



**A thought for today**

The search for human freedom can never be complete without freedom for women

BETTY FORD, former US First Lady

# Stamp Out Stalking

Chandigarh case highlights twin evils of VIP culture and lack of women's safety

We will soon be celebrating 70 years of India's freedom, but when will the struggle for women's freedom be won? Despite the constitutional principle of equality, Indian women constantly find themselves treated as second-class citizens in patriarchal public spaces, where their safety continues to be compromised. The most recent manifestation of this is the Chandigarh stalking case involving the son of BJP's Haryana chief Subhash Barala. The survivor, Varnika Kundu, is among those rare women who actually spoke out about their ordeal. She has vowed to pursue justice and set an example for all women who suffer silently in such cases.

In doing so, Varnika will be taking on a system that is geared towards protecting the powerful. She has already had to face attacks from BJP leaders who prefer to blame the victim, questioning her lifestyle and what she was doing driving alone at night. Plus, there are accusations that the Chandigarh police - who Varnika credits for rescuing her - diluted the charges against the accused under political pressure.

Statistics bear out that even though stalking cases have been rising over the past few years, convictions remain abysmally low. Of the 7,132 cases of stalking registered in 2016 only 379 resulted in convictions - a rate of only 5%. With such numbers it's hardly surprising that stalking continues to be so widespread. Moreover, a lacklustre approach to tackling stalking emboldens more serious crimes against women, which are also legion.

Part of the solution needs to be shunning the VIP culture and sense of entitlement that encourages stalking and other crimes. Accused from influential backgrounds or with powerful connections interfere in police investigation, leading to delays and sabotage. Since BJP has taken a public position against VIP culture, it must let the Chandigarh stalking case reach its logical conclusion without interference. Its Chandigarh MP Kirron Kher's view, that the blame can't be put on women in stalking cases, ought to find larger resonance in BJP. If the Chandigarh case has caused great embarrassment to BJP, as there are widespread allegations it is pressuring the police to protect its own rather than protect women, the best way to save itself from such ignominy in future - as well as to strike a blow against VIP culture and for good governance - is to facilitate much needed police reforms across the country.

# Burgeoning Tax Base

It continues to grow post-demonetisation, but data mining and IT incorruptibility needed

Santosh Gangwar, minister of state for finance, told Rajya Sabha yesterday that 12.6 million new tax payers were added last financial year to the tax base. It was an impressive 27% growth in tax payers but in line with what was recorded the year before demonetisation. The jury may be out on demonetisation's impact, but what is clearly discernible is that India's tax payer base has been growing at an impressive clip over the last four years. Over a decade of building a database which was used to connect the dots in billions of transactions people engage in has begun to pay off.

The next step has to be an increase in the level of sophistication with which information technology tools are used. Under the old manual system where everyone from different arms of government worked in silos, it was possible to evade taxes. But now with electronic transactions increasing rapidly, it is possible for tax department to actually prevent large scale evasion by mining the data thrown up in electronic transactions.

Demonetisation's provided significant leads when the rush to deposit cash resulted in the identification of 1.8 million people whose transactions did not match their tax profile. While tax department is probing these transactions, the advent of GST presents the possibility for tax officials to move to another level. Even a GST pilot project a couple of years ago in Maharashtra showed that by matching direct and indirect tax databases it was possible to curb tax evasion. Over the next few years, these opportunities will multiply. But to tap them there has to be a faster upgrade in tax department's technological capability. There is another big impediment: corruption within the tax department itself. Apart from better technology, the question of who guards the guardians will need to be answered.

# Jhappa-jhappi

How our PM has ensured he's in full contact with the leaders of all countries

Jug Suraiya

Foreign visitors might be excused for mistaking it for a particularly vigorous bout of all-in wrestling, or some other variant of a full-contact mixed martial art. But in fact it is not a form of assault but a demonstration denoting an excess of affection: it is the jhappa. Or, to give it its full double-barrelled name, the jhappa-jhappi.

While the namaste is the traditional greeting all over India, the jhappa-jhappi is reflective of the supposedly more robust temperament to be found north of the Vindhyas. As in all forms of social salutation there is a strict code of protocol to be followed in the performing of jhappa-jhappi.

Both participants in the act must belong to the same gender. An exception, however, may be made in the case of blood relatives and other members of the immediate family.

The self-appointed international brand ambassador of jhappa-jhappi is none other than our prime minister, who literally and metaphorically has shown that he is ready, willing and able to clasp the whole wide world, in his warm embrace.

Thanks to a 56-inch chest, the PM is admirably suited to the task he has set himself, which might best be defined by a paraphrase of JFK's famous saying: Ask not what your country can hug for you, ask whom you can hug for your country.

And the answer to that is just about everyone and anyone you care to name of national leader status. Always mindful of the same-gender rule, of course.

The PM has had photo-ops showing him enthusiastically hugging heads of government and heads of state of diverse political and ideological hues.

This displays a post-Nehruvian approach to the policy of non-alignment and might be called a policy of all-alignment, commendably in tune with the Indian tradition of all-inclusive eclecticism.

The only problem is that when it comes to neighbours like Pakistan and China, an exchange of jhappa-jhappi presents an excellent opportunity for getting a knife stuck in our back.

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# This Day, 75 Years Ago

Contrary to dogma RSS did take part in the freedom movement, including Quit India movement

Rakesh Sinha



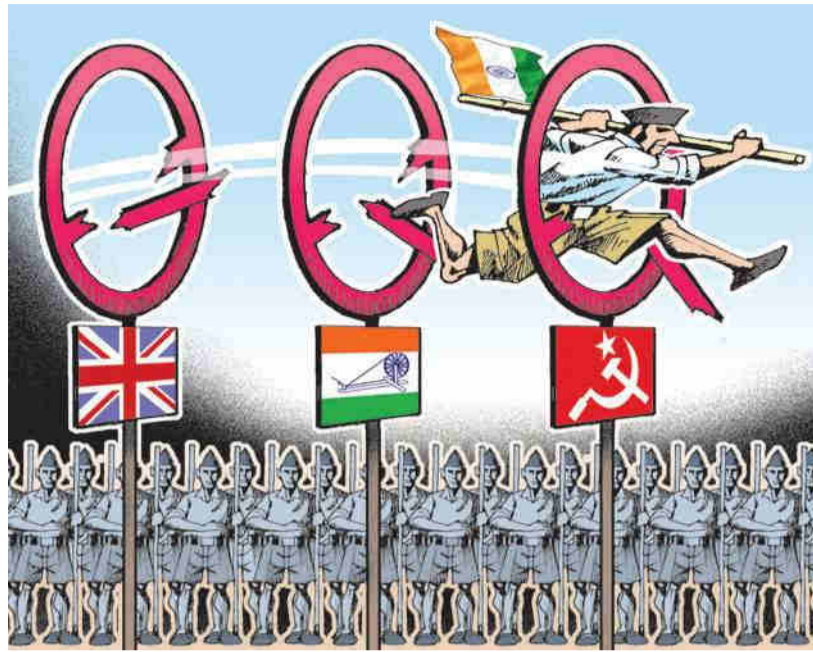
Prime Minister Narendra Modi evoked the significance of the month of August in India's freedom movement in a recent Mann ki Baat - today, for instance, is the 75th anniversary of the launch of the Quit India movement. True to form, Congress and the Left were quick to taunt him about the role of his parent organisation, RSS, in that movement.

This was expected - political discourse and academic writings, comprising mainly history textbooks, have for decades incessantly slandered RSS for its alleged communal and pro-British role during the anti-colonial movement. History, however, suffers distortion whenever the present is used to contextualise the past guided by ideological predisposition. Facts reveal an altogether different reality from Marxist and Nehruvian historians' narratives on RSS.

RSS cadre strength was assessed as nearly 1,50,000, spread among various age groups across the country, in the Home Department's 1939-40 report on volunteer organisations. The British government initiated a recruitment drive for the army, ARP and Civic Guards when World War II broke out. The Hindu Mahasabha and many other Hindu organisations - which included Nathuram Godse's Hindu Rashtra Sena - viewed this as an opportunity to militarily train their cadres for waging war against the British at an opportune time. They fully cooperated in organising camps and acted as recruiting agents.

RSS, however, rejected this outright, a fact that wasn't ignored by the regime. In June 1939, the Home Department suggested the Central Provinces government use Section 16 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act (XIV of 1908) to ban RSS, by then the strongest outfit in the province. The province's chief secretary GM Trivedi wrote to the central government on May 22, 1940, that it was not feasible as it would lead to huge protests in the province.

In the 1930s, even the use of softer methods to curb RSS had brought wrath and humiliation upon the government.



The Sangh's decision to participate in the Civil Disobedience Movement erased the government's delusion that it was a tail of the Hindu Mahasabha. CP & Berar police's fortnightly report stated that RSS founder Hedgewar's participation had invigorated the movement. He led thousands of satyagrahis and suffered a year's rigorous imprisonment.

The Sangh's anti-British stance now invited suppression by an infuriated government. The Home Department report stated, "Of late, the Sangh has started taking interest in political movements of the country, as a result of which the CP government in their circular letter No 2352-2158 IV, dated 15/16 December 1932, was compelled to issue an order warning government servants of the communal and political nature of the Sangh, and forbidding their becoming members or participating in the organisation's activities."

After a two-day discussion on the ideology, organisation and the role of the RSS on March 7-8, 1934, the government was completely isolated and failed to prove RSS involvement in communal

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activities. House leader Raghvendra Rao failed to answer MS Rahman's query on any representation by any Muslim individual or organisations against RSS or of any evidence the government had on its communal activities. Rahman and others praised the RSS; the government had to withdraw its circular.

On August 5, 1940 under the Defence of India Rules, the central government promulgated an ordinance prohibiting drills, use of uniforms and exercises. Any idea that this would stymie the Sangh's mobilisation proved futile.

Hundreds of RSS volunteers courted arrest in violation of the order.

RSS participation in the Quit India movement was the proverbial last straw for British rulers. In August that year, in Chimur and Ashti, RSS cadre dominated Congress processions and attacked police stations, with police in these talukas coming forth with the severest repression of the people. Those hanged and awarded life imprisonment were mostly RSS volunteers. The Sangh's growing integration with the movement created consternation; the government feared an armed coup with RSS and Indian National Army (INA) sharing common sentiments.

British anxiety had good reason. A report warned that RSS volunteers had "infiltrated into various departments of the government such as the army, navy, post & telegraphs, railways and administrative services so that there may be no difficulty in capturing administrative departments when the time comes". It further stated "the organisation is intensely anti-British and its tone is increasingly becoming militant."

The noting of Home Department official GA Ahmed, on December 13, 1943, unravels the government's real intention: "the holding of all camps by any organisation whatever should be prohibited by an order under the Defence of India Rules. This will hit the RSS most, as its main activity is the organisation of camps." Subsequently, the Sangh's training camps were raided and literature and arms were seized, besides the arrest of organisers.

RSS participation in Gandhian movements did not annihilate its instinct and ambition to overthrow colonial rule by armed revolution. The Sangh's weakness is not its absence from the freedom movement, but lack of intellectual rigour among its own academics.

Conversely, communists' privilege flows not from their participation in any national movement (their treacherous role in the freedom movement is well known), but from a strong contingent of committed academics. We owe it to ourselves not to allow the nation's history to be circumscribed by ideological dogmas any longer.

The writer heads India Policy Foundation, a think tank

# 'You need to develop relationships across bureaucracy and with private sector to be trusted and effective in India'

Rakesh Mohan, Distinguished Fellow at Brookings India, has been deputy governor of Reserve Bank of India and secretary in the ministry of finance. He is the editor of 'India Transformed: 25 Years of Economic Reforms' and spoke to Sanjiv Shankaran on the debate around expat economists in Indian policymaking, RBI's inflation targeting regime and economic reform processes:

**■ You believe the push for change in India's economy came from the bureaucracy and not academia. Why?**

That is a remarkable feature of our reform process. In the early 1980s there was little call for change from Indian academics, except for the prescient book by Jagdish Bhagwati and Padma Desai in the 1970s. It is interesting that much of the technocratic call for change came from within. There has been a very interesting interaction between regular IAS civil servants and long-serving economic advisers who have been lateral hires and who then served the government for 20-30 years. They then developed relationships with the rest of the bureaucracy and got trusted. Illustrious examples include IG Patel, Bimal Jalan, Manmohan Singh and Montek Ahluwalia who served many different governments.

**■ How would you distinguish an earlier generation of technocrats hired laterally with the current generation?**

They are bright, dedicated

economists whether it is Kaushik Basu, Raghuram Rajan, Arvind Panagariya or Arvind Subramanian. They brought in new ideas. The issue that I would have is that it takes time for anyone to become effective in terms of getting to know the system, the issues and also all the personnel in government and outside. You need to develop relationships across bureaucracy and with the private sector as well to be trusted and to be effective.

On one hand, it is a great idea to get such people at the highest levels as advisers. But if they had come at a younger age and served the country for 25-30 years they would have been that much more effective. It seems to me that you need a combination of getting lateral hires who then work their way and contribute on a continuous basis, and others who come as senior advisers at the highest levels for temporary periods.

**■ Didn't the changeover to inflation targeting happen over an unusually short period in the Indian context?**

Raghuram Rajan came (as RBI governor), appointed the Urjit Patel committee which recommended it, as did the FSLRC (Finan-

cial Sector Legislative Reforms Committee). The government then implemented it. It didn't take very long. This was relatively easy to do. It was too technical a subject for public debate.

I don't agree with inflation targeting as a monetary policy mechanism, not just in India but generally. There is one target, that is, inflation, and one instrument, the policy interest rate. It makes macroeconomics and understanding of macro economy and inflation too simplistic. It almost makes it a hydraulic system. It can also take your sight away from other things that may be happening in the economy. To my mind it also contaminates public discussion. Once there is a simple target and instrument, public discussion becomes about questions of will or won't they [cut interest rates] as we observe in the frenzied media discussion before every monetary policy meeting now.

**■ Was it any different in your time?**

It was totally

different. We were not inflation targeting. I think RBI under Governor Bimal Jalan had indeed made a significant innovation in articulating an explicit multiple indicator policy. The point is that given the way an economy works you have to look at a number of different variables at the same time, including growth and financial stability. Remember that this approach delivered low inflation from the mid-1990s till around 2008, along with high growth, financial development and financial stability.

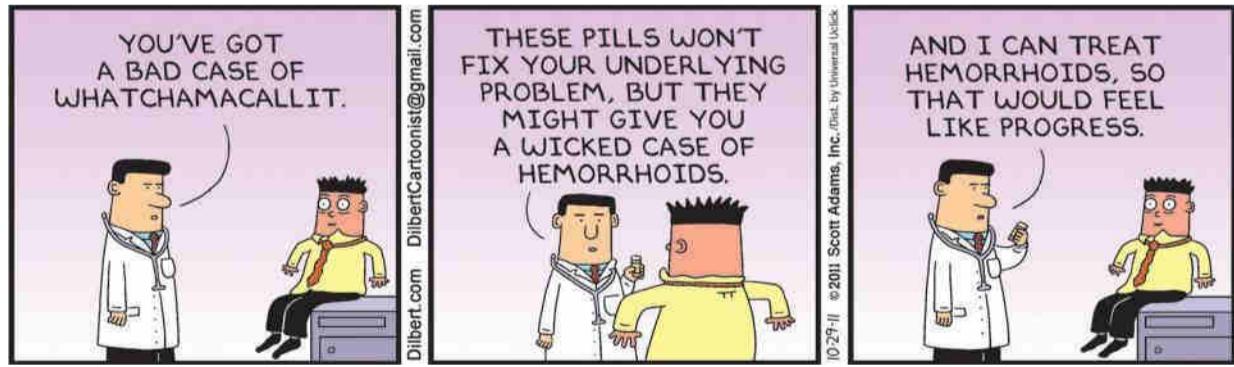
**■ Can economic change in India be only a gradual process?**

The answer is yes and no. Look to the precursors of the 1991 reforms. There was a whole set of committees in the 1960s and 1970, particularly to do with the functioning of the licensing system, which were good at identifying problems in the functioning of the system, but they invariably ended up recommending further tightening rather than liberalising the malfunctioning system.

Also, the global backdrop of development thinking right upto the mid-1960s was to do with planning, import substitution, etc. Today, when we think of examples of high growth we think of East Asia; in the 1950s it was socialist countries. We were completely, in that sense, consistent with the rest of the world.

The change in global thinking came in the late 1960s and 70s, starting with South Korea and Taiwan. We took much longer and started thinking of change only in the 1980s.

# dilbert



# The Need To Include Spirituality In Education

M S Kurhade

We are witness to a critical battle between the best and worst possibilities. When forces of unity and harmony can triumph, and science and technology can be used to end poverty and deprivation, precisely at that time, the forces of violence and impulses of baser human nature are pressing forward on a global scale. Rationality appears to be overtaken by forces of unreason.

Developments in the fields of computers, robotics and artificial intelligence were earlier envisaged only in science fiction: now, we are living in a post human world where we are increasingly taking various manifestations of artificial intelligence and human-machine symbiosis in our stride. However, our moral calibre is yet to keep pace with these developments. The focus of education has been more on material improvements and pecuniary

benefits, rather than on holistic growth of mind, body and spirit. The moral growth of man has not matched his vast strides in other fields.

If we want to build anew and make the world a safer place for future generations, we must attempt to raise the individual's moral stature by forming an inclusive approach to education. We must assist the students, to rest a while in the inns of religious, moral and spiritual, academic consciousness. Thus edified, let them rise and proceed refreshed and encouraged.

It is imperative that we educate students to explore deeper and higher dimensions of human resources so they can successfully work for the fulfilment of their ideal dreams. Our teachings need to turn to the dimensions of values, will power and cultural, ethical and spiritual potentialities.

For an inclusive education philosophy, the following could be useful pointers:

1. Education should teach a student about the real nature of the individual and Nature.
2. Demonstrate that all life is a play of consciousness with itself.
3. Relate the evolution of living success to the movement of conscious life towards increasing higher levels of awareness.
4. Declare the purpose of each life to be the realisation of divine potential.
5. Teach students the art of dynamic equilibrium so that they never tend to extremes, but tread the middle path.
6. Educate to train our mind so that we always live in the present.
7. Teach students to exert their utmost to achieve their objectives as if everything depended on their effort, yet

simultaneously also realise that all events are divinely ordained.

8. Make students take life as it comes, accept whatever comes as a gift from the Divine and remain in a state of equilibrium under all circumstances.
9. Help students to be steadfast in their views, but not claim exclusive truth for their doctrines; to be ready to accept alternative versions of the truth.
10. Integrate with modern doctrines of science, gender, parity, liberty, equality and fraternity and human rights.

When spirituality will be completely embraced in our education system, our students will not only make a living in this physical world, but also make living a success, and experience every moment of life as new, every day as a day of uplift and blessing, and enjoy lasting peace.

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# Sacredspace

The Bridge

A true spiritual teacher does not have anything to teach... does not have anything to give or add to you, such as new information, beliefs, or rules of conduct. He helps you remove that which separates you from the truth...

Eckhart Tolle



the speaking tree