

The SCRIBES WORLD

सच पत्रकारिता का

Vol 1 • ISSUE XV • October, 2025

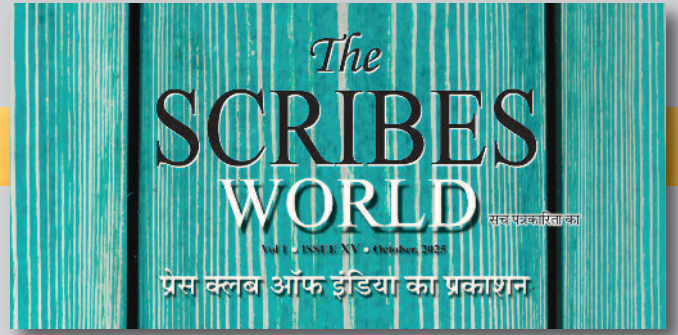
प्रेस क्लब ऑफ इंडिया का प्रकाशन

Website: www.pressclubofindia.org



Collective
Heft
8 Press Clubs
Bond Together

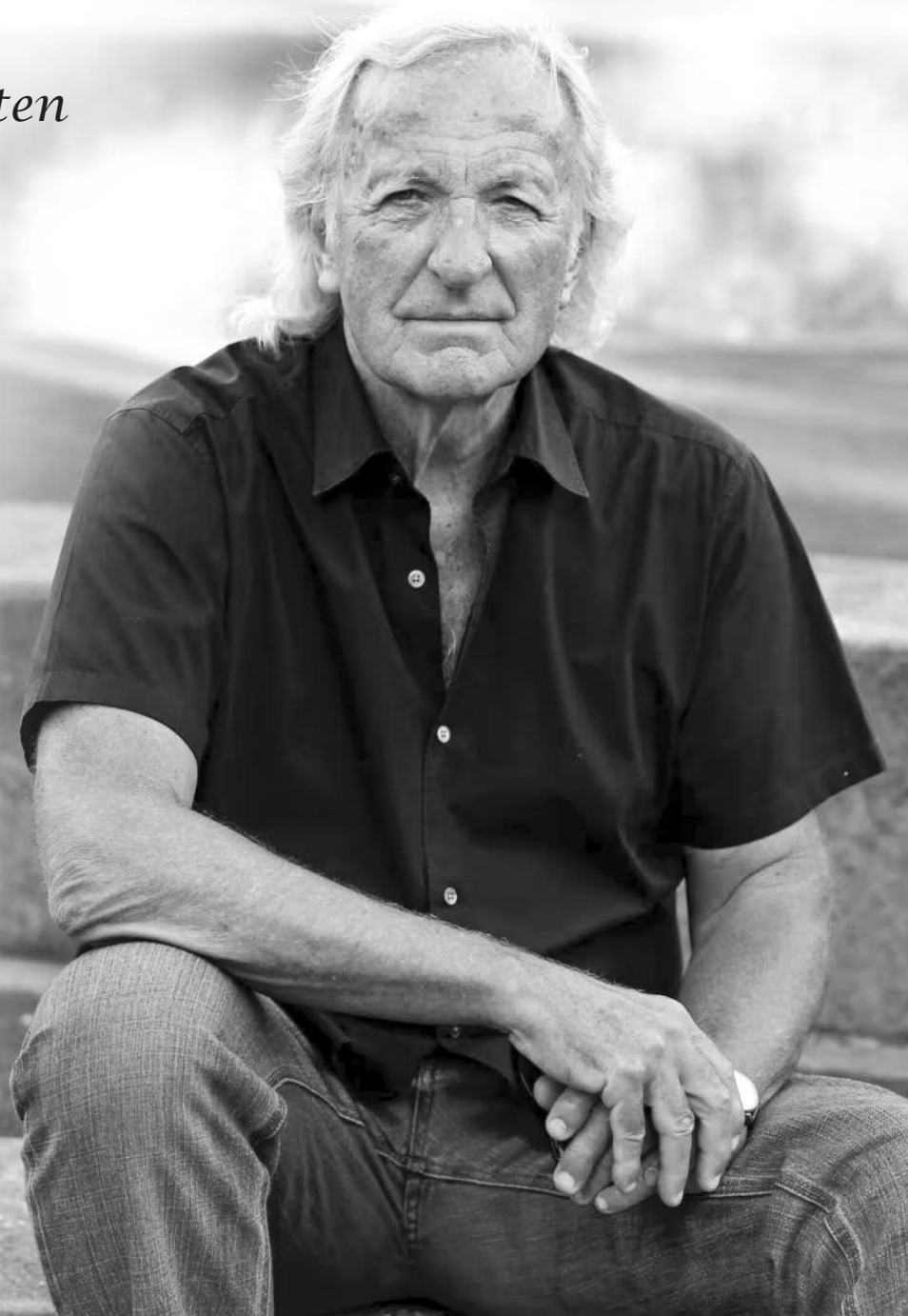


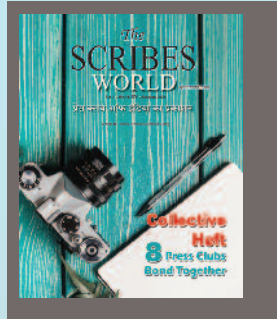


प्रेस क्लब ऑफ इंडिया की त्रैमासिक पत्रिका
अप्रैल-मई-जून 2026

प्रधान सम्पादक
अरुण जोशी*

*“Official truths are often
powerful illusions”
-John Pilger*





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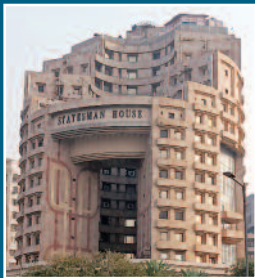
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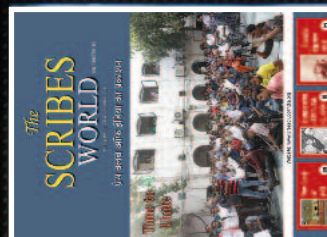
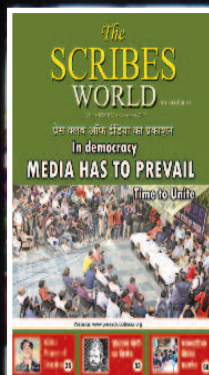
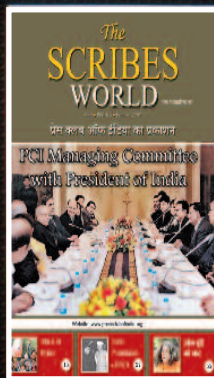
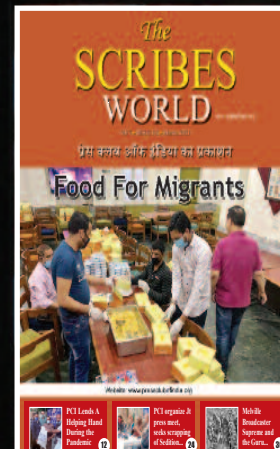
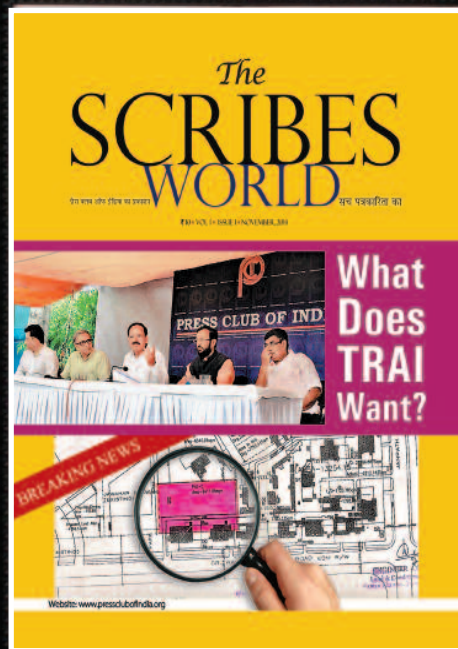
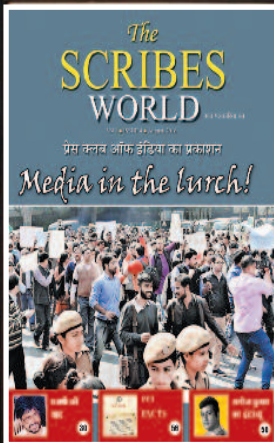
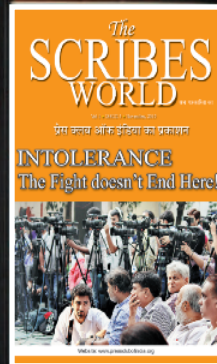
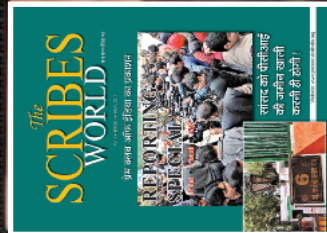
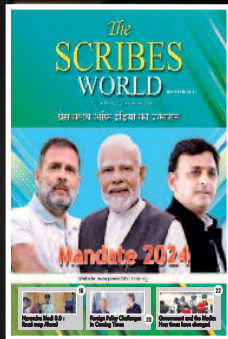
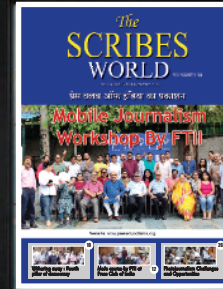
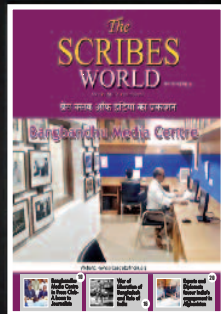
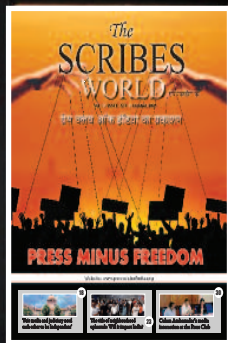
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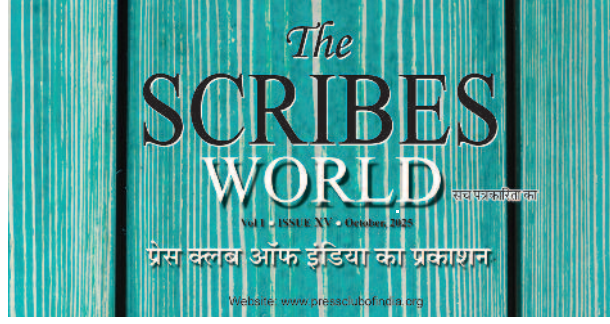
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प्रेस क्लब ऑफ इंडिया का गौरवशाली प्रकाशन

अंक 15, अप्रैल-मई-जून 2026

प्रकाशक व मुद्रक : विनय कुमार

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1, रायसीना रोड, नई दिल्ली-110001

फोन : 011-23719844, 23730248

वेबसाइट : www.pressclubofindia.org

The Scribes World

A Journalistic, Political, Literary Quarterly
Magazine

A publication of Press Club of India

1, Raisina Road, New Delhi-110001

RNI NO. : DELBIL 08041

The Scribes World की पी डी एफ फाइल ई-मेल से प्राप्त करने के लिए संपर्क करें।

विशेष जानकारी के लिए सूत्र हैं-

ई-मेल : pcscribesworld@gmail.com

फोन : 011-23719844

Printed at : Printworks, F-25, Okhla Industrial Area,
Phase I, New Delhi- 110020

Cover & Design by Mukesh Kumar

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प्रकाशित सामग्री के लिए लेखक, प्रकाशक की अनुमति आवश्यक।
प्रकाशित रचनाओं के विचार से पत्रिका का सहमत होना आवश्यक
नहीं। सभी विवाद दिल्ली न्यायालय के अंतर्गत विचारणीय।

*Honorary Post



PCI FACTS

- प्रेस क्लब ऑफ इंडिया के वर्तमान परिसर में पहली बार मैनेजिंग कमेटी की पहली बैठक 14 अगस्त, 1958 को शाम 5:30 बजे श्री दुर्गा दास की अध्यक्षता में हुई। यह क्रम में नौवीं बैठक थी। इससे पहले की सभी आठों बैठकें IENS स्थित आल इंडिया न्यूज पेपर्स एडिटर्स कॉन्फ्रेंस के दफ्तर में सम्पन्न हुईं।
- प्रेस क्लब की शुरुआत में जब क्लब ने दिल्ली प्रशासन को बार लाइसेंस के लिए चिट्ठी लिखी तो उसने बार लाइसेंस देने से मना कर दिया है। दिल्ली प्रशासन की चिट्ठी थी -
 "With reference to your letter dated the 30th June, 1958 on the above subject, I am directed to say that Government are not in favour of acceding to such requests which may give an impression that they are not strictly enforcing the prohibition programme in Delhi. In the circumstances, it is regretted that the request for the grant of a licence for the same and consumption of liquor at the Premises of the Press club of India cannot be granted to."
(11th Managing committee meeting, 7th October, 1958)

- क्लब में पहली बार Sub-Committees 29 दिसम्बर, 1958 में बनीं। यह दो कमेटियां थीं-

Bar Sub - Committee

1. Mr. A.K. Charlton
2. Mr. D.R. Mankekar
3. Mr. P.D. Sharma
4. Mr. K. Rangaswamy
5. Mr. Ram Das

Finance Sub - Committee

1. Mr. Durga Das
2. Mrs. A.V. Jackson
3. Mr. Sri Krishna
4. Mr. P.D. Sharma
5. Mr. Ram Das
6. Mr. Jang Bahadur Singh
7. Mr. Jag Pravesh Chandra

- सन् 1976 में पीसीआई में मदिरा के दाम कुछ इस प्रकार थे-
 Old Monk Rum 2.50 रु., Peter Scot 3.40 रु., Red Knight 2.80 रु., Diplomat 2.80 रु. (प्रति 30 मिली लीटर), किंग फिशर बियर 8.50 रु. और लिम्का, फैंटा वगैरह 1 रुपए का था।

INDIA'S EIGHT PRESS CLUBS ARE TOGETHER A FEDERATION NOW

Managing Committees of eight Press Clubs spread across the country came together this summer and decided to form a Federation of Press Clubs. The idea is to give greater heft to the voice of media persons at a countrywide level

Even to remain upright, positive and forward looking for most people, especially poor among them, is a challenge today. The Press and all the collectives, outfits and associations of media persons have a role in possibly offsetting or minimising this; and, thus, the Press Club of India is no exception to this. Though for decades the PCI has been performing its duties in the best possible way there is always room for improvement and finding new ways to summon more strength and prowess to fulfil its duties towards its members and through them open the possibility of empowerment of public at large. It is with these points in mind that the Press Club, its current managing committee and quite a few members have actively been on a look out for ways and means to do their bit and more in this respect.

And, if exchange of ideas and planning are key to moving ahead in a collective way for any set of people, profession or trade, our club has recently put its best foot forward; and it is through deciding to close ranks with various other press clubs spread across the country. A need for this has for long been felt by the current and previous managing committees and several members of the Press Club of India amid growing challenges that information gathering and its dissemination have come to entail, courtesy myriad vested interests, including government and corporate entities, at the cost of people's right and expectations to know the truth about public matters through media. This is how main office bearers of as many as eight press clubs came together in

Delhi in May this year to forge new bonds in order to build a robust collective voice for what is right in the best interests of the public.

Defending the defenders is often the task today for the Press. Its right to know is also being questioned with greater frequency than before. India's ranking in World Press Freedom Index has been sinking and there are umpteen instances of strongarm tactics being used against journalists by both State and non-state actors. Many of the upright and law-abiding Press reporters face the wrath of governments, both Central and States, and mafia, land grabbers and mining sharks never hesitate to bully, intimidate and in some cases even kill Presspersons in the line of their duty. Besides these hazards, most journalists access to their sources of information is now gravely constricted, making their work often impossibly difficult. Defamation cases under an archaic British days' law are slapped at the drop of the hat against reporters thought to be defiant to the high and mighty in places that have become or treated as their virtual fiefdoms.

The Press Club of India has never shied from away raising its voice against any such instances that ever came to its notice and often went beyond normal courtesies to defend the just rights of journalists and the freedom of speech and expression granted under the Constitution of India and laws, judgements and rulings of higher judiciary emanating from the Constitution. But the lengthening shadows of fear and intimidation makes it necessary to give more heft to the voice of those who assert

their right to express themselves freely in the larger interests of the society. More so since, it is now dogged with chances of getting irredeemably frayed under the weight of narrow and dated views being forced upon media.

It is in this backdrop that duly elected managing committee office bearers of eight Press Clubs spread from North to South and East to West came together this summer in Delhi to chart out a new strategy so as to assert the rights of the Press in a more organised manner at the countrywide level. Together these clubs have formed the Federation of Press Clubs and got it registered. This time The Scribes World cover story is on this so as to make our members and readers more familiar with the latest move of the federating clubs.

There are a few more related stories on Press freedom, besides on other subjects like the initiative to show films in the premises of the club, Singapore as an ideal tourist destination with strong Indian heritage, a tale of the time when Press Club housed office of a news agency too and a curious visitor from far off lands and climes like Siberia. We hope that these and a few more may well prove a good read for you. We also have stories related to war in Iran and its impact on India.

Last but not the least, we pay our heart-felt tributes in this issue to some of our as distinguished members as Mark Tully, HK Dua and Raghu Rai who departed and left us in the preceding months. Let's keep them in our memories and their stellar roll will always warm and guide us.

PCI PRESIDENT'S THOUGHTS ON PRESSMEN'S CLUB AND CALL OF DUTY

The Press Club was founded way back in the 1950s by a rare breed of practitioners of free and fair journalism, a precondition to democracy. They stood with the salient component of a budding democracy. "I take this moment to salute to those seniors for showing us the path..."



**Sangeeta Barooah
Pisharoty**

Journalism worldwide is facing a barrage of challenges for multiple reasons. One is the technological challenge, threatening to take away many entry-level jobs. Upskilling may help our fraternity survive this tide. The Managing Committee is not only aware of it but...

Dear and esteemed members,

Even as I write these lines to you, there is a club standing not far from ours and it is in headlines as the Land and Development Office of the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has served it with a notice to vacate the premises.

The news nudged me to ponder over what do clubs stand for. Are they mere spaces for social interaction and outing and, therefore, when they cease to exist, they are not missed much except by their members?

Should these clubs exist only as little oases of class homogeneity, a value around which the idea of a 'club' was envisioned in colonial-era India?

How inclusive should these spaces be, now that we are an independent country?

Finally, should their existence find a bigger meaning aligned to serving the foundational framework of the country envisioned by the Father of our Nation, The Mahatma; the maker of our Constitution, B R Ambedkar? Two poles on whose ideas and strength we as a nation of diverse cultures and languages stand as one.

This contemplation helped me realise that the Press Club of India may have the word 'club' in its name; may have a popular restaurant and a bar attached to it for its members, but it is so much more than being a mere space for social interaction and outing.

With its members coming from various social and economic backgrounds, it is certainly not an elitist address. Not for nothing even a two-rupee hike on a cup of tea in the Club's menu card raises concern among a section of our members about affordability, many of whom regularly use the space — to work, to network and to simply find a place to relax without any questions asked.

What also helped me to differentiate PCI from several other entities which has the word 'club' in its name across the National Capital is that it was visioned as an institution 68 years ago, during the foundational years of this great nation dreaming a dream to become a vibrant democracy. Some of the finest practitioners of journalism in the 1950s joined forces with that dream to promote Free Press, a prerequisite in a democracy. They wanted to stand up to that salient component of a vibrant democracy. I take this moment also to salute to those seniors for showing us the path from where we must not lose our focus.

Dear members, I write these lines for you, therefore, with the understanding that the basic premise of our club is directly fastened to what the founding fathers of our nation had envisioned for us as a comity of people. PCI was

envisioned as a flag-bearing institution that must rise to safeguard the Fourth Estate as and when it feels the need for it so that the public interest journalism can continue to thrive and play its role of keeping the powers-that-be accountable to those who elect them — the ordinary citizens of this country.

It is in the name of the people that a democracy allows a government and Parliament to function about which we, journalists, the ordinary members of the PCI, write about and comment on. Our only allegiance, must, and should lie with the people.

PCI has been, of course, many things to many people. To the cynics, it is a mere 'drinking hole'. Some take it to the heart in such a manner that they refuse to be a part of it lest their reputation gets 'sullied'.

To the enthusiasts though, it is a place that allows them to fraternise, with the comfort of the knowing that when needed, whatever PCI and its members can as a family, will do to protect the sanctity of journalism, and the right of the journalist to work without fear — a right granted by the Constitution.

It is to continue keeping that promise that I understand I was elected as the president of the PCI in December 2025. In the process, a history of sorts was also made since I became the first woman to be the president of the institution. That breaking of gender barrier is an important one about which we must talk, and I will at a later date, of course.

Journalism worldwide is facing a barrage of challenges for multiple reasons. One is the technological challenge, threatening to take away many entry-level jobs. Upskilling may help our fraternity survive this tide. The Managing Committee is aware of it and our workshop sub-committee to upskill our members is headed by the Vice President himself, a qualified professional to handle that challenge.

One other challenge in India is a warren of legislations, all seemingly designed to disempower journalism in the digital space, an area where many independent journalists are able to eke out a living from at a time of huge job-cuts in the media industry. The Managing Committee is aware of it too and is at the forefront of resisting such legislations in the interest of journalism.

PCI, whenever journalism and journalists have faced an existential threat, have stood up as a bulwark. Be it during the Emergency, or the Rajiv Gandhi government bringing in a Defamation Bill in 1988 hinged on the brute majority his government enjoyed in Parliament, members of the Club under the then leadership had resisted it tooth and nail.

In the age of social media, the terms 'Godi Media' and 'Lapdog Media' may be in usage, but there existed a section of such a lot, editors included, within our fraternity in those times too. Not for nothing did the former home minister LK Advani, then in the Opposition, had chastised that section post-emergency by saying, 'When you were only asked to bend, many of you chose to crawl.'

Many didn't and that's why we remember them with gratitude for standing up to the powers-that-be to safeguard journalism.

History has the tendency to repeat itself. However, the resolve to stand up to the vision, and the path laid out for us by the founding fathers of the Press Club of India, must not waver and weaken.

It was this personal realisation, kicked up by a recent headline, that I wanted to share with you, knowing well that this sentiment is mutual.

Yours sincerely

Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty
New Delhi

PCI, whenever journalism and journalists have faced an existential threat, have stood up as a bulwark. Be it during the Emergency, or the Rajiv Gandhi government bringing in a Defamation Bill in 1988 hinged on the brute majority his government enjoyed in Parliament, members of the Club under the then leadership had resisted it tooth and nail

A FEDERATION KICKSTARTS WITH VOW TO TAKE THE COLLECTIVE VOICE OF FREE PRESS SEVERAL NOTCHES UP

In times to come May 27, 2026, may well be remembered as a red-letter day in the struggle for Press freedom. It can be so because the hot summer day brought together eight leading and democratically structured and managed press clubs from across India in New Delhi.

Together these clubs' prime-office-bearers got registered and, thus, kicked off the Federation of Press Clubs (FPC) under the Registration of Societies Act, 2026. Their idea is to strengthen and add heft to the collective voice of free press and to redeem the otherwise fraying laws and mechanism for protection of journalists' rights that were once bestowed by the Constitution for all times to come





Vinay Kumar

At a time when press freedom in India is backsliding at a rapid pace, platitudes like “a free press is essential for a democracy” ring hollow for the sheer ineffectiveness of these words. Over the past decade, more journalists have been prosecuted by the State and non-state actors, and more journalists have been jailed and murdered than in all the preceding decades. Meanwhile, India’s ranking in the World Press Freedom Index has sunk to an all-time low of 157 out of 180 and it doesn’t look like improving any time soon.

In bleak times

In this twilight zone of India’s press freedom, press clubs across the country and a few other press bodies have emerged as islands of hope for thousands of journalists who are still soldering on in big and small towns, refusing to accept the new normal of keeping quiet. These press clubs have raised their voices individually whenever journalists in their regions, and elsewhere, have come under fire, but in the absence of a collective voice, the pitch and cadence of their effort often fade out in the din of the coopted narratives that now dominate news cycles.

Genesis of the Idea

As early as May 2016, the then management of the Press Club of India, Delhi, and some of the leading journal-

ists in the country, who are its members, saw this tide of change coming in and gave birth to a nebulous idea of forming a common platform of all democratically elected press clubs and press bodies in India for lending their collective shoulders and voices for protecting the islands of press freedom and journalists.

A decade later

It took exactly a decade for that nebulous idea to move from the drawing board to a concrete form in the shape of Federation of Press Clubs (FPC), when on May 27, 2026, eight leading press clubs from across the country came together to register under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, for forming a non-partisan, national-level apex collective.

It took exactly a decade for that nebulous idea to move from the drawing board to a concrete form in the shape of Federation of Press Clubs (FPC), when on May 27, 2026, eight leading press clubs from across the country came together to register under the Societies ...

The first meet

The first meeting of its Governing Council was held at the Press Club of India on June 22, 2026. This endeavour will lend a nation-wide collective voice to the most vibrant organisations of media persons, which are represented by various press clubs spread over across the country. The founding Governing Council of the Federation will continue for a term of two years before the subsequent arrangement is made by member-clubs in a democratic way.

Member clubs

The eight founding members of the Federation of Press Clubs are: Press Club of India, Delhi; Mumbai Press Club; Press Club, Kolkata; Press Club, Hyderabad; Chandigarh Press Club; State Press Club, M.P; Gauhati Press Club and Agartala Press Club.

The FPC will be managed by a 10-member Governing Council comprising Mr. Gautam Lahiri (President), Mr. Vijay Reddy (Vice-President), Mr. Snehasis Sur (Vice-President),

Mr. Samar Khadas (Vice-President), Mr. Saurabh Duggal (Secretary General), Ms. Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty (Assistant Secretary General), Mr. Neeraj Thakur (Treasurer), Mr. Praveen Khariwal (Executive Member), Mr. Pranab Sarkar (Executive Member), and Mr. Khagen Kalita (Executive Member).

Membership open

The Governing Council in one of its first decisions has decided that membership to Federation of Press Clubs will be opened to other press clubs and other similar press bodies in India in the coming weeks. After more clubs join the FPC, the Governing Council will be further expanded for a more democratic representation in the decision-making process of this collective.

Objectives

The objectives of this pan-India body of press clubs are to coordinate and strengthen the activities of its member bodies for the advancement of press freedom, protection of journalists, support media professionals for dealing with the challenges thrown up by an ever-changing media landscape in the age of radical technological transformation, and advocacy for better working conditions for journalists.

Criteria for membership

According to the rules and regulations of FPC, membership will be granted to only those press clubs and media bodies representing journalists operating in various states or regions, which have an active registration, conduct regular elections according to their constitution or Articles of Association, and file statutory audited statement of accounts with the government under the prevailing laws in the country as defined under the provisions of the Societies Registration Act, 1860; Companies Act 2013, or any other law that governs them.

A non-partisan body

Speaking about the formation of the Federation of Press Clubs, its founding President and former President of Press Club of India, Mr. Gautam Lahiri said: “The formation of the Federation of Press Clubs is a culmination of a process that started in 2016, when the need was felt for strengthening the collective voice of various press clubs in India. This is a completely non-partisan body, which will work for the betterment of the profession and will try to develop a support system for journalists, who work in various parts of the country without any significant social security



As early as May 2016, the then management of the Press Club of India, Delhi, and some of the leading journalists in the country, who are its members, saw this tide of change coming in and gave birth to a nebulous idea of forming a common platform of all democratically elected press clubs and press bodies in India

net. Protection of journalists and dignity of life are essential for the survival of the profession.”

A call for pooling ideas and more

Weighing in on the purpose of the Federation of Press Clubs, Mr. Snehasis Sur, its Vice-President and current President of Press Club, Kolkata said: “Today, the media landscape across the world has fragmented as the traditional models of sustenance have collapsed, which have had a profound effect on the profession of journalism. In such a situ-

ation, it’s important for all stakeholders who are invested in press freedom—an essential feature of democracy—to come together to pool their ideas and resources for dealing with emerging challenges.”

Need for district-level networking

Addressing the need to engage with smaller press bodies that function at the district level for helping them in better access of journalistic resources, Mr. Vijay Reddy, Vice-President of FPC and serving President of Press Club Hyderabad said: “The majority of journalism happens in the small towns of India, where journalists turn to district-level press clubs for help in times of crisis, but they suffer from the lack of adequate resources to tackle problems. The FPC will reach out for helping them with better access to resources and network them with other stakeholders to overcoming their problems.”

To promote ethical journalism

At a time when the trust in the traditional media is shrinking, it’s important for the FPC to function in a transparent manner. Emphasising on this crucial public-facing aspect of the organisation, Mr. Samar Khadas, Vice-President of FPC and current President of Mumbai Press Club said: “We need to lead by example and function in a transparent and open manner by remaining a

non-partisan organisation at all levels and avoid any conflict of interest. At the same time, we need to engage with journalists working in various parts of the country through their parent organisations for building awareness about practicing ethical journalism.”

Presspersons' apex body

The FPC has been structured in such a manner that press clubs operating in various parts of the country are adequately represented and have an equal



say in its functioning. “It’s essential that the Federation of Press Clubs to be the collective voice of journalists working in any part of the country. The composition of the founding organisations of FPC shows that their zones are represented in a fair and democratic manner in this apex body of press clubs,” said Mr. Saurabh Duggal, Secretary General of FPC and current President of Chandigarh Press Club.

Collectivising stakeholders

Establishing the Federation of Press Clubs is an ambitious project for strengthening press freedom and freedom of expression under Article 19(1)(A). Emphasising on the important role that the FPC will play in

The Governing Council in one of its first decisions has decided that membership to Federation of Press Clubs will be opened to other press clubs and other similar press bodies in India in the coming weeks. After more clubs join the FPC, the Governing Council will be further expanded for a more democratic representation

underlining this essential nature of the journalism, Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty, Assistant Secretary General of FPC and serving President of Press Club of India said: “The collectivisation of various stakeholders of press freedom is the need of the hour for guard-



ing and expansion of freedom of expression as envisioned in our Constitution.

“The formation of Federation of Press Clubs is an important step in that direction. The world over, organisations and people, who are invested in press freedom, are forming collectives to strengthen each other. In the same spirit, the FPC will function by adopting global best practices so that one of the most important features of democracy is served better.”

Special invitees to May 27 meeting

The meeting held on May 27 was also attended by several important special invitees. Among those who were present included former presidents of the Press Club of India Bobby Mathur and Umakant Lakhera and former secretary-generals of PCI Askari Zaidi, Sandeep Dikshit, Nadeem Ahmed Kazmi and myself. The current Secretary General of PCI Afzal Imam too participated in the deliberations.

On a new search

To sum it up, the driving idea behind the Federation is to set on to a new search, a new journey, open new vistas, cutting down the looming shadows over journalism and collectively devise with scribes of all hues and languages a way out of the currently thickening gloom. The purpose is to usher India’s media-space to the satisfaction and wellbeing of its’ over a billion stakeholders in order as to get their rightful and just entitlements restored as per the norms and mores of democracy rather than depend on anybody’s mercy.

(The writer is former Secretary-General of the club)

WHY COURTS SHOULD STAND BY MEDIA EVEN IF IT IS CRITICAL

*Last year in March former Chief Justice of Orissa High Court, **Justice S Muralidhar** delivered a memorable talk on 'Media, Courts and Freedom of Expression' at India International Centre, New Delhi, to mark the BG Verghese Memorial Lecture. He cited and dealt with numerous cases pivoted at the intersection of judiciary and media to drive the simple point home that media and judiciary need each other to be just not only to each other but also in order to uphold the public interest. The first part of his talk was carried in a previous issue of this magazine and now the concluding bit from him is here in his own words*



BBC India office was raided and searched by Income Tax Department in 2023

The U.S. Supreme Court in *New York Times v. Sullivan* reminded that criticism of the government and those in administration, even by factually inaccurate statements, would not be actionable unless made with malice. In the *Derbyshire County Council Case* the House of Lords held that if institutions of government were permitted to sue for libel, it would place an

undesirable fetter on the freedom of speech. This principle has been adopted by our SCI too. And yet, it is not being followed in practice. Three instances will suffice to make the point.

In 2023 the BBC broadcast a documentary that examined the present PM's actions during the Gujarat riots of 2002. The MIB (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting) immediately invoked the

emergency provisions of the IT Rules and ordered it to be taken off the air. Was it a mere coincidence that this was soon followed by income tax personnel conducting surveys of the BBC's offices in India? The official spokesperson of the ruling party held a press conference in which he railed against the BBC as the most corrupt with a history of working with malice against India.

He rechristened BBC as the Bhrasht Bakwas Corporation, or stupidly corrupt corporation. The reasons for the take down order remain secretive till date. A petition questioning the government action is yet to be heard and decided by the SCI.

Another batch of petitions, now on the back burner, is the one concerning the use by the central government of Pegasus spyware to place under surveillance the mobile phones of politicians, journalists and even judges. The Committee set up by the SCI, headed by a former SC judge, submitted a report more than two years ago. The Committee said that the central government was refusing to cooperate. The report remains in a sealed cover in the SCI. After a long gap, the SCI has now agreed to hear the case in April this year.

The third egregious instance is the government blocking the entire website of Ananda Vikatan (AV) a renowned and popular Tamil magazine only because it carried a cartoon showing the PM in shackles seated next to Trump during his recent visit to the US. This angered the BJP State unit president on whose complaint the MIB acted with alacrity. The Madras High Court ordered lifting of the blockade but unfortunately made it conditional upon AV taking down the cartoon. This is totally contrary to the settled legal position that mere criticism of the government, even if ill informed, is not anti-national. It cannot result in a chilling effect on free speech.

The defence of this measure by the ASG (Additional Solicitor General) in the High Court made curious reading. He cited friendly relations with foreign states - a ground of restriction under Art 19 (2). It is hard to imagine Trump looking at that cartoon in AV and deciding to break off diplomatic ties with India!! But then the reaction of the BJP spokesperson in Tamil Nadu was stranger. He thought the freedom of the press did not extend to "making fun of the country and its 140-crore people!!" The nation wants to know why in the times now, in our republic, in India today, it is so hard to tolerate a healthy sense of humour, the ability to laugh at



Post-Covid-19, with hybrid hearings and live streaming of court proceedings, judges are in the public eye even if the press isn't watching. Social media has exposed many more dimensions of the judiciary

oneself, or take a dig at the government?

Courts need an independent media

On 12 January 2018 a press conference was held by four of the senior-most judges of the SCI, after the CJI. They went public on how the then CJI was acting arbitrarily in the matter of allocation of cases. The judges said that with the independence of the judiciary and the future of democracy at stake, they had "no other choice but to communicate to the nation to please take care of this institution." When asked why now, the senior-most of the four is supposed to have said that they did not want any wise men to say 20 years later that "Justices Chelameswar, Ranjan Gogoi, Lokur and Kurian sold their souls and did not take care of the inter-

ests of this illustrious institution." It is quite another matter that the next CJI, who saw much value then in both independent and noisy journalists and judges, was only too eager to gag the media when presiding over a bench on a Saturday morning on 20 April 2019 to address threats to the independence of the judiciary. He used this occasion to discredit his lady staffer who accused him of sexual harassment. He appealed to the wisdom of the media not to report on it.

The Courts regularly use the media to carry their press releases on the judiciary's achievements, the disposal of cases in Lok adalats. Incoming and outgoing CJIs give interviews to a few select journalists. A few correspondents are favoured by some of the CJIs, and sometimes other judges, with exclusive scoops about the institution's inner workings. Not infrequently a garrulous judge holds forth from the dais making gratuitous comments, wanting them to be relayed through the press.

Post-Covid-19, with hybrid hearings and live streaming of court proceedings, judges are in the public eye even if the press isn't watching. Social media has exposed many more dimensions of the judiciary. When the PMO's social media handle shared the video clip of the PM doing arti at the ganesh pooja at the CJI's residence, it naturally became viral. Video clips of comments made by judges not just inside

the courts but outside too are available within a few minutes to an entire social media audience across continents. Judicial vanity, judicial peeve, judicial wit, judicial anger are all on full display.

Courts controlling the media

So, what then of contempt of court? One senior lawyer termed the practice of the law of contempt in India as an instance of the paradox of the love-hate relationship between the press and the judiciary. They need each other but the judiciary would like to tell the press where it gets off. Beer biceps (read pod-caster Ranveer Allahbadia) wasn't expecting that with the court protecting him from arrest, it would also admonish him to behave on his show. Thankfully, the court self-corrected. It is not unusual though for the court to tell a politician while granting him bail that he will not address meetings and so on.

The SCI does have a system of accreditation of journalists for the print and electronic media. But then in the age of live streaming, live tweeting, there are numerous news purveyors, not just journalists. In fact, if one visits the press room today in the SCI, you find journalists watching the monitor rather than jostle for space in a crowded court room to report on the happenings.

The press has to watch out for contempt action in two contexts. One is interference with court proceedings. The other is scandalising the court through personal attacks on the motives of judges as opposed to critiquing the institutional performance. In the first category falls trial by media. The media campaign run in 1961 by R K Karanjia's tabloid Blitz in support of Col Nanavati, who was being tried for the murder of his wife's paramour, is only too well known. It turned the jury in favour of Col Nanavati. This led to the disbanding of the jury system. The Sahara case, the Nupur Talwar case, and more recently the Rhea Chakraborty case, witnessed high-pitched shouting matches on TV screens of news channels which were acting as prosecutor and judge. The guidelines framed in the Sahara case

In the US the contempt power is rarely used against the press. In the UK the Daily Mirror could get away with depicting the photos of the three judges who granted an injunction in the Spycatcher case upside down with the screaming caption YOU FOOLS!

that an injunction could be granted where the reporting on a case might interfere with the right to a fair trial could be both overbroad and subjective.

Judges in trial courts are vulnerable to intense public glare that the social media facilitates. It is necessary and prudent for judges at all levels to be cautious in engaging with social media. Courts do cordon off trials from media citing security reasons. Where the standards are vague, it is bound to have a chilling effect on the media, which then undermines the freedom of the press. The Court has thankfully not yet placed any restrictions on social media reporting on trials. After all, the criminal justice system is premised on public trials and the press plays an important role in observing and reporting on the process.

The second area is of commenting on the court, its performance, its judgments, its judges. In the US the contempt power is rarely used against the press. In the UK the Daily Mirror could get away with depicting the photos of the three judges who granted an injunction in the Spycatcher case upside down with the screaming caption YOU FOOLS! In November 2016 the Daily Mail on its front page depicted the photos of three of the judges of the UK Supreme Court with the caption 'Enemies of the People'. That Court had ruled that the UK Government could not bypass the Parliament to begin the Brexit process. Neither instance attracted any notice of contempt.

Way back in 1978, in a somewhat similar vein, Justice Krishna Iyer postulated the Mulgaonkar principles to govern contempt proceedings. One of those was that the Court will not be prompted to act as a result of easy irritability. Indeed, occasionally the SCI has said that its shoulders are broad enough to shrug off ill-informed criticism. However, that is not quite how the judiciary as a whole has responded to public criticism. It has bristled with indignation. Arundhati Roy spent a day in Tihar jail for criticising the Court's muzzling of dissent over its judgement in the Narmada dam case.

Patricia Mukhim, the editor of Shillong Times and her publisher were held guilty of contempt for suggesting that a Judge had improperly acted in his own cause when on the day of his retirement he passed a judicial order directing the State to provide retired judges with a slew of benefits. Apart from sentencing them to stand in one corner of the courtroom till the end of the working hours, Milord slapped a fine of 2 lakhs loudly stating that this would shut the newspaper. Thankfully, the Supreme Court stayed the order. Recently when Wikipedia opened a page to report on the case between ANI and itself in the Delhi High Court, it invited a notice of contempt. In an appeal by Wikipedia, the SCI is reported to have questioned why the HC was being touchy about court proceedings.

Concluding thoughts

It is clear that when the I&B Minister described Indian press as 'robust and flourishing', he could not have meant 'free and independent'. The media in India has had to fight for its independence and for its freedom. It is a fact though that much of the mainstream print and electronic media are either owned by large corporate houses or by political parties. Both print and electronic media operate on purely commercial lines dependent as they are on government advertisements, licences and permissions, corporate sponsorships, commercials. These very media houses also have their corresponding web versions. And as Joseph Pulitzer cautioned, once a publisher comes to

regard the press as exclusively a commercial business, there is an end of its moral power. Self-censorship, paid news, advertorials, large self-promoting ads of governments on several front pages, vying for greater TRPs at the risk of fudging data, are all now passe. There is also the control through sponsorship of the independent press on the net by corporate philanthropies. The big challenge then is to keep the news free.

Recently, I was sharing a panel with a senior lawyer who is also an MP of the ruling party. The moderator asked us whether it was matter of concern that much of the corporate controlled mainstream media was aligned with the establishment. My fellow panellist's response was ingenious. They were exercising, he said, their free choice to align with the government. He was in plain denial that there was any muzzle of the press.

For more than a decade now, the PM of the world's largest democracy has not held a non-curated press conference to subject his government's performance to scrutiny by the media and yet there is but a whimper of protest. In his memoirs titled *Hidden Agendas* veteran journalist John Pilger says that when Murdoch took over a newspaper the reporters there would self-censor. They knew that some stories would never go past the editor's desk. Walter Lippman warned that the threat to press freedom is not as much from the pressures and intimidation that they face but from those of their ilk that are readily co-opted into the heady mix of politics with the reward of proximity to the corridors of power. When asked to bend, they crawl. They might do well to heed Benjamin Franklin who said they who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.

While we find ourselves engulfed by WhatsApp forwards, which tend to hide the real news, not everything about the internet and social media is only troubling. It has provided space to journalists, and influencers, to speak fearlessly, and carry their followers with them free of control by state agencies. It has also provided such journalists with a two-way communication channel, with a



The Panama Papers exposed a clandestine world of offshore finance and provided evidence of how heads of state, billionaires, celebrities, and business magnates used offshore structures to evade taxes, launder money, and conduct illicit activities away from public scrutiny

world-wide audience. And occasionally, tucked away in the corners of the print and electronic media, there is space yet for the investigative and critically analytical pieces of fearless and independent reporters, some of whom are being honoured today. Their courage and conviction will undoubtedly inspire generations of reporters. They need not just our admiration, but importantly, our support. They are our hope for a free and independent press, an impartial and trusted media, in the India of the future.

What also is encouraging is that they are not alone. Growing numbers of such independent scribes have formed global coalitions. The Panama Papers exposed a clandestine world of offshore finance and provided evidence of how heads of

state, billionaires, celebrities, and business magnates used offshore structures to evade taxes, launder money, and conduct illicit activities away from public scrutiny. This was a result of a mammoth exercise undertaken by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) which brought together a diverse coalition of over 370 journalists from more than 100 media organizations across 76 countries to probe through 11.5 million documents. It tells us that even amidst threats and pressures, there will be those who are willing to risk their all to uncover and uphold the truth.

As for the judiciary, it will have to develop the ability to receive criticism of its actions by the press, which performs the salutary function of holding it to account. Maybe the judges should recall what Lord Denning said in declining to proceed with the contempt case against Quentin Hogg:

Let me say at once that we will never use this jurisdiction as a means to uphold our own dignity. That must rest on surer foundations. Nor will we use it to suppress those who speak against us. We do not fear criticism, nor do we resent it. For there is something far more important at stake. It is no less than freedom of speech itself. It is the right of every man, in Parliament or out of it, in the Press or over the broadcast, to make fair comment, even outspoken comment, on matters of public interest.”

BANGLADESH : MEDIA FREEDOM SINCE DR MOHAMMAD YUNUS' RULE



Amid assaults by successive governments, media in Bangladesh has been coaxed to submit to a virtual self-censorship. Free voices have been scotched as violence, intimidation, arrests of journalists and arm-twisting of owners and investors become rampant. Fiscal spying and fake fact checking are other devices that have been used against media persons since Dr Yunus took over to make things from bad to worse or since Hasina's deposition from power, leaving little hope for redemption even after Yunus left



Gautam Lahiri

Western countries were critical of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for 'suppressing media freedom' in Bangladesh and even the larger international community too expressed serious concerns about this. So, in the aftermath of the fall of her regime on 5th August 2024 Bangladesh was expected to usher into

a new era of press freedom -- more so when the Interim Government was led by Nobel Laureate, Dr Mohammad Yunus.

But this was not be either during Dr Yunus's rule, or thereafter under the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) government led by Tarique Rahaman which is now ensconced in Dhaka.

The Prime Minister's Information and Broadcasting Advisor Zahed Ur Rahman has strictly warned the Press and television channels the other day against the dissemination of anything that the exiled former Prime Minister may say. The immediate provocation for the government's fiat for the media seems to be an email interview that Sheikh Hasina gave to the NDTV in India towards the end of June 2026.

Sheikh Hasina faces a death sentence in her country and her Awami League Party is banned throughout the country; and so is its coverage violating govern-

ment diktats by all the media outlets. This has been the case since Dr Yunus took the reins of Bangladesh following Hasina's exit from the Capital Dhaka about two years ago from now. Attacks on media have been escalating under his watch and this cannot be said to have relented after he handed over power to the new BNP government.

Comparative data

A comparative analysis of the data on the attacks on journalists and media houses shows a sharp rise in targeted attacks on media houses and journalists under the earlier regime of Dr Yunus. The trend is yet to be reversed.

From August 2023 to July 2024 under Shiekh Hasina there were 383 such attacks vis-à-vis 878 from August 2024 to July 2025 under Dr Yunus. The data for this has been collated by two prominent Bangladeshi human rights organisations, Aio O Salish Kendra and

Manabadhikar Shongskriti Foundation. It shows that the attacks on the journalists under Dr Yunus increased by about 230 per cent. This is so despite the fact that media faced systematic attacks during the students' protests in July 2024 which led to the fall of Hasina's government while Dr Yunus faced no such major uprising in its aftermath.

The data show that 35 cases were filed against journalists under Hasina, whereas about 195 cases were filed under Dr Yunus. This amounts to an increase of 558 per cent cases. While Hasina's regime was not known to have denied any accreditation to journalists, Dr Yunus used accreditation as an instrument to punish the journalists allegedly associated with the previous regime and denied accreditation to about 167 Journalists.

Fiscal spying

In 2023-24, Hasina's regime was not known to have used the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU), an anti-money laundering agency of the country, against the journalists but Dr Yunus let loose the BFIU against the journalists and it issued notices to 107 journalists silencing the prime media houses and/or their journalists. Finally, while 348 journalists faced acts of violence and criminal intimidation under Sheikh Hasina's regime, mostly during the July 2024 uprising, about 431 journalists faced penal laws to curb violence and criminal intimidation under Dr Yunus.

Murder

If reforms were meant to bring an end to persecution of the journalists in Bangladesh, Dr Yunus has failed abysmally. After 15 years of Hasina rule Dr Yunus created the fear in the media in a systematic way within a single year. The situation of the media continues to deteriorate. On 25 June 2025, journalist Khandaker Shah Alam, a correspondent of Daily Matrijagat, was murdered at Nabinagar Upazila, in Dhaka's northeast, in a targeted retaliation by Babul Mia, known locally as 'Tiger Babul Dakat'. The murder took place shortly after Babul Mia was released from prison.



In another case the Cyber Tribunal of Dhaka issued arrest warrants on July 27, 2025 against three journalists, Bangladesh Pratidin Editor Naem Nizam, its publisher Moynal Hossain Chowdhury and news portal Bangla Insider's Chief Editor Syed Borhan Kabir under the Digital Security Act.

On 21 April 2025, Kongkon Karmaker was dismissed by The Daily Star as Dinajpur correspondent after two decades for reporting the death of religious minority community member Bhabesh Chandra Roy. The news was picked up by multiple Indian media outlets and also India's Ministry of External Affairs. Just before the election noted independent journalist Kazi Alamgir was arrested for criticising the Yunus government and denied bail. A few weeks before this, fundamentalists rampaged a leading media house of Bangladesh called Prothom Alo, besides the Dily Star. The Yunus government remained all through a mute spectator.

A weaponised fact checking

In order to silence the media, Chief Advisor of Bangladesh Dr Mohammed Yunus found a disingenuous way and established "CA (Chief Advisor's) Press Wing Facts". Across the world, Fact Checking Units of the governments have been declared as instruments to violate freedom of opinion and expression.

It became the defacto censorship authority of the Interim Government.

The apparent financing of the CA Press Wing Facts by the British Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) was deeply concerning. The FCDO had approved £474,468 for Canadian firm, Alinea International Ltd, which in turn funded the press wing.

From August 2024 to July 2025, about 195 cases, mainly false, were filed against the journalists. The details of some of the cases filed are given as follows:

On 22 August 2024, a murder case was filed by Kamrul Islam, father of a student Nayeem Howlader, who died during protests at Jatrabari in Dhaka against former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and 192 others including seven journalists. The journalists accused included Mozammel Haque Babu, Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief of Ekattor TV; Syed Ishtiaque Reza, former Chief News Editor (CNE) of Ekattor TV; Ahmed Jobaer, a Director of Somoy TV; Munni Saha. There were a few others besides them.

Mozammel Babu, a cancer patient, and Shyamal Dutta were already in jail in connection with two murder cases which were registered during mass protests. Journalist Shahriar Kabir, a prominent Bangladeshi journalist, human rights activist and former President of the Ekattoror Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, was arrested on September 16, 2024 at his residence in Dhaka's Banani area by the Detective Branch of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Following his arrest, Kabir was placed on a seven-day remand in connection with the death of a housemaid, Liza Akter, in a case filed with Ramna Model Police Station. Subsequently, he was shown arrested in two additional murder cases related to the deaths of Rafiqul Islam, a trader, and a madrasa student during the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement in Dhaka's Jatrabari area in July 2024.

Co-accused with Sheikh Hasina

On 11 September 2024, a murder case was filed against former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, 25 journalists

and 139 others over the death of a 31-year-old man at Bhasantek in Dhaka. The case was related to the mass uprising. On 18 October 2024, journalist Raihan of daily Samakal was sent to jail after being arrested in a murder case related to the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement in Habiganj.

On 22 October 2024, journalist Pranab Barua Arnab was arrested in four cases filed with Patia Police Station in Chittagong. Police claimed that Pranab Barua was trying to flee to India through Akhaura.

On 25 October 2024, Pradip Chowdhury, the president of the Khagrachari Journalist Union, and a district correspondent for the daily Samakal was arrested by police in Khagrachari. After the fall of Sheikh Hasina government five separate cases were filed against him at Khagrachari Sadar, Manikchhari, Panchhari and Dighin. He was also named in a case related to a clash with anti-discrimination student protesters on 4 August.

Apart from Pradip Chowdhury, six other journalists from Khagrachari were also implicated in these cases. On 9 October 2024, a case was filed against Sajjad Hossain, Mirzapur upazila correspondent of Dainik Jugantar newspaper, before the Tangail Additional District Magistrate Court No-168/2018 in connection with the case against about 100 people including the then OC of Mirzapur police station, Awami League leaders and 500 persons regarding one Himel losing his eye during the anti discrimination student movement in Tangail's Mirzapur. Thereafter, in October 2024, another fresh case was filed against journalist Sajjad.

Bail none-too-easy, arrest a certainty

On 13 November 2024, a criminal case was registered against The Daily Post reporter, Al Ehsan, by the Uttara West Police. This was two months after publishing tax evasion reports allegedly by Dhaka Cotton and its sister cotton companies in September 2024. Journalist Eshan published an article titled "Dhaka Cotton evades tax despite collecting from staff" on 18 September 2024 alleging staff of 'Dhaka Cotton'



were declined income tax invoices from the Dhaka Cotton higher ups.

On 22 January 2025, two journalists from Gobindaganj, Raihan Mohammad Mostafa Kamal and Nur Mohammad Raihan Farhad were denied anticipatory bail regarding a case filed under the Explosives Act and the attempt to murder Jamaat leader Taharat Tanvir Pradhan way back in 2014. The case was filed in November 2024 or about 11 years after the incident.

Plight of over 400 journos

At least 431 journalists faced acts of violence and intimidation in the first eight months of Dr Yunus's Interim government.

Mohammad Omar Farok (Independent 24 TV) and Syed Mainul Ahasan Maruf (Ekattor TV) were arrested while they covered the destruction of a museum linked to Hasina's family. The police did not intervene.

The Interim Government of Dr Yunus had adopted a number of tactics to intimidate and silence the journalists such as launching financial inquiry against at least 85 of them. The BFIU initiated inquiries against 85 senior journalists, sending a chilling message to the journalists to remain silent. This was from August 2024 to March 2025.

On 30 October 2024, the agency directed various banks of the country seeking information about 28 journalists. It sought details such as bank lockers, savings cards, credit cards and other financial instruments in their name or whether money has been transacted or not. The journalists whose information was sought included Naeem Nizam, editor of Bangladesh Pratidin; Farida Yasmin, former president of Jatiya Press Club; Zayedul Hasan Pintu, head of DBC News and many other prominent media persons.

Selective accreditation

The government revoked press accreditation of at least 167 journalists for their alleged links with the previous government including revocation of accreditation of 20 journalists on 29 October 2024 and 29 others on 3 November 2024. As many as 118 journalists lost their accreditation on 7 November 2024. This greatly crippled their access to information, besides freedom.

Secretariat out of bounds

The Interim government altogether suspended journalists' access to the Secretariat on 29 December 2024 following a fire accident at the Secretariat. The government move was condemned by the Editors Council of Bangladesh. Any journalist reporting against the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement or the government can be sacked instantly without any explanation as the owners of the media easily succumb to the pressure. This has led to massive self censorship.

Bullying an investor

On 24 December 2024, a gang of Bangladesh student protesters led by Hasnat Abdullah, Convener of the Anti Discrimination Students Movement, entered the offices of the City Group which is known to be main investor in Somoy Television. The raiders accused the Somoy TV of "spreading propaganda, twisting comments, and accommodating the views of a fallen political party". Immediately, five journalists including one Omar Faroque, a senior editor, were terminated from job without any reason. The intimidation from the students' side was put by Hasnat Abdullah.

Sadly, the story of media intimidation is continuing in Bangladesh.

(The writer is former President of the club)

WEST ASIA CONFLICT: DIRE STRAITS FOR INDIAN ECONOMY



Iran war has shaken world economy more than anything else in the recent months. India too has felt its detrimental impact, calling for a deeper strategic thinking and a relook at its energy preparedness, reserves and policies



Nilova Roy Chaudhury

For well over three months since the launch of hostilities, which keep threatening to flare up in West Asia, the world is watching how those who fuelled the aggression appear to be caught in an impasse. Right from its start, there has been no easy way out. The egos of warring sides, perhaps even more than their strategic imperatives,

refuse to let go. Even as a deal between the US and Iran is now in sight one has to be cautious. Hostilities are still strong because distrust and bad blood created do not go overnight.

US President Donald Trump has, during this period, repeatedly swayed from diabolical threats to ceasing active hostilities to holding out hopes for a peaceful settlement of the crisis, and back again.

Iran's new leadership, on the other hand, has chosen to remain in the shadows while making clear that they do not trust the United States and will accept a settlement primarily on their own terms. Involved parties now speak of an impending agreement, though there has been no time line available through much of the conflict, nor vital details been forthcoming. Meanwhile, the rest of the world, sliding into an energy crisis, watches as each country struggles to cope.

The prolonged hostilities are hammering the global economy, which had barely begun to overcome the Covid crisis, with no happy ending in sight. For India, seriously dependent on fuel imports, the fallout on the economic situation has become so grim that the prime minister has appealed to the Indian people to initiate austerity measures.

Common Indians hit

It is a different matter that people, after the hammering of the Covid austerity years, appear sceptical of government appeals, especially when not practiced by those in power. There is, however, no doubt that India's economic parameters are in a mess, with exports falling, imports rising and the rupee in a downward spiral. The war is now hitting the common man everywhere, from Agartala to Surat and Colombo, Coimbatore and Comilla to

Mumbai, Manila and distant Minnesota. Even more grim, precious lives are being lost, mostly of innocents caught in the deadly crossfire in countries which are not even parties to the war. Scarcities of cooking fuel are pushing people across South Asia toward hunger. Livelihoods have been lost among the unorganised labour force while thousands of self-employed street vendors, smaller restaurants and eateries have been forced to close shop, facing a scary, insecure future. For middle class households across India, everyday snacks like the 'samosa' or 'dosa' have become scarce, causing an unintended push toward a healthy population!

For those worst hit, it is difficult to comprehend that this phase of dire economic straits and rising hunger and deprivation is because some old men in distant lands decided they did not like the nature of another country's leadership.

Trump's plan goes awry

It is apparent that Trump did not expect the war against Iran, which he launched along with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, to last this long. His idea was to launch a blitzkrieg against Iran's defence and nuclear facilities and, having removed the top leadership there the first night, expect the Iranian people to rise in support of the US saviour. That did not happen.

Iran fights back

While ordinary Iranians face death and devastation, the remains of the country's leadership have retaliated against the aggressor in an unprecedented and targeted exercise to optimise their advantages. The collateral damage has set the global economy on fire and sent fuel prices sky-rocketing and wreaked severe damage across West Asia and beyond. The nature of their response has left those in Washington and Tel Aviv befuddled. Additionally, the uncertainty of when, or indeed if, hostilities will cease is straining international relations.

India's role diminished

For India, at every level, the situation

Iran is a close neighbour with which India has civilizational ties and shared strategic interests, most recently in Chabahar port, yet India opted for silence against the aggression

has been fraught. From the policy perspective, images of Prime Minister Narendra Modi hugging his Israeli counterpart in Israel the morning before the attacks against Iran happened did not convey the image of the neutral arbiter. Despite a call to cease hostilities, India's initial reactions to the war appeared to dispel any semblance of bipartisanship in global conflicts and seriously undermined its credibility as a neutral umpire. In fact, it appeared to have ceded that position to Pakistan, which appears favoured by both Washington and Tehran as a mediator.

BRICS

The recently concluded BRICS foreign ministers' conference, chaired by India, displayed further erosion in India's moral authority and a lack of unity, or even cohesion, within the group. A joint statement could not be issued because of divergences between Iran and the UAE, both now members of the expanded BRICS group. As Chair, India's statement was a summary of the discussions held, outlining the lack of any agreement on initiatives to end the West Asia, or even the earlier Russia-Ukraine hostilities. Russia is among the original founder members of BRICS.

Iran is a close neighbour with which India has civilizational ties and shared strategic interests, most recently in Chabahar port, yet India opted for silence against the aggression even when Tehran urged New Delhi, as chair of the BRICS group, to condemn the aggression and targeting of its leadership.

Other than generic statements seeking a ceasefire and resumption of negotiations, PM Modi has not publicly told

his friends in Tel Aviv and Washington to end the war, although Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian has been urged to cease and desist from targeting other countries. It is fortunate that Iran's current leadership has chosen to stand by the people of India and allow the passage of Indian vessels through the blockaded Strait of Hormuz, thereby easing some of the government's fuel procurement worries.

West Asia's crucial role in Indian economy

West Asia and the Persian Gulf are vital for India. Nearly 10 million Indians live in the region, separated from the homeland only by the Arabian Sea. They send home close to USD 50 billion annually, over 35% of India's inward remittances. In 2025, the total remittances from Indian diaspora totalled USD 135 billion, around 4% of India's GDP. These contributions exceeded foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows, and amounted to over 40% of India's trade deficit.

According to the 'Economist,' around 38% of the amount sent by Indian citizens overseas comes from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, six countries that make up the Gulf Cooperation Council. The region is vital for India's trade, energy security and strategic interests. That region has been badly hit.

New Delhi has been reaching out to all the leaders concerned and PM Modi has visited the UAE, which he called his "second home", to seek continued investment and energy inflows. Abu Dhabi has consented to assist with India's strategic fuel reserves.

However, whatever the optics, including the visit of US Secretary of State Marco Rubio to India, ostensibly for the QUAD foreign ministers' meet, but also to repair the once thriving India-US relationship, the erosion and diminution of its global authority has been starkly exposed over the crisis in West Asia, a region where India has worked very hard in recent decades to gain trust and goodwill and shore up critical strategic interests.

(The writer is a member of the PCI)

INDIA NEEDS TO RESET RELATIONS WITH IRAN

India's centuries old close relationship with Iran has come under cloud due to the recent war with the US. This is potentially detrimental to India's vital interests. More so because it has affected India-bound maritime traffic through Strait of Hormuz and Chabahar Port that India helped develop further in Iran for its trade with Central Asian countries. Now as the war may ebb India should move to rebuild and further strengthen its old, warm and mutually beneficial ties with Iran



Ranjit Kumar

Following the stabilisation of the situation in West Asia, a primary responsibility for Indian diplomacy will be to earnestly pursue a reset in its relations with Iran.

This relationship has historically enjoyed bipartisan support, with leaders from Nehru to Modi recognising its significance. However, the ties faced challenges during the first Trump administration and later after the unilateral U.S. declaration of war on Iran and the assassination of its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei. India's muted response to this drew criticism from the diplomatic community.

Recent developments, including a phone conversation between Prime Minister Modi and Iranian President Pezeshkian, along with ongoing consultations between the foreign ministers of both nations, have rekindled hopes for improved relations. A strong and cooperative partnership with Iran is crucial for advancing India's national interests in Central Asia and beyond.

Chabahar Port agreement

Iran's agreement to allow India to

develop and operate a separate Shahid Beheshti terminal at Chabahar Port has been instrumental in facilitating trade with Afghanistan, particularly as the Taliban has fostered a more amicable relationship with India, raising concerns for Pakistan.

Nevertheless, the Chabahar port project has faced challenges, particularly due to sanctions imposed by the Trump administration. India is currently engaging in discussions with U.S. officials to emphasise the strategic importance of the port within its Central Asia policy. Strengthening ties with Iran not only enhances India's regional influence but also supports its broader geopolitical objectives in a complex and evolving landscape.

Historic ties

The historical ties between India and Iran, as highlighted by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, date back

millennia. In March 1950, independent India marked a significant milestone in its diplomatic relations by signing a Friendship Treaty with Iran, which was further strengthened through high-level visits from leaders of both nations.

Initially, the relationship primarily revolved around cooperation in the energy sector, particularly with India's oil imports from Iran. However, the visit of Iranian President Muhammad Khatami as the Chief Guest for India's Republic Day celebrations in January 2003 added a new dimension to their partnership. During this visit, both leaders agreed on India's development of the Chabahar port, facilitating easier access to Central Asian countries and direct connectivity to Afghanistan, a route previously restricted by Pakistan.

In recent years, India's relationship with Iran has faced significant challenges due to unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States. Despite





India's efforts to resist American pressure, it ultimately had to halt its oil purchases from Iran in 2019. Nevertheless, following the U.S.-initiated conflict with Iran, the Trump administration lifted sanctions on Iran and the Indian-built Chabahar port until April 26, with extensions thereafter. India remains hopeful about revitalising the Chabahar port, which is crucial for enhancing bilateral trade and access to Central Asian markets.

Important trade point

Iran's cooperation is essential for India in realising the ambitious International North-South Transport Corridor, which aims to connect India to Russia via Iran. This corridor, spanning approximately 7,200 kms, has the potential to transform regional trade dynamics by significantly reducing trading costs between India and Russia by up to 55 percent. While Russia actively promotes this project, U.S. sanctions present a significant obstacle that India must navigate to ensure the corridor's successful implementation.

India has consistently prioritised the recognition and adherence to sanctions imposed by the United Nations, while simultaneously viewing its relationship with Iran as crucial for establishing

The imposition of U.S. sanctions on Iran has led to a complex dynamic, wherein the United States, through various domestic laws, has pressured India to align with its directives, resulting in a significant reduction in Indian purchases of Iranian oil

connections with Central Asian nations and developing new trade routes that facilitate access to Russian markets.

US sanctions

The imposition of U.S. sanctions on Iran has led to a complex dynamic, wherein the United States, through various domestic laws, has pressured India to align with its directives, resulting in a significant reduction in Indian purchases of Iranian oil. Instead, India has been encouraged to procure more expensive oil from the U.S. Throughout the tenures of Prime Ministers Nehru and Modi, the bond between India and

Iran has only deepened. Prime Minister Modi further reinforced this relationship during his official visit to Iran in 2016, where he and Iranian President Rouhani issued a joint statement that underscored their shared civilizational heritage and the historical and cultural connections that have long defined their partnership.

The Chabahar project has emerged as a pivotal element in the strategic alignment between India and Iran since its inception in 2016. This initiative provides India with a vital transit corridor to Afghanistan and Central Asia, circumventing reliance on routes that traverse Pakistan. India has placed significant emphasis on nurturing its relationship with Iran, recognizing the deep-rooted civilizational ties that date back to ancient times. The trade and cultural exchanges between the two nations have flourished over the centuries, evolving in significance as global dynamics have shifted. This historical context underscores the importance of their partnership in contemporary geopolitics.

Civilizational connect and more

As two of the world's oldest civilizations, India and Iran have maintained a

vibrant relationship characterized by trade, commerce, and cultural exchange for millennia. This enduring connection has facilitated the sharing of knowledge and the promotion of people-to-people interactions, enriching both societies.

However, in the current landscape, both nations find themselves at a critical juncture, navigating the complexities of geo-economic and geopolitical challenges. The evolving global order necessitates a re-evaluation of their strategies and alliances, as they seek to preserve their historical ties while adapting to the demands of the modern world.

Strait of Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz, historically significant as a vital passage for Indian traders enroute to European markets until the 11th and 12th centuries, has transformed from a commercial conduit into a contentious geopolitical flashpoint. This shift occurred after the region faced interruptions from Ottoman rulers and Portuguese invaders, altering the dynamics of trade and diplomacy.

Indian leaders, from Jawaharlal Nehru to Narendra Modi, have consistently sought to foster a cordial and mutually beneficial relationship with Iran, recognising its strategic importance. However, the rapidly evolving global landscape has prompted Indian leadership to explore new opportunities, while still viewing Iran as a crucial link to Central Asia and Russia. The economic implications of this relationship cannot be overstated, as Iran's role enhances India's geopolitical stature.

As Iran consolidates its strategic influence over the Strait of Hormuz, its geoeconomic significance is poised to grow even further. This waterway, steeped in historical relevance for India, has served as a critical junction for trade and cultural exchange for centuries. Indian merchants once utilized Hormuz as a key trading hub, connecting the Indian subcontinent with Persia, Arabia, and Africa.

Integrated commercial hub

Ports such as Surat, Calicut, and

The Strait of Hormuz has long been a pivotal maritime gateway in India's historical trade and diplomatic relations, extending not only to the Middle East but also reaching into Europe via Turkey. For centuries, Indian merchants navigated these waters, forging connections that enriched both their economies and cultural exchanges

Masulipatnam emerged as vibrant nodes within a broader transregional network, facilitating commerce across the Indian Ocean. This maritime expanse functioned as an integrated commercial arena, linking diverse regions, with Hormuz at its core, where trust-based credit systems enabled Indian traders to thrive and establish extensive commercial networks across the Gulf.

The Strait of Hormuz has long been a pivotal maritime gateway in India's historical trade and diplomatic relations, extending not only to the Middle East but also reaching into Europe via Turkey. For centuries, Indian merchants navigated these waters, forging connections that enriched both their economies and cultural exchanges.

Seizure of Hormuz by Portuguese

The arrival of the Portuguese in the early 16th century marked a significant turning point, as they seized control of Hormuz Island, thereby dominating the trade routes to India. This event not only disrupted the established trade networks but also underscored the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz in the broader context of global commerce and geopolitical manoeuvring. As the dynamics of international relations continue to evolve, the histor-

ical legacy of this strait remains a critical factor in shaping India's economic and diplomatic strategies.

The new flashpoint

The geopolitical landscape surrounding the island has evolved into a critical flashpoint in the ongoing power struggles driven by European colonial ambitions. This development underscores the island's significance in global affairs, as various nations vie for influence and control in the region. In contemporary times, the established rules-based global order, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), has been effectively undermined. Iran is poised to reassert its sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz, compelling the international community, including India, to adhere to Iranian regulations.

Geographical advantage of Iran and Oman

Despite references to UNCLOS, Iran and Oman are expected to jointly oversee the strait, impacting the flow of merchant vessels transporting goods to neighbouring states and beyond. Given that a substantial portion of India's trade relies on this maritime route, it is imperative for the country to acknowledge the authority of the local powers governing these waters.

A study by Money Control highlights that nearly 16 percent of India's total trade transits through the Strait of Hormuz, with energy imports being particularly crucial. India's heavy reliance on this route for energy supplies leaves it with few alternatives. With over fifth of global trade and more than half of its energy supplies passing through the strait, ensuring its security is vital for India's economic stability.

The consequences of the U.S.-led conflict in Iran and the potential closure of the strait have starkly illustrated the risks to India's economy. Therefore, fostering a cooperative and amicable relationship with Iran is essential for both nations' interests.

(The writer is a senior journalist and strategic affairs analyst)

WAR, FUEL, TRUMP, TARIFF, DOLLAR, RBI HURT ECONOMY, RUIN JOB HOPES

The Indian economy is in a tailspin like seldom before, pushing inflation and more so food inflation up. It threatens the poor most. Even as some of the factors behind the current state of the economy are external, the brunt is to be faced back home by everyone, particularly the underprivileged. A senior banker hits the warning signs flashing and exhorts us to keep our tracks covered with a strategy for the future



Paranjoy Guha Thakurta

Twelve years ago, Narendra Modi was talking a lot about the *acche din*, or better times, that would come to people's delight. But today he and his even most ardent supporters are talking about the terrible days ahead.

So much so that the Prime Minister has announced a series of so-called austerity measures.

He has urged everyone to conserve, cut and curb excessive fuel consumption, save on foreign exchange by avoiding to buy gold and overseas travel. He went on to ask our *netas* (leaders) and *babus* (government officials) to reduce the number of vehicles that tail their cars to result in long and huge fuel sucking convoys as they move around – not that these exhortations have worked very well.

Inflation jumps in a month

Now, let us focus on a few important economic trends, signs and issues. The annual inflation rate (as per the consumer price index or CPI) went up to 3.48% in April 2026 from 3.4% the pre-

vious month, marking the fastest inflation rate in the last 12 months. According to the Indian government's Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, this was the fourth reading of the new CPI series, which updated the weights of different goods in the index based on the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey conducted two fiscal years ago, increasing the share of non-food items in the domestic consumer basket.

Food inflation even more biting

What is of particular concern is that food inflation jumped from 3.87% to 4.2% between March and April. The poor is hurt much more because food comprises a larger share of their total household expenditure in comparison

to the share of food in the expenditure of middle-class families.

Still worse may be yet to come

The worse is yet to come: the inflation rate so far mentioned here does not factor in the higher prices of diesel, cooking gas, liquified natural gas and petrol that have taken place in May. These prices are likely to continue to rise. The government may claim that fuel prices have risen because of the war in West Asia. This is true because India imports nearly 90% of the country's total requirements of crude oil and petroleum products and world oil prices have doubled between March and May.

Yet, what the government is not saying is that domestic fuel prices were not reduced when international prices were half the current levels in 2025 and public sector oil refining and marketing entities minted money. Now, we as a country have been put to collective suffering.

Growing joblessness

The next economic issue of importance is unemployment. India's overall employment rate (in terms of the ratio of workers to total population) currently stands at between 53% and 58%, depending on the survey considered. While government statistics contend that the standard unemployment rate hovers between 3.1% and 5.2%, the untold story about jobs is that unemployment among the youth and especially among graduates is disproportionately high.

Moreover, the country's unorganised sector (including the huge agriculture sector) accounts for over 90% of the workforce – more than 44 crore workers out of a total workforce of around 53.5 crore in a country with a population of over 140 crore. In the "informal" economy, workers don't have formal contracts, regular wages, social security benefits and rely greatly on daily wages and self-employment. Thus, it is clear that growth of gross domestic product (GDP) has not created sufficient "decent" jobs outside agriculture, as per the norms specified by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The country's central bank and apex monetary authority, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), has been intervening in the foreign exchange market by selling US dollars in our reserves. The ostensible aim is to curb volatility in exchange rates

Weak rupee, strong dollar kick inflation up and up

The value of the Indian currency has sharply depreciated and was hovering around ₹95-₹96 for one US\$ in the last week of May. Because of this we are actually importing inflation.

Besides crude oil, the prices of fertilisers, edible oils and gold have gone up considerably. As these raw materials and commodities now cost much more in rupees, consumers have to bear the brunt of higher prices. Add to this the fact that foreign Portfolio Investors (FPI) have run away from the country's stock markets.

Reserve Bank's unreserved answer

The country's central bank and apex monetary authority, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), has been intervening in the foreign exchange market by selling US dollars in our reserves. The ostensible aim is to curb volatility in exchange rates. Still, the RBI cannot intervene beyond a point and this is precisely what is happening.

And, at the same time, the RBI is bailing out the Indian government by pumping in higher dividends. It has approved a record-breaking surplus transfer (by way of dividends) of Rs. 2.87 lakh crore to the Government of India for the financial year that will end on 31 March 2027. This boils down to a 6.7% increase from the payout of Rs. 2.69 lakh crore in previous fiscal year. This "windfall" gain boosts the government's non-tax revenues, reduces the

need for market borrowings and contains the fiscal deficit.

Be that as it may, the fact that the economy is in a bad shape is acknowledged even by those who have been close and gained handsomely from the Modi government. Take the case of economist Surjit Bhalla, who was appointed India's executive director in the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The headline of an article he wrote bemoaned the fact that while the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is winning elections, it is "losing" the economy.

In response, the government's chief economic adviser V Anantha Nageswaran argued that "reforms" had to be speeded up but that "pessimism doesn't help".

A banker warns

Senior banker Uday Kotak has warned that the country's economy has entered dangerous territory, a volatile, fragmented global order akin to pre-1945 tribalism. He added that the country would have to cut its reliance on foreign capital, foster domestic risk capital, control unnecessary consumption, and prepare for structural energy shocks.

Trump's tricky tariff trap

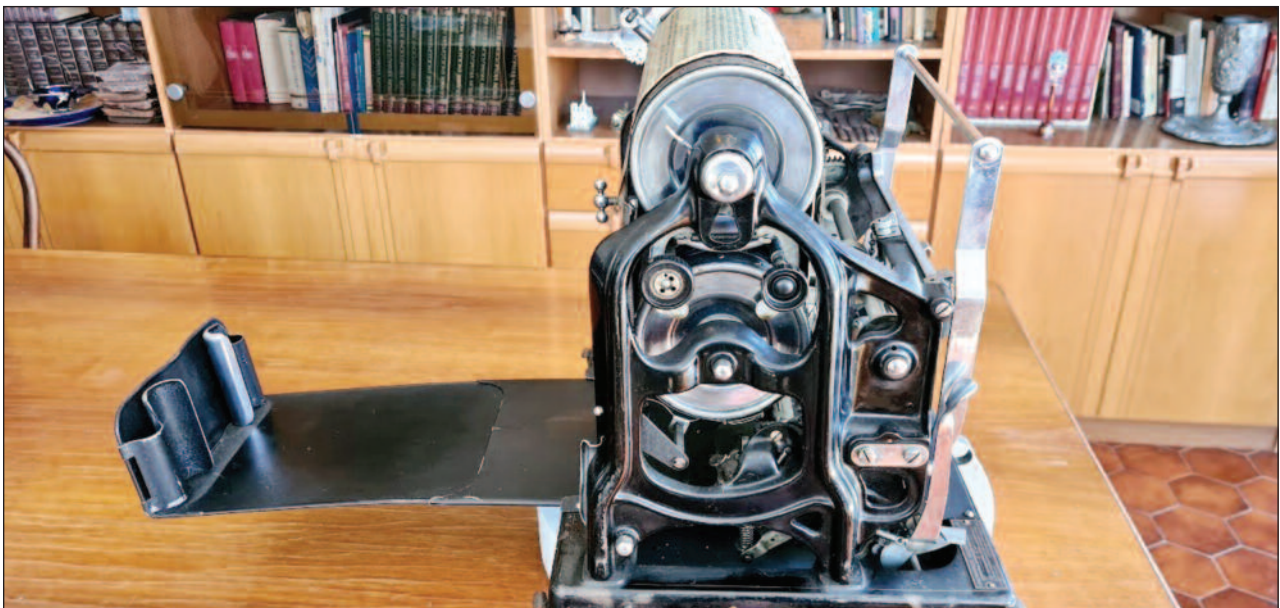
Meanwhile, even as the Supreme Court of the United States pushed back against Donald Trump's decision to impose sweeping reciprocal tariffs, the US is asking India to commit to buying \$500 billion worth of American goods over a five-year period – one billion US dollars equals approximately Rs. 9,460 crore and \$500 billion works out to around Rs. 4.7 lakh crore at the exchange rate prevailing in mid-June.

If the Indian government agrees to what the Trump administration is asking, it would be disastrous for the already terrible state the Indian economy has been getting caught in for a while now.

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WHEN PRESS CLUB BECAME MELTING 'POT' OF A CAREER IN JOURNALISM

Caught between fun and career Press Club once housed even a quaint news bulletin's office. POT News focused on news from India's neighbouring countries and worked like a news agency of sorts. Its cyclostyle machine whirred on the club's first floor where a few people, including some of the budding journalists, worked rather stoically under the watch of old guards



Faraz Ahmad

Way back in the summer of 1975, when Indira Gandhi had imposed nationwide Emergency, I did my M.A. in English Literature from Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). I was confident since I joined the AMU in 1970 for BA English (Hons.) to lecture younger students one day in the verdant campus about the nuances of English Literature and simultaneously carry on my activities as a Students' Federation of India (SFI) activist.

Degree and dilemma

But fate had something else in store for me. That same year, the UGC substantially increased the pay scales of central university teachers, bringing the

opening salary of a lecturer at par with that of class I Central government officers. Simultaneously, it imposed a basic qualification for a central university lecturer's post -- a B+ or 55 per cent marks. I got a second division which till then was considered quite creditable for an MA in English and all such students were easily absorbed in their alma mater or any other prestigious institution, including the numerous colleges of Delhi University. But I fell short of the 55 per cent cut off mark. Instantly, doors of academia were shut on me.

I was not really interested in becoming a journalist, for I had seen my poor father a sub-editor at the Indian Express being paid a pittance and, therefore, I had ruled out a career in journalism. Now I was left with little

choice but to look for an opening in journalism. For two years, till June, 1977, I ran around newspaper offices in search of employment, with no success. Naturally, these two years were frustrating and full of my share of despondency.

And then Emergency clouds lift

Meanwhile, I joined Delhi University for a postgraduate Diploma in Linguistics. In the spring of 1977 Indira Gandhi called for elections which she lost. We all broke into celebration with great fervour, raising slogans outside the Express Building Election Results bill board. It displayed the fact that both Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay were humbled by voters' verdict. But that momentary excite-

ment subsided in no time and again I was on the streets running around newspaper and magazine offices.

Then one day out of the blue, my father came home after his duty at the Express desk with a couple of UNI news bulletins and asked me to try and edit those. I did, maybe not so badly. He asked me to go to the Press Club next day, climb the first floor and ask for his old friend Devendra Chintan. We were living those days in government quarters in Timarpur, allotted to my mother a government school teacher. I had no idea where the Press Club was. My father a man of few words, just asked me to take the 210 DTC bus from Mall Road, get down at Patel Chowk and walk straight down till I find a Press Club of India board on the next round about.

At Press Club for job

I faithfully followed his instructions and saw the antique coal engine at Rail Bhawan which I must have seen umpteen times but never noticed the Press Club right opposite it. It was around 9.30 am and there was hardly anyone visible on the ground floor. What turned out to be the office of POT News (Public Opinion Trends Analysis and News Service), on the first floor, was also bereft of any editorial staff. (That much I could easily make out vis-à-vis my father's Express office that I had visited sometime.) There was a cyclostyling machine sitting on a table tennis table and one gentleman was busy cyclostyling while another was languidly sweeping the floor and a third was dusting the tables and chairs and arranging bundles of newspapers on each table. Till then I knew nothing about POT News Editor Rajendra Sareen nor what work was done there.

I asked for Mr Chintan and was asked to sit at the biggest table there with huge pile of newspapers, both English and Urdu from Pakistan. I found that rather curious. It seemed the staff there had been told of my expected arrival.

Around 10 am Sareen Saheb arrived. He was a tall man with a lot of gravitas. I introduced myself and he just asked me to sit down at the table which I was



Morarjibhai was not just a teetotalter, preferring his own Elixir of life, he disposed every morning. He was disdainful of journalists in general, believing all of them to be drunkards

already occupying. I had nothing to do, so I started reading those English papers, The Dawn, Pakistan Times and SUN, Morning News etc.

Morarjibhai probits booze

This was June 6, 1977. In India, Morarji Desai had become Prime Minister after the Janata Party defeated the Congress party and chose Morarjibhai to lead the country. Morarjibhai was not just a teetotalter, preferring his own Elixir of life, he disposed every morning. He was disdainful of journalists in general, believing all of them to be drunkards. He imposed prohibition of sorts all around,

not like his home state Gujarat, but rather strictly regulated creating considerable economic hardship to all drinking joints. The Press Club was no exception.

Secretary General Kotru

The great Mr ML Kotru then a Special Representative of The Statesman, was the Secretary general of the Press Club of India. Mr Sareen one of the first Hindustan Times correspondent posted in Pakistan soon after Partition, naturally had tremendous interest in Pakistan affairs, though later on he had joined first the Punjab government in its Information Department; and after the creation of Haryana transferred to the Haryana cadre. But at some point of time he fell afoul of Haryana chief minister Bansi Lal and was suspended. That's when he decided to start this specialised news service producing a daily bulletin on current affairs in Pakistan based on their print media.

POT grows

Later, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Nepal bulletins were also added to the

packet which were mostly subscribed by Embassies, Defence Ministry, Foreign office and certain university libraries like the JNU. Some of those bulky files are still available in Teen Murti Library, I am told.

Though I had some bit of second-hand knowledge about journalism through my father's work on the Express desk, but seeing journalists relaxing during prohibition era in the lawn over a beer or maybe just a cold drink or juice with lunch, while we poured over the Pakistani papers, was a whole new experience, I had little idea about. My job, Chintan Sahab explained, was to pick newsworthy items from Urdu newspapers and magazines, translate and make a gist of such items in English and present these before Mr Chintan heading the Pakistan desk. There was another elderly gentleman Mr Mohd. Kazim, also allotted to Urdu journals.

Tryst with Urdu

I had never studied Urdu at any school. During the summer vacations my mother used to lie down on the bed with all three of us children surrounding her and she would teach us to read Urdu. My brother and sister, both younger than me, were bright students and so was it for them at Urdu. But I would doze off in between and had to be shaken up to listen to what my mother was teaching. So, only God knows how much of Urdu I picked up this way. Nevertheless, all three of us could recognise the alphabets and could slowly, with some difficulty read a passage or two, thanks to my mother's persistence.

By this time, I must have come up to class 8 in school when one of my uncles came over from Meerut. At night I saw him reading a Hindi 'Jasoosi Duniya' novel. A few days later when he left behind his two novels, I picked them up and hooked on to the detective novels. That summer vacation my mom decided to go to her nanihiyal (matrilineage home) in Meerut and there I found a whole stack of Jasoosi Duniya, but in Urdu. Excited, I picked up one and started reading. Had some difficulty reading the first one.



I am not the only one whose journalism career started from this Press Club first floor. Within six months, Ashok Bhattacharya, currently the Editorial Director at the Business Standard too joined POT News on the Bangladesh desk in this same hall

But by second, third I became fluent and facile.

Later in AMU I started reading classic Urdu literature as well. That's how I got my first job. I learnt later that Sareen Sahab had asked Mr Chintan to go to AMU to hunt for some young fellow with workable knowledge of Urdu and some command over English with interest in political developments, to employ him as a trainee journalist. And it so happened that he met my father after several years in the DTC bus and discovered over a chit chat about me fitting Mr Sareen's bill.

A Russian's looks

One day I was standing and watching all those journalists enjoying their lunch when I noticed a gentleman very fair, with red cheeks and a cigar in his

mouth talking loudly to someone in English. I asked Kazim Sahab "Who's this Russian?" He told me that it was none other than Mr Kotru.

I am not the only one whose journalism career started from this Press Club first floor. Within six months, Ashok Bhattacharya, currently the Editorial Director at the Business Standard too joined POT News on the Bangladesh desk in this same hall. Partho Mazumdar was the Bangladesh desk in charge here with Mr Dipta Sen as a consulting editor, visiting every day for only a few hours. Arabinda Ghosh who joined The Hindustan Times later was handling the Nepal desk. Jawed Naqvi, and some others too started their journalism career from this same Press Club on the Pakistan desk.

Morarji goes and so does prohibition

But once Morarji went out of power in 1979, the prohibition regime ended and POT News was asked to move out. With this my rendezvous with the Press Club ended, till I returned to Delhi as Express reporter and became a regular at the PCI. In fact, in those days I had not tasted alcohol. But that is why I found this place fascinating than when I returned to Delhi in 1985 having tasted the liquor first in Bombay Press Club and then in the Chandigarh Press Club.

(The writer is a senior journalist and Member of PCI)

TWO COUNTRIES WOVEN, DRAPED, CLAD BY A MARITIME TAPESTRY



Nestling like a dot for seafarers for God knows since when, the port city of Singapore has found its real destiny in modern times and transformed from a tiny island to a bustling country. Today a nation of diverse people, faith and ethnicity – all living in staunchly secular ways and ethos and moving ahead uninterruptedly in this virtual crucible of myriad cultures, ideas and thoughts with respect for all. Thanks to its founder Lee Kuan Yew and his passionate yet cool imagination, Singapore is now a destination of pride and tourists bliss and delight



Suresh Nautiyal

During my travels through Singapore in dry February season in 2026, I observed the enduring threads that bind this island to

India — maritime threads, cultural in expression, and deeply human in resonance.

In Little India, the scents of cardamom and joss stick incense mingled with artisanal coffee from contemporary cafés. Tamil, Hindi, Urdu, Telugu, Bengali, Punjabi, and Malayalam rose in cadence above the hum of Mandarin, Malay, and English. Street vendors, goldsmiths, textile traders, and technology entrepreneurs coexisted beneath the shadow of glass towers and disciplined MRT lines.

The relationship between India and Singapore has never been merely diplomatic. It moves like the tides — maritime in spirit, civilisational in depth, shaped by colonial crossings and insur-

gent whispers, sustained by commerce, sharpened by strategy, layered like ancient silt resting beneath a river's quiet bed.

Stand at the edge of the Singapore or at the East Coast Park at dusk. Ships drift across dark waters like illuminated constellations — tankers, container vessels, naval craft — each following invisible routes drawn by geography and history. Long before embassies and passports, before treaties and ministries, there was only the sea. It carried not only spices and textiles, but prayers, languages, political ideas, and restless dreams.

Early maritime worlds

Long before Singapore emerged as a

modern state, the Malay world was in conversation with India. The Bay of Bengal was never a barrier; it was a corridor. Trade winds bore cotton, beads, and pepper — and also scripts, cosmologies, political vocabulary, artistic motifs. Sanskritic inscriptions, temple forms, epics, and aesthetic principles travelled along maritime circuits that linked the Coromandel Coast, the Straits of Malacca, and the archipelagos beyond.

Singapore, though not yet a defined polity, was part of this Indian Ocean world — a nodal presence within a larger civilisational dialogue. Exchange preceded empire. Cultural interaction preceded conquest. The sea itself was archive and artery.

Even today, one encounters these traces: temples drawing devotees at dawn, shrines' fragrant with jasmine, markets alive with turmeric and silk. The continuity is not fossilised; it breathes in everyday transactions.

The colonial weaving: 1819 and after

The modern political shape of Singapore began in 1819, when Stamford Raffles, acting on behalf of the British East India Company, established a trading post on the island. What

Their presence was foundational. Temples rose beside mosques and churches. Serangoon Road and Tekka became commercial arteries. What is now called Little India emerged as both refuge and enterprise

followed was not merely the founding of a port, but the integration of Singapore into the administrative and economic architecture of British India.

For years, the settlement was governed from Calcutta under the Bengal Presidency. This is no minor historical footnote. It reveals how Singapore was imagined within the imperial grid — as an extension of British India's maritime frontier. Empire stitched the island into circuits of extraction and governance that stretched from London to Calcutta to the Straits.

Through this imperial corridor came Indians in many roles — not as abstractions, but as workers and agents of history. Convicts cleared swamps, carved

roads, erected public buildings. Sepoys enforced colonial order. Tamil labourers toiled along docks and plantations. Sikh policemen became visible symbols of authority. Chettiar financiers extended credit networks sustaining commerce across Malaya.

Their presence was foundational. Temples rose beside mosques and churches. Serangoon Road and Tekka became commercial arteries. What is now called Little India emerged as both refuge and enterprise — a space where the colonised carved dignity within structures not of their making.

Yet, empire also constructed hierarchy. Racial classifications hardened into administrative doctrine. Segregated quarters, differentiated labour, and stratified opportunity shaped not only skyline and street plan, but social consciousness. Colonial order organised diversity through control.

Still, beneath imperial discipline, people-built community — through worship, language, mutual aid, and quiet resilience.

War, occupation, and insurgent memory

The Second World War shattered British supremacy in Asia. In February



1942, Singapore fell to Japan — a blow that reverberated across the colonial world. Imperial invincibility dissolved in weeks.

During the Japanese occupation, Singapore became an unexpected theatre in India's struggle for freedom. Subhas Chandra Bose arrived in Southeast Asia to lead the Indian National Army (INA). From Singapore in October 1943, he proclaimed the Provisional Government of Free India — Azad Hind — asserting sovereignty in exile.

Thousands of Indian prisoners of war and civilians were reorganised into the INA. The movement was complex, controversial, entangled with Axis geopolitics — yet for many participants, it was animated by a singular conviction: that India must be free from colonial rule. Subhash Chandra Bose infused the force with discipline and emotions speaking of unity, sacrifice, and dignity.

In 1945, at Esplanade Park, Bose laid the foundation stone of the INA War Memorial, inscribed with three words: Ittefaq (Unity), Itamad (Faith), Qurbani (Sacrifice). The monument honoured unnamed soldiers who marched with the hope of liberation.

When Japan surrendered and British forces returned, the memorial was demolished under the authority of Admiral Lord Mountbatten. Stones were removed. But memory resisted erasure.

The INA trials in India ignited nationalist sentiment, accelerating the erosion of British moral authority. Singapore — peripheral in imperial cartography — had become central in psychological transformation. Freedom movements do not respect geography; they travel along emotional currents across oceans.

In 1995, Singapore installed a marker at Esplanade Park acknowledging the site. Walking those shaded paths in February 2026, I felt how small markers can hold vast histories. The sea breeze carried echoes: What sustains courage in exile? How does memory survive demolition?

India would achieve Independence in 1947. Singapore's own journey toward self-determination would unfold in sub-



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sequent decades.

Post-war political recasting

After the war, Singapore entered a period of labour unrest, ideological contestation, anti-colonial mobilisation, merger with Malaysia, and eventual separation in 1965. Under Lee Kuan

Yew and the People's Action Party, the republic embarked upon rigorous state-building.

Multiracialism was institutionalised. Tamil was recognised as one of four official languages alongside English, Mandarin, and Malay — a formal acknowledgment of the Indian presence woven into the nation's fabric.

Demography shaped public life. The Chinese community, forming roughly three-quarters of the population, naturally influenced language and economic networks. Malays were constitutionally recognised as the indigenous people of Singapore — a symbolic and historical recognition requiring careful calibration in education, defence, and religious policy. Indians, a minority yet vibrant community, sustained cultural institutions, temples such as Sri Mariamman Temple, schools, media,

and professional networks.

Over time, the Indian community diversified. Post-Independence professionals, financiers, academics, and technology specialists joined older trading and labouring lineages. Indians rose to prominence in law, medicine, business, academia, and public office — even the presidency — yet minority status inevitably shaped influence.

Observing the city in 2026, I saw children studying Tamil literature, traders negotiating in markets whose origins trace to Calcutta and Madras, now Kolkata and Chennai, Indian-founded technology firms contributing to innovation. The past persisted in living form.

Sovereign partnership in a maritime century

Today, India and Singapore meet not as colony and outpost, but as sovereign states navigating a complex Indo-Pacific century. Singapore has become one of India's largest sources of foreign direct investment. The Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) deepened trade, financial, and professional flows. Capital circulates between Singapore's financial district and Indian innovation hubs in Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad.

Geography sharpens partnership. Singapore sits astride the Strait of Malacca, a chokepoint vital to global commerce. India's "Act East" policy seeks deeper integration with Southeast Asia; Singapore functions as gateway and strategic anchor within ASEAN. Naval exercises, defence dialogues, and maritime cooperation underscore shared concern for secure sea lanes.

Singapore practises calibrated pragmatism — economically intertwined with China, security-engaged with the United States, strategically cooperative with India, anchored within ASEAN. For a small yet globally connected state, equilibrium is survival.

Yet, beyond boardrooms and naval decks lies a deeper axis — the people-to-people continuum.

Indian heritage centre: memory as architecture

In the heart of Singapore stands the Indian Heritage Centre in Little India,



opened in 2015 under the stewardship of the National Heritage Board. It is more than a museum; it is a chronicle layered across centuries.

Its galleries begin with ancient maritime exchanges, move through colonial migration, and culminate in post-1965 nation-building. Soldiers, traders, labourers, administrators, reformers — their photographs, letters, textiles, and artefacts speak in quiet testimony. Architecturally inspired by the Indian stepwell, the building itself suggests descent into layered memory — each level a stratum of time.

The Centre reminds visitors that history here is not ornamental nostalgia. It is living inheritance. It belongs not to

empire, but to the people who laboured, resisted, worshipped, traded, taught, and dreamed.

Living maritime axis

If empire once bound India and Singapore through hierarchy, today they are linked by interdependence. The story is not linear. It moves through domination and resistance, minority endurance and majority consolidation, economic pragmatism and strategic foresight.

Stand again at the Singapore Strait. Ships now carry commerce, data, energy, and calculation. Yet, within their movement flows an older rhythm — the footsteps of Tamil labourers, Sikh

policemen, Chettiar financiers, nationalist revolutionaries, dockworkers, teachers, engineers, and entrepreneurs.

India and Singapore remain woven by water. Not ruler and subjects, not periphery and centre, but neighbours in a restless oceanic century — carrying memory, aspiration, and the quiet conviction that history, however turbulent, ultimately belongs to the people who endure it.

To speak of the Common Era in Singapore's historical sense is not merely to invoke a neutral calendar; it is to enter a long unfolding tide of time in which a small island repeatedly redefined its place in the world.

In the early centuries of the Common Era, long before modern borders or national flags, the island lay quietly along the maritime highways that stitched together India, China, and the Malay Archipelago. Traders followed the monsoon winds, and ships carrying ceramics, spices, textiles, and ideas moved through these waters. Singapore—though not yet called by that name—stood within this restless geography of exchange. By the fourteenth century, it appeared in regional memory as Temasek, a settlement tied to the ebb and flow of regional powers. It was not an empire, not a capital of grandeur, but a node—alert, listening to the currents of Asia.

Centuries passed. The island receded from prominence, resting within the loose embrace of the Johor-Riau world. It remained a place of fishermen, scattered settlements, and strategic possibility. History, in this phase of the Common Era, seemed to move elsewhere—until the winds shifted again.

In 1819, a new chapter opened when Stamford Raffles arrived under the banner of the British East India Company. What followed was not merely the establishment of a trading post, but the insertion of the island into the circuitry of empire. The nineteenth century reshaped Singapore dramatically. Migrants arrived in waves—from southern China, from the Indian subcontinent, from the Malay world—each carrying language, labour, belief, and hope. The Common Era, in this colonial century, was marked by docks and



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warehouses, by segregation and opportunity, by exploitation and enterprise. The island grew not through conquest, but through commerce.

Yet, the twentieth century reminded Singapore that history can turn abruptly. The Japanese Occupation during the Second World War fractured the myth of imperial invincibility. Suffering, scarcity, and fear scarred collective

memory. When the war ended, the certainty of colonial permanence ended with it. The Common Era now became a time of awakening—a period of political mobilisation, negotiation, and aspiration.

Lee Kuan Yew's leadership

In 1959, self-governance arrived. In 1963, merger with Malaysia seemed to promise regional belonging. In 1965, sudden separation forced an uncertain independence. Under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew, the island embarked on an experiment that few could think to succeed. Bereft of natural resources, surrounded by larger neighbours, Singapore turned to discipline, planning, and education as its instruments of survival. Housing blocks rose where kampungs once stood; industries replaced entrepôt dependency; English became a bridge language even as mother tongues were preserved.

Thus, the later decades of history witnessed a profound transformation: from colonial port to sovereign republic, from vulnerability to calculated resilience. Institutions such as the Indian Heritage Centre emerged not merely as cultural spaces, but as reminders that the nation's modernity rests upon layered inheritances. Singapore's story in this period is not a linear triumph but careful construction—an ongoing negotiation between memory and momentum.

Today, when Singapore marks dates on the global calendar, it does so within a secular chronology shared across cultures. Yet, beneath those neutral numbers lies a distinctly local narrative. They contain Temasek's tides, the colonial clang of shipyards, wartime anguish, the tremor of independence, and the disciplined striving of a city-state that refused to accept smallness as fate.

In Singapore's historical imagination, this span of years is the measure of becoming. It is the long arc through which geography offered possibility, adversity-imposed resolve, and human agency transformed an island into a nation.

*(The writer is a globetrotter and
Member of PCI)*

INDIA IN SINGAPORE: MIGRATION, MINGLING, BLENDING AND BECOMING

The port-city State of Singapore is an amazing blend of enterprise and belonging. It once brought together people of diverse origins, Indians included. And, thus, reeled off a story, triggered first by search for livelihood but soon becoming much more where future looks assured, courtesy Singapore's warm and welcoming grain and ethos

Tucked along Campbell Lane in the vibrant precinct of Little India, the Indian Heritage Centre (IHC) in Singapore is a museum and quite a bit more. It is a living bridge between history and modernity, between migration and nationhood, and between the personal and the collective civic milieu.

Opened in May 2015 under the watch of the National Heritage Board, the Indian Heritage Centre stands as the culmination of years of vision and advocacy. Although its official inauguration took place after the presidency of SR Nathan, Singapore's sixth President and a statesman of Indian origin, the idea of a dedicated institution for Indian heritage had been discussed and nurtured during his tenure.

Nathan consistently emphasised the importance of preserving minority heritage within Singapore's multicultural framework, encouraging younger generations to understand their historical



journey and underscoring the role of heritage institutions in strengthening national identity. His moral support and advocacy helped sustain momentum within the National Heritage Board and among Indian community leaders, ultimately contributing to the establish-

ment of a permanent centre to chronicle the Indian diaspora's story in Singapore.

The Centre does not merely preserve objects or relics; it narrates the centuries-long journey of a community and illuminates how human movement across oceans gradually becomes part of a shared national consciousness.

Walking through Little India's streets today, the vibrancy of commerce, devotion, and everyday life is immediately apparent. Garlands sway above shopfronts, fragrant spices scent the air, and temple bells chime amid the whirr of motorcycles and chatter of traders, and pedestrians. The Centre functions both as an anchor and a compass in this urban tapestry: it anchors a heritage both ancient and evolving, and it points toward new dialogues on identity, diversity, and belonging in the twenty-first century.

To fully understand its resonance, however, one must travel backward in time, beyond the colonial archive, and into the older currents of maritime Asia, where Singapore's connections with India and the wider world were first forged in a rather quiet way.

Maritime worlds before empire

Long before European vessels entered Asian waters, the Indian Ocean was not a barrier but a bridge. From the early centuries of the Common Era, India, China, Africa, and Southeast Asia were bound through intricate maritime networks. Traders, monks, envoys, and scholars navigated the monsoon winds, carrying not only commodities —



spices, textiles, and beads — but cosmologies, scripts, political ideas, and artistic motifs. Religion, philosophy, and culture travelled alongside material goods, shaping societies far from their points of origin.

Hinduism and Buddhism, for instance, travelled eastward from the subcontinent, finding expression in Angkor, Srivijaya, and Majapahit. These were not acts of simple imitation, but processes of adaptation, where Sanskrit interwove with local languages, temple forms absorbed indigenous aesthetics, and belief systems were creatively reshaped through regional imagination.

Within this broader Asian maritime continuum lay the island later known as Singapore. By the fourteenth century, the settlement appeared in regional memory as Temasek, a modest yet strategic node along trade routes linking India, China, and the Malay world. For centuries thereafter, Singapore remained under the loose jurisdiction of the Johor-Riau sphere, a quiet settlement of fishermen and traders, attentive to passing currents and waiting for history's next turn.

This early history demonstrates that Singapore's Indian connections were neither incidental nor superficial. Maritime trade was a vector not only of commerce but of culture, polity, and ideas. Through centuries of exchange, the Indian subcontinent shaped the religious, linguistic, and aesthetic textures of the region, leaving traces visible even in Singapore's later temples, festivals, and commercial networks.

1819 and after: port, empire, migration

The course of Singapore's history was transformed in 1819, when Sir Stamford Raffles established a British free port under the East India Company. Strategically located at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, the island became an essential hub in British maritime trade and an entry point into Southeast Asia. By the mid-nineteenth century, Singapore was a bustling port, particularly for textiles and regional commerce, attracting migrants from across the Indian subcontinent —



Mr. Mustaq
Ahmad



Mr. Kartar Singh
Thakral

Tamils, Punjabis, Gujaratis, Bengalis, Malayalis, Sindhis, and others.

These migrants did not arrive as a monolith. Some came voluntarily, seeking opportunity in a port of commerce; others arrived under indenture or as part of colonial regiments. Large-scale migration to the Malay Peninsula during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries channelled labourers and professionals to Penang, Port Swettenham, Singapore, and later Port Klang. In Singapore, settlement patterns often reflected occupational specialisation: Chulia Kampong (today Chulia Street and Market Street) housed traders and moneylenders; port and railway work-



ers formed communities in Tanjong Pagar; shipbuilders laboured along North Bridge Road; textile merchants flourished on High Street and Arab Street; naval base employees settled in Sembawang. Over time, the Serangoon Road district evolved into what is widely recognised today as Little India.

Religious monuments marked presence and continuity. Temples along South Bridge Road, Telok Ayer Street, and Serangoon Road anchored spiritual life. The Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple became one of Little India's sacred nuclei, offering solace amid migration's uncertainties. Through worship, language, commerce, and mutual aid, community coherence emerged despite the challenges of displacement, unfamiliarity, and colonial hierarchy.

Migration during this era was deeply human, layered with longing, adaptation, and resilience. Labourers cleared land, built roads, tended kilns, and worked docks; their toil underpinned the colony's infrastructure. Traders and entrepreneurs animated mercantile networks. Religious teachers sustained rit-

ual and cultural continuity. Soldiers and indentured workers, often compelled by circumstance, nonetheless contributed enduringly to the island's foundations. Movement across seas was never merely demographic; it was emotional, social, and intellectual, shaping both individuals and society in profound ways.

Little India: A living landscape

Little India, as it gradually took shape, was not merely a residential district; it was a living landscape, where commerce, culture, and devotion intertwined. From brick kilns and cattle farms to sari shops and modern enterprises, the neighbourhood evolved organically. Festivals such as Deepavali and Thaipusam continue to animate the streets, weaving tradition into daily life.

The Indian Heritage Centre itself emerges seamlessly from this context. Its architecture draws inspiration from the Indian baoli or stepwell — historically a communal gathering space — symbolically inviting visitors to descend into layers of memory. At the same time, glass and geometric forms reflect Singapore's modern skyline, creating a dialogue between past and present. In its very structure, the building embodies the paradox of diaspora: continuity within adaptation, memory within modernity.

Galleries of memory: From contact to citizenship

The Centre's permanent galleries unfold chronologically, guiding visitors through a narrative arc that links past to present. The first gallery, Early Contact, explores pre-colonial maritime and cultural exchanges, illustrating Singapore's position within larger Asian networks. The second gallery, Roots and Routes, examines 19th and 20th century migration, presenting letters, suitcases, jewellery, and textiles that humanise the experience of crossing seas. The third gallery, Pioneers, highlights civic leaders such as Navroji R Mistri and William Lawrence Soma Basapa, whose philanthropy strengthened community cohesion. The fourth gallery, Social and Political Awakening,



situates the Indian community within anti-colonial and reformist currents, reflecting the influence of figures like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, and Periyar. Finally, the fifth gallery, Making of the Nation, honours post-independence contributions, including statesmen such as S Rajaratnam and philanthropists like P Govindasamy Pillai, whose vision and generosity helped shape modern Singapore.

Through these galleries, the narrative shifts from migration to participation, from settlement to citizenship, demonstrating how diasporic communities evolve from outsiders to integral participants in national life.

The moral compass of a young republic

In 1966, just one year after Singapore's independence, S Rajaratnam (1915–2006), country's first foreign minister, authored the National Pledge, a civic invocation recited daily in schools and at national events: "We, the citizens of Singapore, pledge ourselves as one united people, regardless of race, language or religion, to build a democratic society, based on justice and equality, so as to achieve happiness, prosperity and progress for our nation."

Rajaratnam emphasised that Singapore's fragile multi-ethnic republic could survive only if citizens imag-

ined themselves as Singaporeans first. His call was for the transformation of diaspora identity into national belonging. Devan Nair, Singapore's third President, later reflected on this shift, noting that his generation began as British subjects of Indian origin, while their children grew up feeling wholly Singaporean. SR Nathan, the sixth President, further urged historical self-awareness, encouraging citizens to look back, assess the nation's journey, and recognise unfinished responsibilities. Between exhortation and reflection lies the arc of becoming — a central theme that the Indian Heritage Centre seeks to convey.

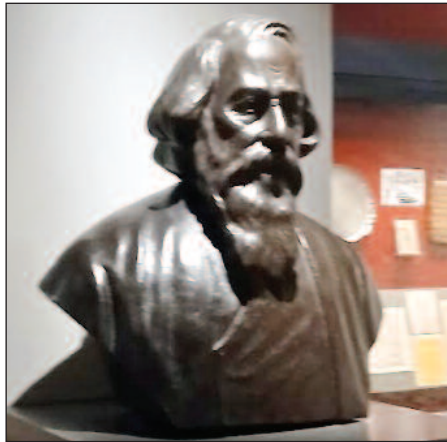
Post-war awakening and nation-building

The post-World War-II era witnessed the rise of anti-colonial nationalism across Malaya and Singapore. A shared sense of destiny began to transcend ethnic divisions. Following independence in 1965, Singapore consciously developed a multicultural and meritocratic framework. Indians participated fully in public life — in politics, civil service, law, banking, medicine, science, technology, education, the arts, and trade unions. Cultural traditions such as Bharatanatyam, culinary practices from dosai to biryani, and religious festivals became interwoven into Singapore's national fabric, enriching the republic's social and developmental landscape.

Although constituting approximately nine percent of the population, the Indian community has remained an integral strand of the city-state's identity, reflecting a broader truth: that migration is not merely an additive phenomenon but a transformative one, shaping both the newcomers and the society that receives them.

Heritage as participation

The Indian Heritage Centre is not confined to vitrines and labels. Its spaces are animated by performances, workshops, lectures, and educational programmes that connect past to present. Historical panels, drawn from archives and oral testimonies, invite visitors to engage directly with the artefacts — to think, observe, and reflect in



situ, in the space where the objects and narratives are curated. This immersive engagement allows migration to become memory, and memory to become responsibility. History ceases to be an abstraction; it is lived and personal, bridging the temporal and spatial gap between past journeys and present citizenship.

In this sense, the Centre embodies an analytical principle: understanding heritage requires participation. Visitors move from pre-colonial trade networks to modern policymaking, from ritual

objects to civic ideals. Through these layered encounters, they witness the transformation of migrants into citizens, and of diasporic memory into a national narrative.

Conclusion: Melting into one united people

Ultimately, the Indian Heritage Centre tells a story larger than the migration alone. It narrates the process of becoming: how people who crossed seas — voluntarily or under constraint — gradually shaped, and were shaped by, a new homeland. It demonstrates that identity evolves without erasing roots, and that multiculturalism is not passive coexistence but active participation in shared civic ideals.

Amid Little India's mosaic of colour, devotion, and commerce, the Centre stands as a witness to transformation. Singapore's story, it shows, is not singular but symphonic, composed of countless journeys converging into one pledge: to be one united people, building a democratic society based on justice and equality, so as to achieve happiness, prosperity, and progress for the nation.

Thus, the Indian Heritage Centre situates memory within the contemporary city, linking centuries of maritime trade, colonial migration, wartime rupture, political awakening, and nation-building into a coherent narrative of human agency, resilience, and shared belonging. It reminds visitors that history is not merely to be remembered, but to be experienced, reflected upon, and carried forward.

-SN

DELHI POLICE: A GLORIOUS LEGACY GETTING LOST THOUGH IN UNIFORM?

Delhi Police virtually embodies centuries old and often tumultuous history of Delhi. From the impeccable integrity of its Kotwal of yore, the city police force has a stupendous task to cling to its stellar standards of the past and take it forward in these uncertain times



Inder Vashisth

Unlike in the past, Delhi Police may not enjoy a very good image today. But the force has, indeed, a glorious history. There was a time when Delhi's Kotwal was often cited as a stellar example of honesty. The history of police is strewn with stories of the Kotwal's integrity through much of its history.

Yet, no police officer can be compared to that standard. The situation has deteriorated to such an extent that people are appalled by the corruption within the police force. Policemen themselves are found involved in serious crimes like extortion, robbery, and collusion with criminals. Corruption is rampant within the force.

This is not merely about accepting bribes. If a police officer fails to perform his or her duties honestly, fails to provide individuals with their rightful protection, refuses to register a criminal case, files a false case, implicates or arrests an innocent person, or protects subordinates who collude with criminals, it is not just corruption but a serious crime.

The misuse of authority by IPS offi-

cers for personal gain, squandering away public funds, and using government vehicles for family purposes also constitute corruption.

Centuries old Delhi Police

The origins of the Delhi Police system are believed to date back approximately 800 years. At that time, the Kotwal (City Police Chief) was responsible for maintaining security and law and order in Delhi. Gangadhar, the grandfather of India's first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was the last Kotwal of Delhi in the Mughal period. The Delhi Police has come a long way ever since to become one of the most well-resourced police forces in the country.

First Kotwal of Delhi

Delhi's first Kotwal (Police Chief) was Malikul Umara Faqrud din. He became Kotwal in 1237 AD at the age of 40. In addition to his role as Kotwal, he was also appointed Naib-e-Gibt (in the absence of the Regent). Due to his impeccable integrity, he held this position for a long time during the reigns of

When Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan made Delhi his capital in 1648, Ghazanfar Khan was appointed the first Kotwal of the new city of Shahjahanabad. He was later also appointed Mir-e-Atish (Chief of Artillery)

three Sultans.

On one occasion, when some Turkish nobles approached him to secure the withdrawal of Sultan Balban's order confiscating their estates, the Kotwal is recorded to have said, "My words will carry no weight if I accept any bribe from you."

The Kotwal's police headquarters was located in Qila Rai Pithora, present-day Mehrauli. History also records the name of Kotwal Malik Ala-ul-Mulk, who was appointed by Sultan Alauddin Khilji in 1297 AD. Sultan Khilji once remarked about him, "I am appointing him as Kotwal, even though he is worthy of the position of Wazir (Prime Minister)."

It is also mentioned that while leaving for war, Sultan Khilji handed over the keys of the city to Kotwal Malik, instructing him to give them to the victor and serve him with the same loyalty.

Shah Jahan's time

When Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan made Delhi his capital in 1648, Ghazanfar Khan was appointed the first Kotwal of the new city of Shahjahanabad. He was later also appointed Mir-e-Atish (Chief of Artillery).

After the 1857 Revolt, the British captured Delhi, and the Kotwal system came to an end. Pandit Gangadhar Nehru, the grandfather of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and father of Motilal Nehru, was the Kotwal of Delhi during the reign of the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar.

According to the Ain-i-Akbari, the Kotwal was required to be present during court proceedings. He received daily updates on the city's activities through chowkidars (watchmen) and informants. The British reorganised the police in 1857. At that time, Delhi was part of Punjab.

Police in British Delhi

Even after becoming the capital in 1912, policing in Delhi continued to be under the Punjab Police. The first Chief Commissioner of Delhi was appointed and given powers equivalent to the Inspector General of Police (IG), with headquarters in Ambala. According to the 1912 Gazette, the Delhi Police was

controlled by a DIG-rank officer. The force was commanded by a Superintendent of Police (SP) and a Deputy SP. At that time, there were two inspectors, 27 sub-inspectors, 110 head constables, 985 constables, and 28 cavalrymen to police the city.

The rural areas of Delhi had two inspectors, with headquarters at Sonipat and Ballabhgarh. Ten police stations came under three tehsils—Sonipat, Delhi, and Ballabhgarh.

In 1861, the British established five police stations in Delhi: Sabzi Mandi, Kotwali, Sadar Bazaar, Mehrauli, and Mundka (now Nangloi). Police barracks were located in Civil Lines.

The historic Kotwali police station building was later handed over to Gurudwara Sis Ganj Sahib. The Nangloi police station, established in 1861 for rural areas, was known as the Mundka police station until 1872.

Delhi Police after independence

The Delhi Police was reorganised in 1946, and the number of personnel was doubled. In 1948, D.W. Mehra was appointed as the first Inspector General of Police in Delhi. Since his appointment was made on February 16, the date is celebrated as Delhi Police Foundation Day. The Police Commissioner system was implemented in Delhi on July 1, 1978.

On October 31, 2019, the Delhi Police Headquarters shifted to its newly constructed 17-storey building on Jai Singh Marg, near Parliament House in New Delhi.

Earlier, the headquarters operated from ITO and Kashmiri Gate. Delhi currently has 225 police stations and a police force of approximately 90,000 personnel.

Today, the Delhi Police is perhaps the largest metropolitan police force in the world, larger than those of London, Paris, New York and Tokyo.

The police have a glorious history. Honest officers must draw inspiration from it and strive to restore the force's credibility. Only then can its image truly be revived.

(The writer is a senior journalist and a Member of the PCI)

A FRIEND CAME FROM SIBERIA, FLEW BACK TO COME AGAIN WITH A FLOCK

Come winter and Siberian cranes looking for warmth wing all the way to India with rare glee. But first came a lone soul to make a lovely story set in the jungles of Himalayas



Lavlin Thadani

Once, a long, long time ago, a Siberian crane visited our country, India, the first one to do so. And as he entered lifting snow-packs of the Himalayas, spraying sil-

ver flakes over the valleys, the tropics woke up to this unusual happening... The jungle rang an alarm, leaves bent to protect nests and beehives from a possible assault of this large white bird. The local birds alerted the little ones hiding them under the twigs. Who was he? How had the Himalayas allowed a stranger to enter their domain? Each one had his own doubts, his own fears.

While the distant guest, unaware of the tropical heat, parked himself under a thick banyan tree, "God", said he, "Will I survive this summer? Seems I have come at the wrong time of the year or maybe, it gets even worse! Who knows?"

As he sat sweating for the first time

in his life, the good old banyan tree, feeling the frost in the bird's wings, began to shiver and his leaves suddenly changed shade from the summer green to the autumn gold. "A miracle!", whispered the bewildered crane. And as he watched the dance of death of the broken crisp leaves, it dawned upon him that the banyan tree, unable to bear the cold in his, the Siberian crane's wings, had to cast off his leaves.

"Sorry," apologised the crane, "I didn't mean to do that! I have come from a land so far, a barren land of Siberia, covered with layers and layers of snow, on which my family, friends and I used to sleep, with a little discomfort sometimes. Sleeping on that

moist white expanse, one night, I dreamt of a country bathed in sunshine, of the sky so blue, that my soul began to dance, of fairy-like delicate flowers, gently responding to the caresses of the warm passionate wind... and as its fragrance filled my being, I woke up and allowing my heart to guide me, I arrived here."

The banyan tree responded with a very confused smile.

"Welcome, my friend from afar. Welcome to the country you dreamt of. And now, I suggest you relax as you must be tired while I shall spread two crisp sheets of leaves to keep you as cool as possible in our tropical heat. By the way, I am the banyan tree. Would you please introduce yourself?"

"I am a crane from Siberia, some 4000-km north of here."

"Gosh, 4000 kilometres!" replied the banyan tree.

As the guest-crane dozed off, a watchful bird, serving as a spy for the king of the jungle, hopped on to the tree and collecting whatever information she could, carried it to the king. The perplexed lion summoned an urgent meeting. In his opening speech, he talked of the dream of the crane from an unknown land called Siberia... where (he paused), rulers like him did not exist. He paused again, cleared his throat. Following the indication, the inhabitants of the jungle quickly applauded.

He spoke of the gracious hospitality extended by the banyan tree and "taking his experience into account", said the lion, "which was vast as the tree was 200 years old", the king emphatically declared that all of them, without fearing the Siberian crane, should make friends with him, making his stay pleasant and memorable. And as everyone clapped, inquisitive and eager to meet the most unusual and outstanding guest in years, the Siberian crane woke up... found himself surrounded by friendly, strange, smiling faces. He instantly knew his arrival was being warmly greeted by one and all.

Two squirrels, as if on cue, jumped down from the tree and while one



combed the lion's mane, the other tied a nice blue bow for the occasion.

Welcoming the guest, the lion introduced him to some animals he had never seen before. The introduction was closely followed by a jungle anthem chirped by the birds. Elephants blew the trumpets of happiness, the peacocks presented a monsoon dance, rabbits served sweet carrots, the panther clicked photographs, the deer made pretty eyes at the guest much to the annoyance of the tigers, while the fox cooked a clever, improvised meal of fresh vegetable curry and rice.

Rabbits were energetically hopping to please the guest, much to the satisfaction of the host, the lion. The crane relished the Indian cuisine and profusely thanked the host and his efficient team. He added, "I am sorry, Your Highness, I am not very well turned out for the occasion. The next time, I will carry my red bow. You

know, we, Russians, like the colour red."

"I understand", replied the lion, "You come from a country where the climate is very cold; so, you like warm colours. Here, the climate is warm; hence, we like cool colours like the blue colour of my silk bow."

The jungle population thunderously clapped at the in-depth knowledge their king had of every subject.

"The curious faces of my friends here tell me they would like to learn more about my land. May I, with your permission, Your Majesty?"

"Yes, of course! Even I would love to hear!" replied the lion.

The crane narrated stories of the sparkling frozen crystals of Siberia, of the aroma of the freshly baked bread in the winters, of the sky, heavy, almost leaning against the earth, of the trees that stood naked, awaiting the soft snow.

"In our land too, we have squirrels and they take great leaps; so, they have come to be known as flying squirrels!" said the crane. "Flying squirrels! Wow!" exclaimed the animals.

"Yes, our Siberia too is a wonderland with its reindeer, rough-legged falcons, grey wolves, Siberian brown bears, Siberian weasels and even our unique Siberian tigers!"

"Tigers! How do they hunt in a place with naked trees and endless expanses of snow? May not be as much fun as here where we can hide behind the bushes!" said one tiger.

The crane laughed heartily at this well-thought-out comment. "They have a much thicker coat given our cold, though coloured in a lighter shade of orange. They have brown and not black stripes like you; they manage their camouflage quite well."

Thereafter, when the juicy sweet mangoes were been served to the guest as the sweet dish, the black panther, with his camera tied to his neck, jumped from the banyan tree and pounced on the mangoes. Everyone was shocked and the lion roared in anger. "How dare you, panther? No manners, no shame! The fox has selected the best mangoes for our guest and you, greedy, large-whiskered brute! You want to gobble them up all alone!" and he roared again, and the roar frightened the crane who tried to intervene saying, "Never mind, Your Majesty!"

"You may please stay out of this mess! Let me deal with this ill-behaved panther as per the constitution of our jungle!"

The frightened panther could not believe his ill-luck and tried his best to placate his king by clicking some pictures.

Looking at two of the tigers, he ordered, "Confiscate his camera!"

The panther, bereft of his camera, was facing the king's fury. "So, panther, why did you pounce on our guest's mangoes?"

"Your Majesty, mangoes belong to our jungle, meant for our own consumption, not for the stranger coming from God knows what kind of icy ter-

rain. And you know my weakness for mangoes, Your Majesty!"

"How dare you insult our guest and his homeland? And your weakness for mangoes stands to be corrected! Come on, monkeys, lift this greedy panther and put him upside down, tying his tail to a strong branch of the banyan tree."

The crane knew from his experience back home that every offence was punishable, but this punishment was unimaginable; so, with folded wings, he pleaded, "Your Highness, please do not punish this mango-loving panther on my account."

"Need I repeat, my guest that I have to follow the laws of our jungle? Monkeys, don't waste any time!"

"Oh, please, please, Your Majesty! I promise never to pounce on a guest's food!" pleaded the panther.

The king called for the opinion of the public for this serious matter. Some voted for punishment, while others for pardon. The parrot counted the number of animals in each group and announced, "50 on each side!"

"Hmmm...", responded the lion. "We need to amend our constitution but what to do now?"

The large-hearted, compassionate crane went and stood on the side of the animals seeking a pardon of the panther. The king was shocked and before he could cite the constitution, the intelligent crane said, "Your Highness, now that I am in your jungle, may I please accept you as our king and may you count me as one of your subjects too."

The king's face suddenly exuded a big smile. "But of course, you are welcome to join my kingdom not only as a subject but given your wisdom in tackling difficult situations, I hereby appoint you as a visiting advisor at my court."

The crane bowed as low as he could, spreading his wings, but before he could say anything, the panther landed near the crane and lovingly licked him. The fox retorted, "Enough, panther! Stop behaving like a monkey! The crane wants to say something."

The crane thanked the king. "India is not only a beautiful land but has a great culture and sense of justice.

Now, may I please thank all my friends here. I shall fly back here, the next time in the winter to soak in some cool sunshine, with my family and friends. The summer weather here is too hot for us, Siberian cranes."

All the animals bade him a nice farewell and gave him two boxes of mangoes for his family and friends. "Let them have the taste of India", said the lion, "and do bring them along the next time."

Before taking flight, the crane lay down on a carpet of soft, scented grass and heard some ancient tales from the lovely insects... He watched as one by one the stars came out. And he wondered at the richness and magnanimity of Indian nature... Two such diverse lands and climates coexisted on one planet, he thought happily and he slowly began to hum -

*As I slept on the earth
white soft with
snowflakes at night
I dreamt of a beautiful land
of jungles thick, sunny flowers
and golden sand.*

And with this song on his lips, he traveled through the Ghats, the hills on both the sides of the Indian peninsula, down to the ocean blue deep... and as he traveled, he went on collecting little souvenirs for his family and friends back home. He collected pebbles on the beach, peacock feathers in the jungles, pearls and some other precious stones for his favourite beryozka tree.

On his arrival back to Siberia, he wrote a lovely book on his travels to India, which still remains a jungle bestseller, and he kept dreaming of the country that lay serene and peaceful under the deep night sky with millions of stars, enveloped in fragrance rare and exotic... only this time, his dreams were real... they had been realized. The crane flew back to India every year in the summer, along with his family and friends, a tradition that has continued for generations, with sometimes as many as 70 Siberian cranes in a magnificent flock visiting our beautiful country.

(Lavlin Thadani, an author and filmmaker, is Member of PCI)

PCI TURNS A NEW PAGE WITH WEEKLY SCREENING OF FILMS FOR ITS MEMBERS

The audiovisual art of films – both documentaries and feature films in short as well as long format – have found its new destination in the Press Club of India. Every Thursday evening a new film is screened by the PCI's film club since this midsummer. The screening is followed by a discussion between its cast, crew and the audience

Jahnavi Sen

Come Thursday evening and the Press Club is set abuzz. The PCI's Film Club meets on the first floor in Conference Hall to watch a film together and discuss it afterwards. Launched on May 19 by PCI president Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty, the club has already screened a number of documentaries, short films and feature films.

The first film

The opening film on May 19 was Bedabrata Pain's *Déjà vu*. Set in the context of the farmers' protests at the outskirts of Delhi and beyond through the year 2020 and 2021, the documentary looked at how corporatisation has all but wiped-out small farmers in the US. The move made it impossible for farmers in the US to compete in the open market. Soon it turned vibrant villages into virtual ghosts' abode as nearly everyone was forced to sell their land and move out.

Pain participated through a Q&A after the film. It spoke about the parallels -- and differences -- seen in the Indian and American scenarios, and why it is so crucial, even if difficult, that India not follow the same path.

More screenings

Other moving documentaries have followed through subsequent Thursdays. These included Sanjay Kak's *Words on Water* and Shaunak Sen's Oscar-winning *All That Breathes*. The two films were made more than a decade apart. They followed different styles, but both sought to bring out realities of India that felt extremely relevant



to our times. With the filmmakers joining in to speak about both the issues they had highlighted and their craft, the evenings proved to be enriching and fulfilling for all those who were able to join.

First feature film

The first fiction film to be screened by the film club was Anureet Watta's short film *Don't Interrupt While We Dance*. It saw a packed audience. Watta's film brought out both the joys and the constant threats faced by trans people living in Delhi. The screening came soon after the Trans (Amendment) Bill. The law was heavily criticised by the community and rights activists. Yet, it was passed by parliament, making the grim realities Watta described even more pressing to discuss.

Two more short films followed the week after – Samir Zaidi's *Two Sinners* and Indrani Ray's *Tea and a Rose*. The evening was a chance to talk about the art of short films. Why filmmakers are drawn to it and why they don't always get the attention that they deserve.

And the Russian classic

In the month of May, the PCI collab-

orated with the Embassy of Russia in India to screen *The Cranes Are Flying*, a 1957 classic about the costs of the Second World War and the only Soviet film to ever make it to the Cannes festival. Senior dignitaries from the Russian Embassy were present to talk about the resonance the film still generates among audiences in diverse parts of the world.

More recently, the club screened Faiza Ahmad Khan's documentary *Supermen of Malegaon*, about the now-extinct Malegaon film industry and its wide popularity in the past. And, among other screenings were Vani Subramanian's documentary '*Cinema Pe Cinema*', Prateek Shekhar's '*Ruke Na Jo*', Chitransh Shrivastava and Ashutosh Thakur's '*Najariya*' and Mohd Fehmeed and Amir Khan's '*Ruuposh*'.

So, the weekly Film Club has become a vibrant place for film buffs to meet and explore their common interest.

The PCI Film Club is open to all members of the Press Club of India.

Details of the screenings are shared on the PCI WhatsApp groups and Instagram and X handles, and on the PCI bulletin board.

MARK TULLY: A FEARLESS JOURNALIST'S MARK ON EMERGENCY, BABRI AND MORE

Certain turning points of India's history were, indeed, marked by the remarks of the BBC led by Mark Tully in Delhi and South Asia who passed away earlier this year



Qurban Ali

A titan of a journalist, the BBC's Voice of India, prolific author, and my dear friend and mentor, Sir William Mark Tully is no more. He passed away on January 25, aged 90 in Delhi, the city he called home for over 50 years.

If there is one word, I would use to describe Mark Tully with, it is fearless. He was a staunch proponent for standing up for what he believed was right, whether from outside the system, or for affecting change from within. Despite the fact that he was the BBC's Delhi bureau chief for over two decades, he did not hesitate to voice his displeasure at the state of affairs in 1993.

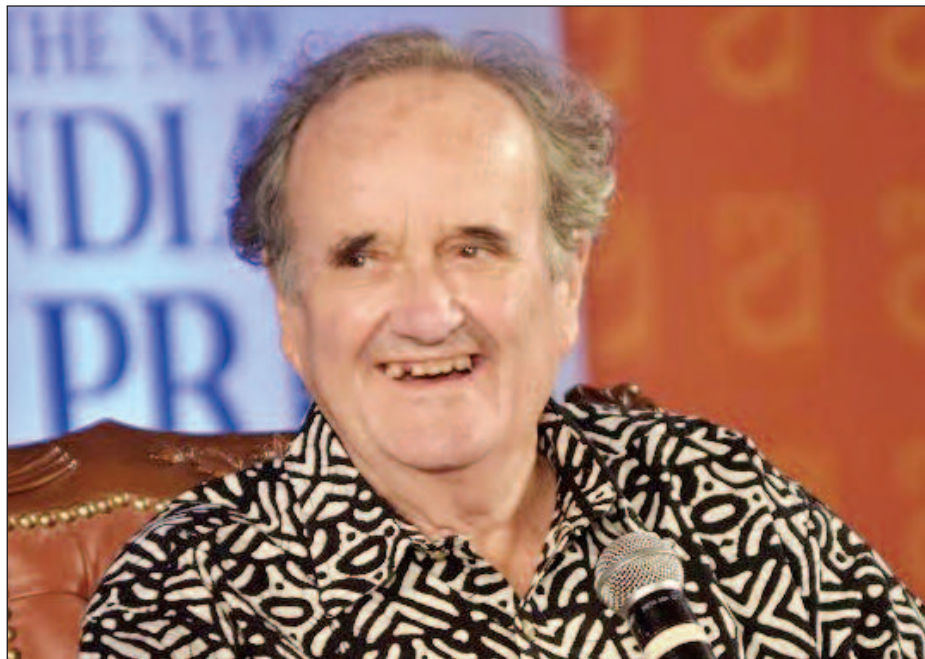
His scathing remarks about director-general John Birt, lambasting the "culture of fear" and the broadcaster's trans-

formation into "secretive monolith" with demoralised staff, led to his resignation in July 1994. His defiance showed that he placed journalistic ethics above all else, and was not scared of walking the talk, one of his many admirable qualities.

I came to know of Mark Tully through his dispatches on the BBC Hindi and Urdu services at the onset of the Emergency. My father, late Capt. Abbas Ali Khan, was jailed under MISA and DIR for nineteen long months at the time, and I found some common ground between him and Mark Tully, who was also critical of the ruling Indira Gandhi government. He was asked to leave, and returned only when the Emergency had been lifted in 1977.

He was once again asked to leave when Operation Blue Star unfolded in Amritsar in 1984. But in typical Mark

Mark Tully was once again asked to leave when Operation Blue Star unfolded in Amritsar in 1984



Tully fashion, he ensured that the coverage was fair, accurate and unbiased as per the highest journalistic standards which he adhered to, teaming up with Satish Jacob, who was on the ground, while he co-ordinated from New Delhi, and I reported to him.

The incident that I will always associate with Mark Tully, however, is of the Babri Masjid demolition in 1992. When we arrived at Ayodhya on the fateful day, it was crowded with kar sevaks who began storming the Babri Masjid at 10 am.

As the BBC's South Asia Chief, Mark Tully traveled to Faizabad to file a report on the situation, which was rapidly developing into one of Indian history's most infamous days. At the time, the only way to contact the BBC office in London was through the Central Telegraph Office in Faizabad.

After filing the first report at noon, the team tried to return to Ayodhya. By 1 pm, the first dome of the mosque had fallen, and the others were being destroyed. Crowds blocked the main roads, so the team tried to follow the RAF and CRPF paramilitary forces. However, these forces were stopped at a railway crossing, preventing them from entering the town.

With the help of journalist Vinod Shukla, the team eventually reached the site, but the mosque had already been

demolished. Upon arrival, a violent group of local kar sevaks armed with tridents and lathis attacked the car. They recognised Mark Tully and were angry about his previous BBC coverage. Instead of attacking them further, the mob decided to lock the five team members in a nearby room to avoid disrupting the demolition, planning to deal with them later.

After two hours of captivity, the Mahant of Bada Sthan arrived to help. He gave Mark Tully a shawl to hide his identity and told the group to wear "kar sevak" bandanas as a disguise. They were placed in a Uttar Pradesh Police truck and driven to the Hotel Shan-e-Awadh, arriving around 8 p.m.

Be it the 1989 general elections, the formation and subsequent fall of V.P. Singh's National Front government, or the formation of Chandra Shekhar's government in 1990, I was lucky to be on the frontlines with Mark Tully on many occasions. May Tully Sahib rest in peace.

This article was first published by The Wire. Qurban Ali is a trilingual journalist and a member of the club. He has covered some of modern India's major political, social and economic developments. He has a keen interest in India's freedom struggle and is now documenting the history of the socialist movement in the country.

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HK DUA: SAUVE, GENTLEMANLY, COOL EDITOR WITH RARE NOSE FOR NEWS



A thorough professional, unbelievably unassuming and honest to the core, the long-time editor at Delhi's fleet-street HK Dua (1 July, 1937 - 4 March, 2026) also rose to diplomatic and legislative heights. A Padma awardee in his own right and yet the high positions held by him could never take away the better of him as he always loved to mingle with old colleagues and friends with his usual and characteristically rare warmth and affection

Devsagar Singh

With an uncanny nose for news, he got along well unexceptionally with all his colleagues – always mentoring the younger ones among them; and built, cultivated and cherished contacts across the political spectrum as he pursued journalism with utmost professional honesty. So has been the long-time editor of the Indian Express and other newspapers, Mr HK Dua. He passed away on March 4 at the age of 88.

His professionalism paid him handsomely. He became editor-in-chief of three major newspapers -- Hindustan Times, Indian Express and the Tribune between 1987 and 2009. He also briefly worked as editorial advisor to the Times of India. An icing in the cake was a diplomatic assignment as India's ambassador to Denmark (2001-03)

apart from being a nominated member of the Rajya Sabha (2009-2015) and media advisor to two prime ministers.

Mr Dua made a mark early in his career, having become political correspondent of Indian Express, Delhi, around 1980s only to be elevated as Chief of Bureau of the paper. In between, he worked as diplomatic correspondent too. Hardworking, Mr Dua made a place for himself by sheer diligence and was liked by titans like Frank Moraes, S Mulgaonkar, Surinder Nihal Singh, BG Verghese who all edited the paper one after another.

His break came while working as editor of Express News Service after several years of serving as bureau chief. He got an offer to become executive editor of Hindustan Times in 1987. He never looked back ever since. He took over as editor in chief of the paper soon and remained in that position for seven

years till 1994 when he was invited to rejoin Indian Express as its editor-in-chief.

Calm amid tough situations

As bureau chief of Indian Express earlier, Mr Dua successfully navigated pulls and pressures of top-heavy editors of the time and a politically demanding chairman -- Ram Nath Goenka. He never let down his colleagues, always defending them in editorial meetings. One example: an aggressive editor once asked Mr Dua in an editorial meeting to immediately transfer a colleague out of Delhi. Dua did not resist and took the fulminations of the editor with his characteristic cool and went on as if nothing had happened.

After a few days, the editor again raked up the matter in the editorial meeting and demanded to know why the correspondent concerned had not

been transferred yet. Mr Dua responded coolly by saying: 'I shall get back to you'. This was the end of it. The transfer never happened. The editor apparently relented, thanks to Mr Dua's handling of the situation. That was Dua.

As Editor-in-Chief of Indian Express in his second inning, Mr Dua went through another bout not too long after joining. His first advice to colleagues upon joining was to check and re-check facts before writing. It was, however, misinterpreted by some who argued that Express would now become a 'handout paper' under his leadership. The word reached up to the top management which made its own discreet enquiries. Although Dua was aware of such goings on, he never made any attempt to clear himself. He behaved as the boss that he was till he said goodbye to the paper sometime in 1996 after about two years of his unfussy stewardship.

Quietly moving up over peers

In the heady days and politically tumultuous times, all editors had their ups and downs when only newspapers mattered in the absence of 24x7 TV days. Dua was no exception. He was not awe-inspiring like some of his predecessors, having risen from the ranks. But he overtook them in terms of reach and influence. He was appointed as media advisor of two PMs -- first to HD Deve Gowda in the United Front days and then to Atal Bihari Vajpayee of the BJP. Vajpayee later made him Ambassador of Denmark. Dua was awarded Padma Bhushan too in 1998.

It was in 2009 when Dr Manmohan Singh was Prime Minister under the UPA regime that Dua sprang another surprise. He won nomination to Rajya Sabha for a six-year term by the UPA government. It raised eyebrows in journalistic and political circles. But that spoke of Mr Dua's acceptability in opposing circles. This was Dua's resounding success in the face of those who sought to mock to underestimate him.

Deep Understanding

Dua made many friends outside journalism. He earned his place among

Always greeting colleagues and friends with a smile whenever he met them, Dua endeared himself to all never wearing an ego about high positions he held. He kept in touch with those he worked with and never let an opportunity go to attend to events where he thought he would meet old hands. A regular at the India International Centre, he would spend much time at the reading room glancing through newspapers and magazines. In between, he would relish talking about old times with former colleagues like yours truly



senior bureaucrats and civil servants. Speaking of him, former Industry Secretary N Mohanty, a 1962 batch IAS officer said: "Mr Dua was an excellent journalist and a fine gentleman. He impressed everyone with his deep knowledge of Indian politics and understanding of public affairs."

Humble beginning

Having migrated from Sargodha in Pakistan amid partition horrors in 1947 as a 10-year-old boy, Dua's family had

to suffer a lot. He, however, completed his studies and got a degree in journalism from Punjab University. His first shot in journalism was in the UNI where he learnt the ropes. After working there for some time, he moved to Indian Express where he spent a number of years.

Word goes that Dua once gave a ride in his Lambretta scooter to Atal Bihari Vajpayee in his early years in UNI. Vajpayee was a Jan Sangh politician then. In their later years the association only cemented further, it is said.

All praise

Dua's days in Hindustan Times and Tribune are remembered fondly by his colleagues. Says Deepak Razdan, a special Correspondent in HT then: "Dua always gave preference to Opposition parties. He insisted that parties not in power must be given proper coverage. I liked reporting on political beat then because the Editor gave a lot of encouragement."

Senior Journalist Faraz Ahmad was equally effusive on Dua. Said Faraz: "Dua Saheb used to appreciate my crime stories when I worked in the Indian Express as a staff reporter. I subsequently worked under him in the Tribune where he was editor many years later. He encouraged me and gave me BJP beat. He was always encouraging younger journalists."

Always greeting colleagues and friends with a smile whenever he met them, Dua endeared himself to all never wearing an ego about high positions he held. He kept in touch with persons he worked with and never let an opportunity go to attend to events where he thought he would meet old hands. A regular at the India International Centre, he would spend much time at the reading room glancing through newspapers and magazines. In between, he would relish talking about old times with former colleagues like yours truly.

There is a legion of reporters who worked under Dua. The measure of his popularity was visible in the Lodi Road crematorium on March 5. A large number of journalists thronged the place to bid farewell to Dua Saheb. All spoke of him quite highly and so fondly!

RAGHU RAI: A LENSMAN WHO TAUGHT INDIA TO LOOK AT ITSELF

Long before the selfie mania betook Indians, the legendary photojournalist Raghu Rai (18 December 1942 - 26 April 2026) chronicled India's journey in images. It was from the mid-1960s to what the country is today. He had a rare eye for what is changing, forming or brewing. He also mentored many budding photographers. A tribute by one of his early disciples



Sondeep Shankar

Raghu Rai was born in 1942 in a small village in Jhang, now in Pakistan. He began his journey with photography in 1965, quickly mastering the depth of the medium. By 1966, he had joined The Statesman as its chief photographer. His coverage of the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971 established him as a master of the craft, using the camera not merely to record events, but to document life itself.

Our paths first crossed in 1972 when he judged a photography competition at St. Stephen's College. He offered me a mantra that would define my career: "recording events around your life with a camera." Following his lead, I sought and received his permission to study his work in his office, spending hours with his negatives and prints even in his absence.

A personal bond

I frequently took a ride with Raghu to his Kaka Nagar home and walked back to my place at night. At his home, on return from Statesman, he was greeted by son Nitin and daughter Lagan. While Nitin was always full of energy and demanded complete attention from his father, Lagan jumped around in background. There was a very straight, beautiful photo of Lagan taken by her father showing her running towards the camera and I always noticed it for its beauty and timing.

As a mentor, Raghu was a demanding taskmaster. He frequently critiqued my early work with brutal honesty until

the day he finally accepted a series of my photographs with open arms. That marked the true beginning of our journey together. He welcomed me into his darkroom, invited me to shoot alongside him, and allowed me to accompany him on various news assignments.

When off camera

Beyond the lens, Raghu was a warm-hearted individual with a deep passion for music and the arts. He often maintained that photographers should function as impartial observers and witnesses. This philosophy is evident in his Bangladesh series, which captured human suffering with immense sensitivity, poise, and composition. For his monumental contributions, he was awarded the Padma Shri by the Indian government.

When Raghu joined The Statesman, it took the editors a while to understand that the young photographer's pictures often said as much if not more than the printed report. That is why his pictures got such a great display in the papers. Once recognised by the senior editors Raghu took tough stand for display and demanded best or right kind of space for the display of this photographs.

Love for new ideas

Raghu had always tried new photographic ideas and used equipment for experiment. While still at The Statesman, he had bought himself a Russian Panoramic Camera, which he used extensively for pictures used in The Wall exhibition at Triveni Gallery (1974-75).

When Raghu joined The Statesman, it took the editors a while to understand that the young photographer's pictures often said as much if not more than the printed report.

That is why his pictures got such a great display in the paper



Thereafter, Raghu wanted to create a large format panoramic camera. This was in collaboration with Lattoo Singh, a camera repairer in the Chandni Chowk market.

In those days, Delhi had one Association of photographers and it was called News Cameraman Association (NCA). This association was dominated by some very senior cameramen who often created roadblocks for the younger generations who wanted to grow into the profession.

It was in 1978 that Raghu along with the younger lot of photographers like Thyagrajan from HT, Mathura Das ji from WTN New Network, Sinha, myself, Paul Sahib and several others suggested that we break way from NCA and start our association named Working News Cameramen's Association (WNCA). I can proudly say that WNCA is the only surviving association today.

Trailblazing photo essays

In the early 1970s, Raghu took his Bangladesh exhibition to Paris. It was there that Henri Cartier-Bresson viewed his work and subsequently nominated him to join Magnum Photos. By 1981, Raghu joined India Today, where he worked on special issues and trailblazing picture essays. His visual narratives on social, political, and cultural themes fre-

quently became the defining features of the magazine.

Raghu also dedicated himself to an in-depth documentary project for Greenpeace regarding the 1984 Bhopal chemical disaster. This work, which highlighted the ongoing struggles of the victims and the lack of compensation, resulted in a book and international touring exhibitions. He remained a vocal advocate for the survivors, using his platform to create global awareness about the tragedy and the contaminated environment.

His 1992 National Geographic cover story, "Human Management of Wildlife in India," earned him further critical acclaim. Throughout his career, Raghu's work was exhibited in major cultural hubs including London, Paris, New York, Tokyo, and Zurich. His photo essays were featured in the world's leading publications, such as Time, Life, The New York Times, and The New Yorker.

And then laurels come

In 2019, the Lucie Foundation in New York honoured him as the Master of Photojournalism. He was also the first recipient of the Academy of Fine Arts Photography Award – William Klein, a consecration award celebrating his entire career and his singular contribution to the world of photography.

By 1981, Raghu joined India Today, where he worked on special issues and trailblazing picture essays. His visual narratives on social, political, and cultural themes frequently became the defining features of the magazine

के.जी मार्ग और बाराखम्बा रोड: जहां रातें जागती थीं खबरों के लिए



विवेक शुक्ला

दिल्ली की कुछ सड़कें अपने आप में सिर्फ रास्ते नहीं हैं; ये अपने भीतर समय की परतें, यादों की खुशबू और इतिहास की आवाजें समेटे हुए हैं। कस्तूरबा गांधी मार्ग और बाराखम्बा रोड भी ऐसी ही सड़कों में शामिल हैं। आज इन रास्तों पर ट्रैफिक पहले की तरह ही दौड़ता है, ऊंची-ऊंची इमारतें भी खड़ी हैं, लेकिन एक दौर में इन पर पत्रकार और मीडिया की दुनिया से जुड़े लोग बड़ी संख्या में मिल जाया करते थे।

बेशक, कस्तूरबा गांधी मार्ग और बाराखम्बा रोड दिल्ली का मीडिया कॉरिडोर था। इन सड़कों पर हिंदुस्तान टाइम्स, द स्टेट्समैन, राष्ट्रीय सहारा, एशियन एज, अमर उजाला (ब्यूरो), द हिन्दू, संडे ऑब्जर्वर और ऑब्जर्वर फॉर बिजनेस एंड पॉलिटिक्स जैसे प्रतिष्ठित अखबारों के दफ्तर हुआ करते थे। दिन से लेकर देर रात तक यहां पत्रकारों, संपादकों और फोटो जर्नलिस्टों की हलचल रहती थी, और रात में भी इन इमारतों की खिड़कियों से रोशनी झिलमिलाती रहती थी।

उस दौर की रातें कुछ अलग ही हुआ करती थीं। जब दिल्ली के अधिकतर हिस्से सोने लगते थे, तब यहां काम की रफ्तार तेज हो जाती थी। रिपोर्टर अपनी खबरें लेकर भागते हुए आते, सब-एडिटर डेस्क पर बैठकर शब्दों को तराशते, और प्रेस की मशीनें देर रात तक गूँजती रहती थीं। खबरों की दुनिया का वह धड़कता हुआ दिल यहीं बसता था।

कस्तूरबा गांधी मार्ग और बाराखम्बा रोड के फुटपाथों पर अक्सर छोटे-छोटे समूहों में पत्रकार दिखाई दे जाते थे। कोई चाय के कप के साथ दिन भर की खबरों पर चर्चा कर रहा होता, तो कोई किसी बड़ी स्टोरी के सोर्स तलाश रहा होता। सबसे बड़ी बात यह थी कि अलग-अलग मीडिया संस्थानों में काम करने के बावजूद सबके बीच दोस्ताना संबंध हुआ करते थे। बाराखम्बा रोड के आसपास के ढाबे और चाय की दुकानें भी उस दौर के गवाह थे। इधर

के छोटे साइज के समोसे खाकर पत्रकार अपनी एक्सक्लूसिव स्टोरी लिखते थे।

बाराखम्बा रोड की विजय बिल्डिंग में संडे ऑब्जर्वर (हिंदी और अंग्रेजी) और ऑब्जर्वर फॉर बिजनेस एंड पॉलिटिक्स के दफ्तर थे। यहीं राजीव शुक्ला काम करते थे। वे हर गुरुवार को अपनी स्टोरी फाइल करने आते थे। उनके पास मारुति 800 कार हुआ करती थी। अंबानी समूह के अखबारों में चंदन मित्रा, प्रभाकर सिन्हा, राजेश रपरिया, मोहम्मद सईद मलिक और राजीव कटारा जैसे धाकड़ पत्रकारों ने काम किया था। ये दोनों पेपर आला दर्जे के थे।

विजय बिल्डिंग के नीचे या हिंदुस्तान टाइम्स हाउस के पीछे देर रात तक ढाबों में चाय बनती रहती थी, क्योंकि पत्रकारों की ड्यूटी का समय कभी तय नहीं होता था। हिंदुस्तान टाइम्स और अंसल भवन के बीच एक दुकान पर मीडिया कर्मियों की भीड़ लगी रहती थी। वहां यूनिन के नेता जावेद फरीदी, एस.एन. सिन्हा, प्रेम नाथ भार्गव और आनंद प्रकाश शर्मा और उनके ट्रेड यूनिन के साथी शाम के वक्त गपशप करते मिल जाते थे। तब अमर उजाला अरविंद कुमार सिंह, अतुल सिन्हा और अजीत अंजुम काम करते थे। अरविंद सिंह के पास शैलेश मटियानी आते रहते थे।

तब अखबारों के दफ्तर सिर्फ दफ्तर नहीं होते थे, वे एक तरह से विचारों की प्रयोगशाला होते थे। यहाँ देश और दुनिया की राजनीति पर बहस होती थी, समाज के मुद्दों पर चिंतन होता था और लोकतंत्र की धड़कन को शब्दों में ढाला जाता था। नई पीढ़ी के पत्रकार अपने वरिष्ठों से सीखते थे, और हर रात एक नई कहानी अखबार के पन्नों में जन्म लेती थी।

हिंदुस्तान टाइम्स के ठीक सामने की सूर्य किरण बिल्डिंग से एशियन एज के शुरू होने के बाद इस इलाके की रौनक और बढ़ गई। इसके संपादक एम.जे. अकबर थे। अगर मेरी याददाश्त सही है, तो इसमें सीमा मुस्तफा और गोलू एजेकियल जैसे

उस दौर की रातें कुछ अलग ही हुआ करती थीं। जब दिल्ली के अधिकतर हिस्से सोने लगते थे, तब यहां काम की रफ्तार तेज हो जाती थी। रिपोर्टर अपनी खबरें लेकर भागते हुए आते, सब-एडिटर डेस्क पर बैठकर शब्दों को तराशते, और प्रेस की मशीनें देर रात तक गूँजती रहती थीं। खबरों की दुनिया का वह धड़कता हुआ दिल यहीं बसता था।



बेहतरीन पत्रकार काम करते थे। द स्टेट्समैन की औपनिवेशिक दौर की लाल रंग की इमारत के सामने से गुजरते हुए हम सबके गुरु आर.वी. स्मिथ, किथ फ्लोरी, भूपेंद्र सिंह और रामू शर्मा जैसे वरिष्ठ पत्रकार मिल जाया करते थे। इधर ही पहली बार जिया उस सलाम से मिलना हुआ था।

लेकिन समय का स्वभाव ही बदलाव है। धीरे-धीरे मीडिया का स्वरूप बदलने लगा। तकनीक ने खबरों की दुनिया को नई दिशा दी, और बड़े-बड़े मीडिया हाउस अपने दफ्तर शहर के दूसरे हिस्सों में ले जाने लगे, जबकि कुछ बंद हो गए। देखते ही देखते वे इमारतें, जो कभी खबरों की फैक्ट्री हुआ करती थीं, अब किसी और काम में इस्तेमाल होने लगीं।

आज जब कोई कस्तूरबा गांधी मार्ग या बाराखंभा रोड से गुजरता है, तो शायद उसे यह एहसास भी नहीं होता कि इन सड़कों ने कभी पत्रकारिता के स्वर्णिम दिनों को देखा था। अब वहाँ वैसी हलचल नहीं है, न रात के सन्नाटे में टाइपराइटर की आवाज सुनाई देती है और न ही प्रेस मशीनों की गूँज।

सब कुछ बदल गया है—खबरों का माध्यम भी और उनका ठिकाना भी। अब न्यूजरूम डिजिटल हो गए हैं; खबरें मोबाइल और कंप्यूटर की स्क्रीन पर जन्म लेती हैं। लेकिन उस पुराने दौर की एक अलग ही गरिमा थी, एक अलग ही आत्मा थी।

आज भी अगर कोई पुराना पत्रकार इन सड़कों से गुजरता है, तो शायद उसकी आंखों में अनायास ही पुरानी यादें तैर जाती होंगी। उसे याद आता होगा कि कैसे रात के दो बजे भी दफ्तर में हलचल रहती थी, और कैसे एक बड़ी खबर के आने पर पूरे न्यूजरूम में उत्साह की लहर दौड़ जाती थी।

कस्तूरबा गांधी मार्ग और बाराखंभा रोड आज भी दिल्ली के नक्शे पर मौजूद हैं, लेकिन उनके भीतर



छिपी पत्रकारिता की वह पुरानी धड़कन अब सुनाई नहीं देती। अंबानी समूह ने अपने अखबारों को बहुत पहले ही बंद कर दिया था। यह बदलाव समय का हिस्सा है, लेकिन यादों की दुनिया में वे दिन आज भी जिंदा हैं।

शायद यही शहरों की सबसे बड़ी खासियत भी है—वे बदलते जरूर हैं, लेकिन अपने अतीत की कहानियों को कहीं न कहीं सहेजकर रखते हैं। कस्तूरबा गांधी मार्ग और बाराखंभा रोड भी आज भले ही अलग नजर आते हों, पर उनकी हवाओं में अब भी उन दिनों की हल्की-सी गूँज महसूस की जा सकती है, जब यहाँ से हर सुबह देश को जगाने वाली खबरें निकलती थीं।

(लेखक प्रेस क्लब ऑफ इंडिया के सदस्य हैं)

आज भी अगर कोई पुराना पत्रकार इन सड़कों से गुजरता है, तो शायद उसकी आंखों में अनायास ही पुरानी यादें तैर जाती होंगी। उसे याद आता होगा कि कैसे रात के दो बजे भी दफ्तर में हलचल रहती थी, और कैसे एक बड़ी खबर के आने पर पूरे न्यूजरूम में उत्साह की लहर दौड़ जाती थी।



आधी हकीकत आधा फसाना



राजेश बादल

उन दिनों लाहौर साहित्यिक गतिविधियों का बड़ा केंद्र था। पंजाबी, उर्दू और हिन्दी के लेखकों, कवियों, शायरों के सपनों का शहर इकबाल, जोश, फिराक, फैज और मजाज जैसे सितारे अदब - आकाश पर छाए हुए थे। लेकिन कोई नया हस्ताक्षर सामने आता तो उसका भी स्वागत होता था। गाँव गाँव में कविताओं के जलसे हुआ करते थे। ऐसा ही एक जलसा हुआ था अमृतसर से लाहौर के बीच बसे प्रीतनगर में। उर्दू, पंजाबी और हिन्दी के कवि और शायर इकट्ठे हुए। लौटने लगे तो मूसलाधार बरसात शुरू हो गई। दो दिन झड़ी लगी रही। इस दौरान दो चेहरे वहाँ एक दूसरे को घूरते रहे और कविताएँ सुनते रहे। आपस में बात न हुई। बरसात थमी तो कवि चल पड़े लोपोकी गाँव की ओर। लोपोकी से लाहौर के लिए बस पकड़नी थी।

रास्ता कीचड़ भरा था। कहीं खेतों की मेड़ तो कहीं बरसाती नाला - कवियों का काफिला अपने शब्दों के साथ सफर तय करता रहा। उन दो चेहरों ने भी बात की। कभी चलते चलते साथ आ जाते तो कहीं एक चेहरा दूसरे की परछाई में पैर रखते पीछे पीछे चलता रहा - ठीक वैसे ही, जैसे हम लोग बचपन में दोस्तों की परछाई में चला करते थे। ये दो चेहरे थे अपने जमाने में उर्दू अदब का दमदार नाम साहिर लुधियानवी और पंजाबी की क्रांतिकारी कवियत्री अमृता प्रीतम। लोपोकी से लाहौर तक अमृता को लगता रहा कि वो इस साये के पीछे सदियों से चलती रही है। लाहौर पहुँच कर दोनों जुदा हो गए। एक दूसरे की तस्वीर दिल में बसाए। संकोच की दीवार ऐसी कि दिल की बात होठों पर न आई। खामोशी के साथ गुप्तगू चलती रही। साहिर इक्कीस बरस के थे और अमृता उनसे दो साल बड़ी थीं। संकोची साहिर के दिलो दिमाग पर वो छा गई थी, लेकिन संकोच की ये दीवार अमृता ने गिरा दी और एक दिन साहिर को न्यौता भेजा। साहिर आए और

फिर तो सिलसिला शुरू हो गया। साहिर जब भी आते, अमृता की काली रातों सपनों के पैरों तले जैसे चांदनी बिछा देतीं। आसमान के तारे दिल की तरह धड़कने लगते। इन मुलाकातों में अक्सर खामोशी छाई रहती। नज्में लिखी जातीं। एक दूसरे को सुनाई जातीं। मोहब्बत का इजहार कविताओं और नज्मों के जरिए होता, लेकिन दोनों ने एक दूसरे से यह न कहा, मैं तुमसे प्यार करता हूँ। खामोशी ऐसी कि चुपचाप दोनों बैठे होते। साहिर सिगरेट पीता रहता। धुआँ उड़ता। अमृता उसे देखती रहती। एक के बाद एक सिगरेट चलती रहती। एक बेटी की माँ बन चुकी अमृता अपने ख्यालों के खोल में बंद रह जातीं। एक जगह अमृता ने लिखा, कई बार उसके हाथ को छूना चाहती। दिल तेजी से धड़कने लगता। कान गरम हो



साहिर जब भी आते, अमृता की काली रातों सपनों के पैरों तले जैसे चांदनी बिछा देतीं। आसमान के तारे दिल की तरह धड़कने लगते। इन मुलाकातों में अक्सर खामोशी छाई रहती। नज्में लिखी जातीं। एक दूसरे को सुनाई जातीं। मोहब्बत का इजहार कविताओं और नज्मों के जरिए होता, लेकिन दोनों ने एक दूसरे से यह न कहा, मैं तुमसे प्यार करता हूँ।

जाते। आवाज भराने सी लगती लेकिन हाथ को छू न पाती। मेरे सामने संस्कारों की वो दूरी थी, जो कभी तय ही नहीं होती थी। जब वो चला जाता तो सिगरेट के टूटे और बचे टुकड़ों को उठाती, उँगलियों के बीच लगाती और थरथराने लगती। ऐसा लगता - उसका हाथ छू रही हूँ। इन्ही दिनों मुझे उन टूटे टुकड़ों से सिगरेट पीने की लत लगी। सिगरेट सुलगाते ही धुएँ के बीच साहिर किसी जिन्न की तरह प्रकट हो जाता। ऐसी ही एक बैठक में साहिर से अमृता की बेटी ज़िद कर बैठी, अंकल कहानी सुनाओ।

साहिर ने कहानी शुरू की, एक लकड़हारा था। जंगल में लकड़ियाँ काटा करता था। एक दिन उसने एक राजकुमारी को देखा। बेहद सुंदर। लकड़हारे का मन हुआ कि राजकुमारी को लेकर भाग जाए।

फिर क्या हुआ? बेटी ने पूछा

होना क्या था? लकड़हारा था न। सो उदास होकर लकड़ियाँ काटने लगा। क्यों सच है न? साहिर ने उससे पूछा

हाँ! बिलकुल सच। मैंने भी देखा था उसे। बेटी ने उत्तर दिया।

अमृता बगल में खड़ी मुस्करा रही थीं। साहिर ने अमृता से कहा, देख लो! इसे भी कहानी पता है। इसके बाद साहिर ने फिर बेटी से पूछा, अच्छा! यह बताओ। तुमने लकड़हारे को देखा था। कौन था वो?

आप। बेटी ने उत्तर दिया।

और वो राजकुमारी कौन थी? साहिर ने पूछा

मेरी ममा। साहिर मुस्कराए। अमृता को देखकर बोले, देखा! बच्चे सब कुछ समझते हैं।

इन्ही दिनों साहिर ने अपनी चर्चित नज्म ताजमहल लिखी। उन्होंने ये नज्म शानदार फ्रेम में मढ़वा के अमृता को भेंट की। अमृता ने हमेशा उसे कलेजे से लगाकर रखा। इस नज्म का कुछ हिस्सा पेश है -

अनगिनत लोगों ने दुनिया में मोहब्बत की है / कौन कहता है कि सादिक न थे जज्बे उनके

लेकिन उनके लिए तशहीर का सामान नहीं / क्योंकि वो लोग भी अपनी ही तरह मुफलिस थे

ये चमनजार, ये जमना का किनारा, ये महल/ये मुनक्क़श दरो दीवार, ये महाराब ये ताक /

इक शहंशाह ने दौलत का सहारा लेकर / हम गरीबों की मोहब्बत का उड़ाया है मजाक

मेरी महबूब कहीं और मिला कर मुझसे।

लेकिन मोहब्बत परवान चढ़ती, इससे पहले ही अमृता के बसंत में ढेरों पतझड़ एक साथ आ गए। एक दिन सुबह सुबह साहिर आए। बोले, लाहौर छोड़ कर जा रहा हूँ। रोटी - रोजगार की तलाश में। अपनी एक तस्वीर और कुछ नज्में दे दो। और साहिर चला गया। अमृता अवसाद में चली गई। आखिर वो क्या

था, जो इन दोनों के बीच आकर खड़ा हो जाता था। उस दौर का समाज, दोनों के अपने अपने संस्कार, दोनों का मजहब, दोनों की अपनी अपनी जबान या दोनों का अपना अपना अतीत।

करीब सौ साल पुराना हिन्दुस्तान। लुधियाना में बरतानवी हुकूमत का एक एजेंट था फजल मोहम्मद। यह साँवला अंगरेज टाट-बाट से रहता और सामंती जुल्म करता था। इसी की ग्यारहवीं या बारहवीं बीवी थी सरदार बेगम। इन दोनों का बेटा हुआ -अब्दुल हई। सरदार बेगम की हैसियत फजल मोहम्मद की नजर में एक रखैल से ज्यादा नहीं थी। इसीलिए बेटे का नाम अब्दुल हई अपने दुश्मन पड़ोसी के नाम पर रखा। जिस दिन उसे गरियाना होता, आँगन में गंदी गालियों के साथ अब्दुल हई की पिटाई शुरू हो जाती, ताकि पड़ोसी सुन ले। अब्दुल हई पिता के प्रति नफरत लिए बड़ा होता रहा। माँ पर रोज जुल्म देखता था। एक दिन सब्र का बाँध टूटा और सरदार बेगम ने कोर्ट में अपना हक माँग लिया। फजल मोहम्मद के लिए तो ये डूब मरने की तरह था। उसने अब्दुल हई को जान से मारने की धमकी दे डाली क्योंकि वो माँ के पक्ष में गवाही देने वाला था। माँ ने अपने जेवर बेचे और बेटे की हिफाजत के लिए निजी सुरक्षा गार्ड तैनात किए। सरदार बेगम ने मुकदमा तो जीत लिया, लेकिन मुआवजा एक पैसा न मिला। बेटे को लेकर सरदार बेगम चुपचाप घर से निकल गई। माँ - बेटे दाने दाने को मोहताज थे। किसी तरह बेटे को खालसा स्कूल में एडमिशन कराया। पिता का दिया नाम भी उतार फेंका। अब उसका नाम साहिर हो गया था। स्कूल के बाद सरकारी कॉलेज में भी साहिर ने पढ़ाई की मगर असल पाठ तो जिंदगी पढ़ा रही थी। अपनों के शहर में नफरतों के तीर खाकर साहिर जवान हुआ। अंदर के खालीपन को भरना चाहता था। गरीबी देखी थी, इसलिए पैसा चाहता था, माँ के साथ गुमनामी देखी थी इसलिए शौहरत चाहता था, जागीरदार पिता के हक में हुकूमत देखी थी इसलिए हुकूमत से लड़ना चाहता था। माँ को पति का प्यार नहीं मिला, इसलिए बेपनाह मोहब्बत चाहता था। पिता का प्यार तिजोरी में बंद था इसलिए दिल के दरवाजे खोलकर दुनिया पर प्यार लुटाना चाहता था। ये सारी चाहतें कलम और जुबां से फूट पड़ीं। लोग साहिर के मुरीद हो गए। लड़कियाँ पीछे पीछे घूमतीं। इन्हीं में से एक हिन्दू लड़की थी - महिंदर। साहिर की पहली मोहब्बत। साहिर उसके पीछे पागल हो गए। उन्होंने लिखा, सामने एक मकान की छत पर मुंताजिर कोई एक लड़की है / मुझको उससे नहीं ताल्लुक कुछ, फिर भी सीने में आग भड़की है / लेकिन ये अफसाना आगे जाता, महिंदर इस दुनिया से चली गई। उसे टीबी हो गई थी। साहिर उसकी जलती चिता पर फूट फूट कर रोते रहे। बहुत दिन बाद सामान्य हुए तो एक और लड़की भा गई। वो ताँगे पर जाती और साहिर उसके पीछे पीछे। सिलसिला चलता रहा। साहिर उसे भरोसा दिलाने में कामयाब रहे कि वो वाकई उसे प्यार करते हैं। लड़की ने भी दो चार कदम आगे बढ़ाए। इसी बीच उसके घर के लोगों को पता चल गया। फिर क्या था। साहिर की



लुधियाना में बरतानवी हुकूमत का एक एजेंट था फजल मोहम्मद। यह साँवला अंगरेज टाट-बाट से रहता और सामंती जुल्म करता था। इसी की ग्यारहवीं या बारहवीं बीवी थी सरदार बेगम। इन दोनों का बेटा हुआ -अब्दुल हई। सरदार बेगम की हैसियत फजल मोहम्मद की नजर में एक रखैल से ज्यादा नहीं थी। इसीलिए बेटे का नाम अब्दुल हई अपने दुश्मन पड़ोसी के नाम पर रखा।

जान पर बन आई। यह सिलसिला भी टूट गया। इसके बाद हॉस्टल में रहने वाली एक सिख लड़की जिंदगी में आ गई। यह रिश्ता मोहब्बत में तब्दील हो गया। कॉलेज में साहिर और उस लड़की के इश्क की दास्तान हर छात्र की जबान पर थी। खबर लड़की के घरवालों को लगी तो कॉलेज से निकाल कर गाँव ले गए। साहिर को कॉलेज से निकाल दिया गया। जुदाई बर्दाश्त न हुई तो एक दोस्त को साथ लेकर बीस किलोमीटर दूर पैदल उस लड़की के गाँव जा पहुँचे। खुद तो जा नहीं सकते थे, दोस्त को भेजा। उस लड़की ने हाथ जोड़ लिए और हमेशा के लिए भूल जाने की प्रार्थना की। साहिर फिर अकेले। उन्होंने लिखा, मेरा तो कुछ भी नहीं है, मैं रो रो के जी लूँगा/ मगर खुदा के लिए तुम असीरे -गम न रहो /मैं जानता हूँ कि दुनिया का खौफ है तुमको / मुझे खबर है, ये दुनिया, अजीब दुनिया है /

इसके बाद जैसे साहिर के डीएनए से मोहब्बत हाशिए पर चली गई। पटरी से उतरी गाड़ी वापस पटरी

पर न आई। कलम समाज और व्यवस्था से लड़ने लगी। माँ को लेकर लाहौर चले गए। वहाँ बीए में एडमिशन लिया। दो साल फेल होते रहे। कलम मजदूरों और किसानों के हक में आग उगलने लगी थी, लिहाजा एक बार फिर कॉलेज से निकाल दिया गया। उनके खिलाफ वारंट जारी हो गया मगर तब तक वो उस दौर के नामी गिरामी शायर बन चुके थे। लेकिन उनकी अपनी जिंदगी वीरान थी। इसे उन्होंने दोस्तों के जरिए भरने की कोशिश की। मन यहाँ तक उचटा कि दोस्ती का अहसास पैसों से खरीदने की आदत बन गई, जो सारी उमर बनी रही। इसी दौर में अमृता प्रीतम से मुलाकात हुई और हालात ने लाहौर छोड़ने पर मजबूर किया तो अमृता की प्रीत भूलकर शहर छोड़ने का फैसला करने में साहिर ने एक मिनट नहीं लगाया।

गुजरात की राज बीवी का पति पहले विश्व युद्ध के दौरान अंग्रेजों की फौज में भर्ती हुआ और परदेस चला गया। फिर कभी नहीं लौटा। राज बीवी ने सूनी दुनिया में रंग भरने के लिए स्कूल में छोटे बच्चों को पढ़ाने का काम शुरू कर दिया। लाहौर चली गई। गुजरांवाला में विधवा भाभी के साथ रोज एक डेरे में मत्था टेकने जाती और स्कूल चली जाती। एक दिन डेरे में एक नौजवान साधू नंद पर नजर पड़ी। साधू संस्कृत, ब्रजभाषा और साहित्य का अच्छा जानकार था। उसे निजी जिन्दगी में इतने झटके लगे थे कि वो सन्यास ले चुका था। राज बीवी से मुलाकात ने चाहतों को जिन्दा कर दिया। दोनों ने एक दूसरे को अपना लिया। नंद स्वामी अब करतारसिंह पीयूष बन गए। पीयूष का अर्थ होता है अमृत। इसी वजह से दस बरस बाद जब करतार और राज बीवी के घर बेटी आई तो नाम रखा गया अमृत। करतार पिता तो बन गए, लेकिन फकीरी नहीं गई। घर में सिर्फ और सिर्फ धार्मिक माहौल। अमृत दस ग्यारस बरस की रहीं होंगी तो माँ

का साथ हमेशा के लिए छूट गया। पिता एक बार फिर सन्यास के मूड में। लेकिन अमृत का बंधन उन्हें न सन्यासी बना पाया और न ही वो गृहस्थी में बंध पाए। नतीजा घर में ही एक तरह से डेरे का माहौल। ऐसे में अमृत पर तो इसका असर होना ही था। अमृत ने भी अपने सपनों की इबारत लिखनी शुरू कर दी। लेकिन हालात ने सोच की दिशा ही बदल दी थी। एक नमूना... माँ गंभीर रूप से बीमार थीं तो मौसी ने अमृत से कहा, तू ईश्वर का नाम ले। बच्चों की प्रार्थना वो अवश्य पूरी करता है। माँ बच जाएगी। अमृत ने आँखें बंद कीं। बस ईश्वर से यही कहती रही, मेरी माँ को मत मारना। लेकिन माँ नहीं बची। बचपन पत्थर हो गया। भरोसा उठ गया। गुस्सा फट पड़ा - ईश्वर किसी की नहीं सुनता। बच्चों की भी नहीं। सारे भजन पूजन कीर्तन बंद। पिता की हर धार्मिक आज्ञा का पालन बंद। पिता पुत्री के बीच तर्क और जिद का संघर्ष चलता रहा। हारकर पिता ने सुबह शाम पूजा पाठ का फरमान सुना दिया। अमृत आँख बंद करती और कहती - लो अब आँख बंद करके भी ईश्वर को याद नहीं करती। कर लो क्या करते हो। मैं तो आँखें बंद कर सपने देखूंगी। सपनों में एक राजकुमार देखूंगी। सोलहवाँ साल लग चुका था।

जिद का एक और नमूना। माँ की मौत के बाद अमृत को नानी पाल रही थी। नानी ने घर में कुछ बरतन अलग रखे थे। अमृत ने देखा - जब दूसरे धर्म या नानी की नजर में छोटी जात के लोग घर में आते तो अलग रखे उन बर्तनों में उन्हें चाय पानी मिलता था। अमृत अड़ गई, बोलीं - मैं भी इन्हीं बर्तनों में खाऊँगी- पियूँगी। नानी हैरान। अमृता ने खाना पीना छोड़ दिया। पिताजी को पता चला तो हैरान रह गए। घर के भीतर चल रही इस दोहरी व्यवस्था की खबर उन्हें नहीं थी। फिर क्या था ... बेटी की जान पे सब कुर्बान। उस दिन से सारे बरतन भारतीय हो गए। आखिर पिता का बेटी के सिवा इस दुनिया में था ही कौन?

एक तरफ अमृत की जिदें तो दूसरी तरफ पिता की आध्यात्मिक पहरेदारी - चारों तरफ किताबों की चहारदीवारी। न जाने कब किताबों का चस्का लग गया। उनके सोलहवें सावन में दाखिल हुई किताबें बचपन की समाधि भंग करने के लिए किसी मेनका की तरह स्वर्ग से उतरती थीं। अमृत दो पाठों में पिस रही थी। जवान होती एक किशोरी पिता के सामने पुराणों की पूजा करती थी और उनके जाते ही फूटते यौवन की बहरें महसूस करती थी। सोलहवें साल को साठ साल बाद अमृता ने आत्मकथा रसीदी टिकट में कुछ इस तरह बयान किया - सोलहवें साल से मेरा परिचय उस असफल प्रेम की तरह था, जिसकी कसक हमेशा के लिए वहीं पड़ी रह जाती है। शायद इसलिए ये सोलहवाँ साल मेरी जिन्दगी के हर साल में कहीं न कहीं शामिल है। उमर का ये साल उनकी जिन्दगी के सबसे महत्वपूर्ण वर्षों में से एक था। उनका पहला संकलन अमृत लहरें छप कर बाजार में आया। इतना लोकप्रिय हुआ कि उस समय कपूरथला के महाराजा ने अमृत को दो सौ रूपए का मनीऑर्डर भेजा, नाभा स्टेट की महारानी ने साड़ी तोहफे के तौर पर भेजी

और न जाने कितने दिलों में अमृत गहराई से उतर गई। अमृत अब जाना पहचाना चेहरा बन गई थी लेकिन माँ की ममता से महरूम अमृत पिता के खालिस प्यार के लिए तड़प रही थी।

इसी साल पिता ने सरदार प्रीतमसिंह से उनका ब्याह कर दिया। दरअसल यह शादी तो तय हो गई थी, जब अमृत सिर्फ चार साल की थी। अब वो अमृता प्रीतम बन गई। दो बच्चों की माँ भी बन चुकी थीं लेकिन पति से रिश्ते को नहीं ढो पा रहीं थीं। साहिर से मुलाकात ने कुछ कामनाएँ जगाईं, लेकिन तब तक साहिर लाहौर छोड़ कर विदाई लेने आ पहुँचा था। सूनापन बरकरार।

हिन्दुस्तान आजाद हुआ। कलेजे पर बँटवारे की छुरी चली और दुनिया के नक्शे में एक नए देश पाकिस्तान ने जन्म लिया। साहिर दिल्ली और अमृता परिवार के साथ देहरादून आ गई। कुछ समय बाद साहिर मायानगरी मुंबई चले गए और अमृता देहरादून से दिल्ली आ गई। वक्त ने फिर साथ रहने का मौका छीन लिया। लेकिन अंदर ही अंदर दोनों ने एक दूसरे

अमृता के पास एक छोटा साहिर था। ये था उनका बेटा नवरोज। कहानी खुद अमृता ने बयान की है। दरअसल उन्नीस सौ छियालीस में जब वो माँ बनने की तैयारी कर रही थीं तो किसी ने कहा, जिसका ख्याल मन में करो तो होने वाली संतान उसके जैसी होती है। अमृता ने प्रसव होने तक साहिर को मन में रखा और जब बेटा आया तो वो दंग रह गई। एकदम साहिर की शक्ल।

को सुरक्षित रखा था। एक दूसरे के लिए नज्में लिख रहे थे, कहानियाँ लिख रहे थे और अपनी भावनाएँ कागज पर उतार रहे थे। अमृता के पास एक छोटा साहिर था। ये था उनका बेटा नवरोज। कहानी खुद अमृता ने बयान की है। दरअसल उन्नीस सौ छियालीस में जब वो माँ बनने की तैयारी कर रही थीं तो किसी ने कहा, जिसका ख्याल मन में करो तो होने वाली संतान उसके जैसी होती है। अमृता ने प्रसव होने तक साहिर को मन में रखा और जब बेटा आया तो वो दंग रह गई। एकदम साहिर की शक्ल। उन्होंने भगवान को लाख लाख शुक्र अदा किया। और देखिए जब बेटा तेरह साल का किशोर था तो एक दिन माँ से पूछ बैठा, माँ! क्या मैं साहिर अंकल का बेटा हूँ?

नहीं तो? अमृता ने उत्तर दिया

पर अगर हूँ तो बता दो। मुझे वो अच्छे लगते हैं बेटे ने कहा

हाँ बेटे! काश! ये सच होता तो मैंने बता दिया होता। मुझे भी वो अच्छे लगते हैं अमृता ने बेबाकी से उत्तर दिया।

बरसों बाद अमृता ने दिल्ली में एक शाम साहिर

को यह बात बताई तो वो हँस पड़ा। बोला, वैरी पुअर टेस्ट।

तो मुंबई में साहिर और दिल्ली में अमृता एक अपने अकेलेपन का बोझ ढोता हुआ तो दूसरा रिश्तों की गठरी उठाए हुए। अपनी अपनी दुनिया के खालीपन की कसक लिए। साहिर की जिंदगी में लड़कियाँ हमेशा दस्तक देती रहीं। मुंबई में फिल्मों ने उसे आसमानी लोकप्रियता दिलाई थी। दौलत बरस रही थी। माँ के आराम के लिए कोई सुविधा उपलब्ध कराने में कंजूसी नहीं। लेकिन माँ को बेटे को की तन्हाई कचोटती थी। उसे अमृता और साहिर के भावनात्मक रिश्ते का पता था। कभी कभी उसने कहा भी, अमृता से ब्याह क्यों नहीं कर लेते। हर शाम शराब और किराए के दोस्त कब तक साथ देंगे। साहिर नम आँखों से माँ को देखता। फीकी मुस्कान के साथ चुप रह जाता। ठंडी साँस लेते हुए सोचता - माँ सिर्फ बेटे की चिंता कर रही है। अरे! अमृता के साथ पति है, दो बच्चे हैं, देश भर उसे मान सम्मान देता है। बेहद खूबसूरत है और मैं - लंबे और टेढ़े मेढ़े शरीर वाला। चेहरे पर दाग, लंबी सी नाक, एक तरह से कुरूप, रोज रोज दारू की महफिलें - अमृता इस रिश्ते को कैसे ढोएगी? एक रिश्ते के बोझ से मुक्त होगी, दूसरे में उलझ जाएगी।

उधर अमृता रोज मरती, रोज जीतीं। सरदार प्रीतम सिंह अमृता को बेहद प्यार करते थे, लेकिन अमृता दिल से उस प्यार का मान नहीं रख पा रहीं थीं। बच्चे बड़े हो रहे थे। आकाशवाणी में तीन चार सौ रूपए की नौकरी करती थीं। उन्हें अपनी खूबसूरती का अहसास था। दो बच्चों की माँ होने के बाद भी गजब का यौनाकर्षण था। साथ काम करने वाले न जाने कितने लोग अमृता पर जान छिड़कते थे, लेकिन अमृता को तलाश थी, उसकी जो उस पर जान छिड़के। ऐसा तो एक ही शख्स था - साहिर लुधियानवी। अमृता को एहसास था कि वो साहिर की मोहब्बत हैं, लेकिन वो खुलता क्यों नहीं? एक बार प्यार से कहे तो सही - अमृता मैं तुमसे प्यार करता हूँ। आओ मुझे शादी करो। फिर ठंडी साँस भरतीं। सोचतीं - सितारा है फिल्म इंडस्ट्री का। उसके नाम पर फिल्में हिट होती हैं। दौलत उसके कदम चूमती है। उसकी कलम पर सरस्वती विराजती हैं। वो मुस्लिम, मैं सिख। वो लिखता है उर्दू में, मैं पंजाबी में। मेरे साथ मेरे बच्चों का बोझ भी क्यों कर उठाएगा। मैं अमृताप्रीतम से अमृता साहिर बन पाऊँगी या नहीं। और फिर डबडबाई आँखों से मन को बहलातीं। उसकी दोस्ती इतनी ही मिलनी थी।

वक्त गुजरता रहा। दोनों अपनी अपनी जगह सितारों की तरह चमकते रहे। वो अक्सर मिलते थे लेकिन संस्कारों का फासला कभी खत्म न हो पाया। रिश्ता आधी हकीकत आधा फसाना बना रहा। दिल की बात जुबां पे न आई। अमृता लिखतीं हैं, हमारे बीच नौ सौ मील का फासला था। ये नौ सौ मील लम्बा एक रेगिस्तान था जो मेरे सामने बिछा हुआ था। दिल्ली रेडियो से मैं रोज जो प्रोग्राम पेश करती थी, कभी कभी उसमें मेरा गीत भी होता था, मेरे खून से भीगा हुआ, जिसे पेश करते हुए मुझे अहसास होता

कि मैंने एक पल के लिए वो नौ सौ मील का फासला तय कर लिया है..। इसी बीच एक घटना और घटी। अमृता ने लिखा - ,उन्नीस सौ सत्तावन में मेरी एक पंजाबी नज्म, सुनहड़े पर साहित्य अकादमी का अवार्ड मिला। फोन पर खबर मिलते ही सर से पाँव तक मैं तपने लगी। खुदाया ये नज्म मैंने किसी इनाम के लिए तो नहीं लिखी थी। जिसके लिए लिखी थी, उसने तो पढ़ा ही नहीं। अब सारी दुनिया पढ़े भी तो मुझे क्या?

अवार्ड की खबर जंगल में आग की तरह फैली। प्रेस रिपोर्ट्स और फोटोग्राफों से घर भर गया। वो अमृता का यही नज्म लिखते हुए एक फोटो लेना चाहते थे। अमृता ने लिखना शुरू किया.. देर तक लिखतीं रहीं..फोटोग्राफर चले गए तो कागज पे नजर गई .उफ..क्या लिख गई थीं वो पूरे कागज पर सिर्फ साहिर...साहिर साहिर

ऑल इंडिया रेडियो के जरिए अमृता अपनी आवाज के जादू से लाखों सुनने वालों को दीवाना बना चुकीं थीं। लेकिन जिसकी वो दीवानी थीं, वो उनकी जिन्दगी से बाहर था। उन्नीस सौ छपन में अमृता ने साहिर के नाम आखिरी खत लिखा, लेकिन पोस्ट नहीं किया। साहिर का नाम हटा कर छपने भेज दिया। अमृता ने ये खत लिखा साहिर के लिए। खत शमा में छपा। लोगों ने पढ़ा और प्रतिक्रियाएं भी दीं। साहिर का कोई संदेश तक न मिला। अरसे तक अमृता इस भरम में तड़प के साथ जीती रहीं कि जिसे आखिरी खत लिखा, उसने पढ़ा ही नहीं। उधर साहिर ने ये खत आईना में पढ़ा तो कई दिन तक छाती से लगाए घूमते रहे। लेकिन अमृता से एक लफ्ज भी न बोला। वर्षों बाद जब सब कुछ खत्म हो गया तो खुद साहिर ने अमृता को बताया-मैंने आखिरी खत पढ़ा तो लगा,अभी ख्वाजा अहमद अब्बास के घर जाऊँ, कृष्ण चंदर के पास जाऊँ, सभी दोस्तों के पास जाऊँ और उन्हें चिल्ला चिल्ला कर बताऊँ कि अमृता ने ये खत मेरे नाम लिखा है लेकिन चुप रह गया। संकोच हुआ कि दोस्त कहेंगे -हाँ बेटा! तेरे नाम ही लिखा है। अब चलो हमारे साथ। तुम्हें पागलखाने में दाखिल करा देते हैं। अमृता को लगा अपना सर दीवार पर दे मारूँ। इतना ही नहीं साहिर ने इसी मुलाकात में करीब बीस बरस पहले की एक घटना अमृता को सुनाई। इससे जाहिर है कि साहिर अपने संकोच की लक्ष्मण रेखा पार करने में कितने कच्चे थे। उन्होंने लाहौर के दिनों को याद करते हुए अमृता से कहा, जब हम लोग लाहौर में थे तो मैं रोज तेरे घर के करीब आता था और कोने में जो पान बीड़ी की दुकान थी, वहां खड़े होकर कभी पान खरीदता, कभी सिगरेट तो कभी सोडे का गिलास लेकर घंटों खड़ा रहता। वहां से तेरी एक झलक पाने के लिए तेरे घर की खिड़की को देखता रहता,जो उस दुकान की तरफ खुलती थी। अमृता ने अफसोस के साथ माथा पीट लिया। बाद में उन्होंने कहीं लिखा - मेरे और साहिर के दरम्यान दो दीवारें थीं।एक खामोशी की जो हमेशा बरकरार रही और दूसरी भाषा की। मैं पंजाबी में नज्म कहती थी, साहिर उर्दू में। इस दीवार ने कभी मेरी नज्मों को साहिर तक नहीं पहुँचने दिया।

आप इस निष्कर्ष के साथ किसी भी अफसाने का समापन कर सकते हैं कि दैहिक आकर्षण के बिना प्रेम अधूरा है। अनेक लोग इस कसक के साथ अपना बुढ़ापा जिंदा रखते हैं कि जीवन में उन्होंने जिससे पहली बार टूटकर मोहब्बत की, उससे दैहिक संपर्क न हो पाया। अमृता ने तीन स्थितियों में अपने भीतर की औरत को एक लेखिका से ऊपर महसूस किया।

मोहब्बत के अफसानों में अक्सर यह सवाल झलकता है कि यह रूहानी रिश्ता है या इसमें कहीं देह भी शामिल होती है। साहिर और अमृता के इश्क को देखें तो इसमें दोनों बराबर नजर आते हैं। संस्कारों की मयादां के चलते एक दूसरे को खुलकर गले लगाने का एक भी किस्सा नहीं मिलता लेकिन ऐसा नहीं होने की तकलीफ अमृता के लेखन में अनेक बार मिलती है। आप इस निष्कर्ष के साथ किसी भी अफसाने का समापन कर सकते हैं कि दैहिक आकर्षण के बिना प्रेम अधूरा है। अनेक लोग इस कसक के साथ अपना बुढ़ापा जिंदा रखते हैं कि जीवन में उन्होंने जिससे पहली बार टूटकर मोहब्बत की, उससे दैहिक संपर्क न हो पाया। अमृता ने तीन स्थितियों में अपने भीतर की औरत को एक लेखिका से ऊपर महसूस किया। एक बार साहिर दिल्ली आए। उन्हें सर्दी और बुखार हो गया। साहिर न न करते रहे और अमृता ने जबरन उन्हें बिस्तर पर लिटाया। शर्ट के बटन खोले और देर तक साहिर के सीने पर विक्स मलती रहीं। उन्हें कुछ कुछ होता रहा। कामनाएँ अंगड़ाई लेती रहीं। बाद में अमृता ने इस अहसास के बारे में लिखा, उस समय मुझे लग रहा था कि विक्स मलते हुए मैं सारी उमर काट सकती हूँ। मेरे अंदर की औरत को उस वक़्त दुनिया के किसी कागज - कलम की जरूरत नहीं थी।

अमृता की अपने आप से लड़ाई साल दर साल जारी रही। एक दिन अपने भीतर का सारा साहस बटोरकर उन्होंने तय किया कि अब सारी दूरियाँ मिटा देंगी और साहिर को अपनी जिंदगी में लेकर आएँगी। उन्होंने पति से अलग होने का फैसला कर लिया। उन्नीस सौ साठ के साल की एक सुबह साहिर को फोन पर अपनी ओर से ब्याह का प्रस्ताव देने जा रहीं थीं। लेकिन इसी बीच एक फिल्मी मोड़ आया। रसीदी टिकट में अमृता लिखतीं हैं, मन ने घर की दहलीजों के बाहर कदम रख लिया था ...साहिर को मुंबई फोन करने के लिए गई थी कि अजीब संयोग हुआ। उस दिन का एक अखबार बिल्टज फोन के पास पड़ा था। उसमें खबर और फोटो छपी थी कि साहिर को जिन्दगी की नई मोहब्बत मिल गई है। खबर का इशारा सुधा मल्होत्रा की ओर था। अमृता के हाथ फोन के डायल से कुछ इंच दूर शून्य में खड़े रह गए। वो उलटे पैरों लौट पड़ीं। बाद में उन्होंने लिखा, मुझे ऑस्कर

वाइल्ड के इन शब्दों की याद आई, मैंने मर जाने का विचार किया। ऐसे भीषण विचार में जब जरा कुछ कमी हुई तो मैंने जीने के लिए अपना मन पक्का कर लिया, सोचा उदासी को अपना लिबास बना लूँगा....जिन्दगी की सबसे उदास कविताएँ मैंने इसी साल लिखीं। अमृता को इतना सदमा लगा कि वो अवसाद में चली गई। उन्हें अजीबोगरीब सपने आने लगे। उन्हें डिप्रेशन दूर करने के लिए मनोचिकित्सक से काफी दिनों तक इलाज कराना पड़ा। उबरने में काफी वक़्त लगा। दिमाग में पल रहे रिश्ते की भ्रूण हत्या हो गई। अफसाना अंजाम तक नहीं पहुँचा न ही कोई खूबसूरत मोड़ आया। हाँ दिल से साहिर कभी नहीं निकले। बिखरी हुई अमृता ने अपने को तिनका तिनका समेटना शुरू किया। मान लिया कि साहिर से कभी कभी कुछ देर की मुलाकातें ही अब उनकी जिंदगी का सहारा है। इसी दौरान इंदरजीत याने इमरोज उनकी जिन्दगी में दाखिल हुए। इंदरजीत की कहानी यहाँ से शुरू होती है। क्या आप रिश्तों के इस त्रिकोण की कल्पना कर सकते हैं, जिसमें किसी से किसी का कोई रिश्ता नहीं था मगर वो रूह की गहराइयों तक जाने वाले रिश्ते के तार से बंधे थे। तीनों मिलते थे, घंटों साथ बिताते थे और अधूरी प्यास लिए रुखसत हो जाते थे। अमृता ने मंजूर कर लिया कि उनकी झोली में साहिर का इतना ही हिस्सा था, साहिर मान चुके थे कि वो अमृता को इतना ही पा सकते थे और इमरोज भी जानते थे कि उन्हें जो मिल रहा है वो जिन्दगी में अमृत की एक बुँद से भी ज्यादा है। तीनों की महफिलें जमतीं थीं और एक कसक के साथ बर्खास्त हो जातीं थीं। उन्नीस सौ साठ और पैसठ के बीच की बात है। अमृता और इमरोज मुंबई गए। शाम को महफिल जमी। उस शाम साहिर उदास थे। महफिल के बाद तीनों के खाली गिलास पड़े थे। सिर्फ साहिर वहां अकेले बैठे रह गए। उस रात वहीं बैठकर उन्होंने एक नज्म लिखी - मेरे साथी खाली जाम। तुम आबाद घरों के वासी, मैं आवारा और बदनाम। लिखने के बाद ग्यारह बजे उन्होंने अमृता को फोन किया, ये नज्म सुनाई और बताया कि तीनों के खाली गिलासों को बारी बारी से भर कर उनके नाम से पी रहे हैं। इस त्रिकोणीय रिश्ते का अंत उन्नीस सौ अस्सी में हो गया, जब साहिर इस दुनिया से ऊपर चले गए और अमृता अपनी उमर के बाकी दिन उनके नाम न कर पाईं। उन्हें आखिरी साँस तक एशियन राइटर्स कॉन्फ्रेंस का एक मनहूस पल तड़पाता रहा। हुआ यह था कि कॉन्फ्रेंस शुरू होने के ठीक पहले साहिर और अमृता साथ साथ पहुँचे। दोनों की कुर्सियाँ सटी हुई थी और दोनों के लिए सीने पर लगाए जाने वाले नाम के बैच भी पड़े हुए थे। साहिर ने अपने नाम का बैच उठाया और अमृता के सीने पर टांग दिया और अमृता का बैच अपने सीने पर लगा लिया। पूरी कॉन्फ्रेंस में दोनों बावले ऐसे ही घूमते रहे। जब साहिर ने अचानक इस दुनिया को अलविदा कहा तो अमृता को लगा यमदूतों ने साहिर को गलती से उठा लिया। दरअसल वो अमृता को लेने आए थे और साहिर के सीने पर अमृता का बैच देखा तो साहिर को अमृता समझ कर ले गए। अकेली अमृता और भी अकेली रह गई।

सहारे के लिए बचे थे इंदरजीत, जिसे दुनिया इमरोज के नाम से जानती है।

एक बार फिर लौटते हैं आजादी से पहले के हिन्दुस्तान में और उसी लाहौर में, जहाँ से अमृता और साहिर की प्रेमकथा शुरू हुई थी। पास के गाँव लायलपुर के चक-छत्तीस में बेहद गरीब पंजाबी परिवार रहता था। मुश्किल से घर को रोजी रोटी नसीब होती थी। घर में इकलौता बेटा था इंदरजीत। सिर्फ नौ साल का था और हमेशा के लिए माँ का साथ छूट गया। ममता से महरूम इंदरजीत रात के अँधेरे में अकेला चारपाई पर लेटा, कभी दोस्तों के टिफिन में तो कभी अपने कपड़ों में बटन लगाते या तुरपाई करते कसक के साथ माँ की धुंधलाती छबि को याद करता था। घंटों माँ को याद करके रोता। दोस्तों के साथ उनके घरों में जाता तो उनकी माँओं को देखकर उसका दिल और दुखी हो जाता, लिहाजा उसने धीरे धीरे अपने को समेट लिया। उसका घर और उसकी किताबें। जब सातवीं क्लास में पहुँचा तो कहीं अमृता का फोटो देखा। फोटो को देखकर हिलक हिलक कर रोए। अमृता में माँ की झलक नजर आई। हाईस्कूल में पहुँचे तो अमृता का उपन्यास डॉक्टर देव पढ़ा। डॉक्टर देव उसका एक किरदार था। उपन्यास पढ़ते ही किशोर होते इंदरजीत के दिलो दिमाग पर अमृता छा गई। दुस्साहस देखिए कि कहीं से लाहौर में अमृता के घर का फोन नम्बर खोजा और डायल कर दिया

उधर से मीठी सी आवाज आई, कौन?

इंदरजीत बोले, मैं डॉक्टर देव बोल रहा हूँ।

इसके आगे तो बोल ही नहीं पाए और फोन काट दिया।

वक्त गुजरता रहा। इंदरजीत अमृता की हर किताब खरीदते और उसका एक एक शब्द घोंट कर पी जाते। कॉलेज की पढ़ाई पूरी करके रोजी की तलाश में दिल्ली आ बसे। शौक चित्रकारी का था इसलिए रेखाओं को किस्मत के कैनवास पर उतारने का फैसला कर लिया। जल्द ही इंदरजीत की धूम मच गई। उन्नीस सौ पचास - पचपन में वो हर महीने करीब डेढ़ हजार रूपए कमाते थे। दिल में अभी भी अमृता की तस्वीर बसी हुई थी। यह तो मालूम था कि अमृता रेडियो में काम करती हैं। उनकी मीठी आवाज भी वो रोज सुना करते थे। एक दिन किस्मत ने अमृता से मिला भी दिया। हुआ यूँ कि जब साहिर के लिए अमृता ने आखिरी खत लिखा और उसे आईना में छपने के लिए दिया तो उसके लिए रेखांकन का काम इंदरजीत को मिला। अमृता इंदरजीत के सामने थीं जिसकी तस्वीर बचपन से बसी थी, वो उसके सामने खड़ी थी। अपने प्रेमी के लिए आखिरी खत लिखे हुए। अपने को संभालकर इंदरजीत ने पूछा, जिसको लिखा है, उसकी तस्वीर दिखा दो तो उसके आधार पर उसका ही रेखाचित्र बना देता हूँ। अमृता संकोच कर गई। लेकिन दोनों की मुलाकातें होने लगीं। अमृता ने भी अपने को समझा लिया कि उनकी जिंदगी अब ऐसे ही चलेगी। हालाँकि वो उमर के उस पड़ाव पर थीं, जहाँ अकेलेपन का अहसास अपने सबसे विराट रूप में होता है। मन समझौता कर लेता है कि वीरान जिंदगी में जो भी साथ मिल रहा है, वही बहुत है। और

फिर इंदरजीत तो बचपन से उनको अपने दिल में रखे हुए है। भला ऐसी भी फिल्मी कहानी किसी की होती है?

इंदरजीत अक्सर ही अमृता से मिलने आकाशवाणी जाते थे। उन दिनों रेडियो आज की तरह चौबीस घंटे नहीं चलता था। तीन सभाएं होती थीं। पहली सुबह साढ़े छह से साढ़े नौ, दूसरी साढ़े बारह बजे से ढाई बजे और तीसरी शाम साढ़े पांच से रात साढ़े दस बजे। अमृता प्रायः रात की सभा में होती थीं। इस पाली के लोगों को सरकारी कार घर छोड़ने जाया करती थी। एक रात सरकारी कार को काफी देर हो गई। इंदरजीत ने कहा, चलो मैं ही छोड़ आता हूँ। अमृता तब पटेल नगर में रहती थी। दोनों रात को चल दिए संसद मार्ग से पटेल नगर। उस चांदनी रात में चलते हुए अमृता और इंदरजीत ने अपने संबंधों का एक बड़ा सफर तय कर लिया। घर पहुंचे तो कड़ाके की भूख लग रही थी। अमृता ने नौकर से पूछा, क्या है खाने में। अमृता की खुराक को देखते हुए नौकर ने सिर्फ दो रोटियाँ बनाई थी। एक एक रोटी दो थालियों

एक दिन इंदरजीत को मुंबई से गुरुदत्त का बुलावा आया। अपनी फिल्मों में काम चाहते थे। वेतन अच्छा था और रहने का इंतजाम भी था। इंदरजीत ने अमृता को खबर सुनाई। अमृता लिखती हैं, लगा जैसे मेरे से कुछ छूट रहा हो।

में लेकर नौकर आया। अमृता ने इंदरजीत की भूख देखी तो चुपचाप आधी रोटी तोड़ कर दूसरी थाली में दी। बरसों बाद इंदरजीत ने इस वाक्य को लिखा। शीर्षक था -आधी रोटी पूरा चाँद।

इसी दौरान एक दिन इंदरजीत को मुंबई से गुरुदत्त का बुलावा आया। अपनी फिल्मों में काम चाहते थे। वेतन अच्छा था और रहने का इंतजाम भी था। इंदरजीत ने अमृता को खबर सुनाई। अमृता लिखती हैं, लगा जैसे मेरे से कुछ छूट रहा हो। एक बार इसी मुंबई ने मेरे साहिर को ले लिया था और अब वही मुंबई दूसरी बार...आँखों का पानी संभल नहीं रहा था..कोई दूसरा न देखे इसलिए उस दिन का अखबार उठा कर आँखों पर रख लिया। अमृता की दुआ काम कर गई। तीन दिन ही बीते थे कि मुंबई से फोन आया, मैं कल लौट रहा हूँ। यहाँ नौकरी अच्छी है। गुरुदत्त भी पसंद आया है, पर मुझे लगता है - यहाँ मैं नहीं रह पाऊंगा। और इंदरजीत दिल्ली लौट आए।

लेकिन काम और पैसा तो मुंबई में ही था इसलिए अक्सर उन्हें जाना पड़ता और तब अमृता एकदम अकेली हो जातीं। तब दोनों चिट्ठियों के जरिए अपनी धडकनें पहुंचाया करते। इन चिट्ठियों में इंदरजीत अमृता को कई नामों से संबोधित करते थे। जोरबा द ग्रीक नॉवेल पढ़ा तो उसकी नायिका के नाम से अमृता जोरबी बन गई। द नेकेड माजा पढ़ा तो अमृता माजा

हो गई। किचिन में जब अमृता काम करतीं और जिस तरह से वो बचत करतीं, इंदरजीत ने उनका नाम बरकते रख दिया। कभी उनका नाम आशी हो जाता। इंदरजीत और अमृता के बीच इस पत्र व्यवहार से दोनों के बीच रिश्ते की गहराई का पता चलता है।

अमृता को कभी कभी इंदरजीत से उम्र में सात साल बड़ा होना कचोटता था। वो कहतीं, मुझे जब प्यार मिला, जिन्दगी की शाम होने लगी थी। उन्नीस सौ साठ में लिखे एक पत्र में अमृता लिखती हैं -राही! तुम मुझे संध्या के समय क्यों मिले? जिन्दगी का सफर खत्म होने वाला है। अगर मिलना था तो जिन्दगी की दोपहर में मिलते। कम से कम उस दोपहर का ताप तो देख लेते।

और इंदरजीत ने लिखा - तुम खूबसूरत शाम ही सही, मगर भूलो मत, तुम ही मेरी सुबह हो, तुम ही मेरी दोपहर हो, शाम हो, मेरी मंजिल हो, मेरी किस्मत हो। पूरे मन से मेरे साथ -अपने जीती के साथ जीकर तो देखो।

इंदरजीत से मिलन की तड़प का एक नमूना, मेरी जान! उड़कर आ जाओ। मेरे दिल से पंख उधार ले लो। मेरी जान, तुम्हारा ये रूपए वाला चेक मैं कैश नहीं कराऊंगी। सिर्फ तुम्हारी मोहब्बत का चेक कैश कराना है अगर जिन्दगी के बैंक ने कैश कर दिया तो? और इंदरजीत ने उत्तर दिया, आशी! तुम्हारे बिना जीना जीना नहीं लगता, एक सजा लगती है। कौन चाहता है कि जिन्दगी रहते सजा काटे। ...काम में अगर मन लगता भी है तो काम के बाद सख्त डिप्रेशन हो जाता है कि मैं यहाँ क्यों हूँ। अपने आप पर गुस्सा आता है। मैं अपनी जिन्दगी का नोट तुम्हारी देहलीज पर चढ़ा आया हूँ। अब ये तुम पर है -इसे भुना लो, खर्च कर लो या देहलीज पर पड़ा रहने दो....ओ सब्रों वाली! कभी मेरी बेसब्री लेकर तो देखो।

एक और खत में अमृता ने लिखा, तुम्हारे जैसी सोच, तुम्हारे जैसी शख्सियत अगर दुनिया में न होती तो तुम्ही बताओ कहाँ जाती मैं?...अच्छा अब जल्दी से लौट आओ और इंदरजीत के भी जवाबी खत का छोटा सा टुकड़ा, तुम मेरी किस्मत बनी रहना। फिर किसी बदकिस्मती की मुझे कोई परवाह नहीं।

अमृता के शुभचिंतकों में एक गुलजार भी थे। इंदरजीत को लिखे एक खत में अमृता ने गुलजार का जिक्र किया। लिखा, कल गुलजार आया था। बोल रहा था, सुना आपकी तबियत ठीक नहीं है। मैंने कहा, वैसे तो ठीक हूँ, पर शाम को दर्द शुरू हो जाता है, जब सूरज डूबता है। गुलजार हंसने लगा। बोला, पुराने समय में किसी ने काल को चारपाई के पाए से बाँधा था। आप सूरज को बाँध लीजिए। मैंने कहा, वो तो मैंने बाँध रखा है। शाम को जब जीती का खत आता है तो वो सूरज ही तो होता है ...जीती तुम्हारा खत शाम का सूरज ही तो होता है...क्या मैं कम करामाती हूँ? मैं भी सूरज को पाए से बाँध सकती हूँ।

एक खत में तो अमृता और इमरोज के बीच मोहब्बत की चाहत का अजीब सा नमूना मिला। उन्होंने लिखा, यह मैंने कभी नहीं सोचा कि तुम्हारी मोहब्बत पाक नहीं थी। लेकिन मोहब्बत में एक प्यास थी। जवानी की प्यास। इस प्यास को तुम्हें तृप्त करना

होगा। मेरे जीती! तुम और मैं दोनों इस प्यास का भयानक रूप देख चुके हैं। तुम जैसे मुझ तड़पती को एक पराए घर में यह तुम्हारा रूप नहीं, तुम्हारी प्यास का ये भयानक रूप था। तुम दस बरस तक जी भरकर इस प्यास को मिटा लो, फिर मैं तुम्हारे जिस्म पर पड़े सारे दाग अपने होंठों से पोछ दूंगी। अगर तुमने फिर भी चाहा तो मैं तुम्हारे साथ जीने के लिए भी तैयार हो जाऊंगी और मरने के लिए भी।

और इस अजीबोगरीब खत में जैसे इमरोज ने उत्तर भी अलग अंदाज में दिया। इमरोज ने लिखा, तुम जिंदगी से रूठी हुई हो। मेरी भूल की इतनी बड़ी सजा नहीं आशी! यह बहुत ज्यादा है। दस साल का बनवास नहीं। नहीं! मेरे साथ ऐसा न करो। मुझे आबाद करके वीरान मत करो। दोनों के बीच यह पत्र व्यवहार दिसंबर, उन्नीस सौ साठ का है याने अमृता कोई इकतालीस साल की थी और इमरोज चौतीस के। यकीनन इसमें कोई तात्कालिक दैहिक दुविधा या द्वन्द्व है।

सिलसिला चलता रहा। अखिरकार इंदरजीत ने स्थाई तौर पर दिल्ली बस जाने का फैसला किया और मुंबई को अलविदा कह दिया। अमृता ने भी हौजखास इलाके में अपना घर बनवा लिया था। उन्नीस सौ बासठ में वो इस घर में रहने लगीं। इंदरजीत ने अमृता के बगल वाले मकान की पहली मंजिल किराए पर ले ली। अब रोज मिलने में कोई परेशानी नहीं थी। इंदरजीत ने एक स्कूटर खरीद लिया। बड़ी सुबह उनका दिन शुरू हो जाता। वो अमृता के बच्चों को स्कूल छोड़ने जाते। लौटते तो नहा धोकर अमृता को छोड़ने आकाशवाणी जाते। वहां से अमृता के बच्चों को स्कूल से घर छोड़ते। फिर आकाशवाणी आते। पार्क में बैठकर पेंटिंग बनाते और शाम को अमृता को लेकर हौज खास आ जाते। स्कूटर के पीछे बैठी अमृता साहिर के ख्यालों में डूबी रहती थी। जब वो स्कूटर पर पीछे बैठती तो उंगली से इंदरजीत की कमीज पर साहिर साहिर लिखती रहतीं। दिलचस्प यह कि इंदरजीत को पता था कि उसकी पीठ पर उसके रकीब का नाम लिखा जाता था। यही था इंदरजीत का दिल। धीरे धीरे दोनों को लगने लगा कि वो अलग अलग नहीं रह सकते। आठ जनवरी उन्नीस सौ चौंसठ से अमृता और इंदरजीत साथ रहने लगे। बिना शादी किये। हालांकि अमृता ने पहले इंदरजीत से कहा था, भई देख लो! पहले सारी दुनिया देख आओ, और अगर लौट कर भी तुमने मेरे साथ जीना चाहा तो फिर मैं वही करूंगी जो तुम कहोगे।

इंदरजीत ने उस कमरे के सात चक्कर लगाए और बोले, लो देख ली सारी दुनिया अब क्या कहती हो। अमृता लिखती हैं, अब ऐसे आदमी का कोई क्या करे? हँसे या रोये!

तब के समाज में उनके इस रिश्ते का जमकर विरोध हुआ, लेकिन उन्होंने कोई परवाह नहीं की। उन्होंने तो अपना समाज रचा था।

साथ रहने के साथ ही शुरू हो गया पुराना सिलसिला। अमृता को स्कूटर पर ऑल इंडिया रेडियो छोड़ने जाना और लेकर लौटना। दिन भर वही कहीं बैठकर पेंटिंग करना। इससे पहले सुबह अमृता के

बच्चों को स्कूल छोड़ना। कई बार तो ऐसा हुआ कि तीन सवारी होने के कारण पुलिस उनका चालान कर दिया। इंदरजीत पुलिस वाले को मुस्करा कर देखते, जुमाना भरते और चले जाते। एक दिन फिर तय हुआ कि क्यों न कार खरीदी जाए। पांच हजार अमृता ने दिए और इतने ही इंदरजीत ने मिलाए। कार खरीदी। रजिस्ट्रेशन करने वाले ने दो मालिकों के नाम देखे तो रिश्ता पूछा। इन्होंने बताया - दोस्त। रजिस्ट्रेशन करने वाला चकरा गया। कार का नाम रखा गया - नीली। इसका जिक्र अमृता की कहानियों में कई बार आया है। अब नया घर था, नई कार और नया साथ इंदरजीत का। सब कुछ नया था तो इंदरजीत पुराने कैसे रह सकते थे, सो उन्नीस सौ छियासठ में इंदरजीत हो गए - इमरोज, इमरोज याने आज याने वर्तमान। इसके बाद इस जोड़ी ने करीब चालीस बरस साथ बिताए। इमरोज अमृता को प्यार से हमेशा माजा कहा करते थे। इमरोज सुबह की चाय बनाते। अमृता को बिस्तर पर चाय मिलती। दोपहर का खाना मिलकर पकाते। रोटियां अमृता सेंकती और इमरोज सब्जी पकाते।

जानी मानी लेखिका उमा त्रिलोक ने एक बार इमरोज और अमृता से सवाल किया, आप लोगों ने क्या समाज में एक गलत परंपरा नहीं शुरू की है? उत्तर इमरोज ने दिया। बोले, वे जोड़े, जिन्हें अपने प्यार पर भरोसा नहीं होता, उन्हें सामाजिक स्वीकृति की जरूरत होती है। हम दोनों अपना मन जानते हैं। फिर समाज की क्या जरूरत है? दरअसल हम समाज के जरिए एक सुविधा खोजते हैं। मुझे और अमृता को ऐसी किसी सुविधा की जरूरत ही नहीं थी। अमृता ने इस उत्तर को आगे बढ़ाया, हमने प्रेम का बंधन और मजबूत किया है। जब शादी का आधार प्रेम है तो हमने कौन सा सामाजिक नियम तोड़ा है? हमने तन, मन, वचन और कर्म से साथ निभाया है जो शायद बहुत से दूसरे जोड़े नहीं कर पाते। हमने पूरी सच्चाई से इस रिश्ते को जिया है। फिर अमृता ने अपनी एक कविता दोहराई - रूह का जख्म / एक आम रोग है / जख्म के नंगेपन से / अगर आती है शर्म / तो एक टुकड़ा सपने का / फाड़कर जख्म पर लगा लें / ऐसी ही एक और बैठक में अमृता ने इमरोज से कहा, अगर मैं साहिर को पा लेती तो तुम्हें कैसे मिलती? इमरोज ने उत्तर दिया, तुम मुझे तो मिलती ही, चाहे मुझे तुम्हें साहिर के घर से ही निकाल कर लाना पड़ता। जब हम किसी को प्यार करते हैं तो रास्ते की मुश्किलें नहीं देखते।

इस आलेख के अंतिम चरण में एक बेहद भावुक संस्मरण। अमृता के मन में कभी भी अपने पति प्रीतम सिंह को लेकर गुस्सा, नफरत, चिढ़ या मनमुटाव नहीं था। अमृता से अलगाव हुए दशकों गुजर गए। अपने अंतिम दिनों में प्रीतम एकदम अकेले थे। बीमार थे और तीमारदारी के लिए कोई पास न था। अमृता के बेटे नवरोज को पता चला तो उसने माँ को पूछा कि क्या वो अपने पिता को घर लाकर उनकी देखभाल और सेवा कर सकता है। अमृता ने एक सेकंड भी नहीं लगाया। बेटे और इमरोज के साथ प्रीतम के पास गई, उन्हें साथ लेकर आई और उनकी भरपूर सेवा की। इमरोज ने प्रीतम की तीमारदारी में रात दिन एक

कर दिया। एक दिन प्रीतम सिंह ने अमृता के घर अमृता की बाँहों में अंतिम साँस ली। पूरे घर ने विधि विधान से उनके सारे संस्कार किए।

नई सदी दस्तक दे रही थी और पुरानी विदा ले रही थी। अमृता बड़े उत्साह से सन दो हजार में दाखिल हो रहीं थीं। वो उमर के अस्सी बसंत देख चुकीं थीं। इमरोज का साथ उन्हें हर दिन नया और ताजा बना देता था अलबत्ता शरीर कमजोर हो गया था और बुढ़ापे की बीमारियों ने घर बना लिया था। उन्हें अपने अंतिम सफर पर जाने का अनुमान हो गया था। वो अपने आप उठ बैठ भी नहीं पातीं थीं। इमरोज उन्हें अपने हाथ से नहलाते, कपड़े बदलते, उनके बाल ठीक करते और अपने हाथ से खाना खिलाते। इसके बाद भी उनकी लिखने की इच्छा बरकरार थी। एक दिन उन्होंने इमरोज से कागज और कलम माँगी। इमरोज के नाम अपनी आखिरी कविता लिखी। इस कविता का शीर्षक था - मैं तुम्हें फिर मिलूंगी। कविता की कुछ लाइनें इस तरह हैं

मैं तुम्हें फिर मिलूंगी
कहाँ? किस तरह? नहीं जानती,
शायद तुम्हारे ख्यालों की
चिंगारी बन कर
तुम्हारे केनवस पर उतरूंगी,
या शायद तुम्हारे केनवस पर
रहस्यमय रेखा बनकर
खामोश तुम्हें देखती रहूंगी
या शायद एक झरना बनूंगी
और जैसे उसका पानी उड़ता है
मैं पानी की बूँदें
तुम्हारे जिस्म पर मलूंगी
और टंडक सी बनकर
तुम्हारे सीने से लिपटूंगी
मैं और कुछ नहीं जानती
पर इतना जानती हूँ
कि वक्त जो भी करेगा
ये जन्म मेरे साथ चलेगा
ये जिस्म जब मिटता है
सब कुछ खत्म हो जाता है
पर चेतना के धागे
कायनाती कणों के होते हैं
मैं उन कणों को चुनूंगी
धागों को लपेटूंगी
और तुम्हें मैं फिर मिलूंगी।

इकतीस अक्टूबर दो हजार पांच का दिन इमरोज के लिए बड़ा भारी थालंबी बीमारी के बाद इमरोज की बाँहों में उन्होंने दशकों पुराने इस साथी को अलविदा कह दिया।

इमरोज आज करीब करीब नब्बे साल के हैं। अपने घर में अभी भी अमृता के साथ को एन्जॉय कर रहे हैं। पूरे घर के कण कण में अमृता की निशानियाँ नजर आती हैं। इमरोज कहते हैं कि अमृता ने देह छोड़ी है। रूह तो मेरे साथ ही है। वो मरी कहाँ? वो तो हमेशा मेरे साथ रहेगी

(लेखक प्रेस क्लब ऑफ इंडिया के सदस्य हैं)

मेरी यादें रेडियो के पुराने रस की



राजीव कुमार शुक्ल

हमारी पीढ़ी यानि आज 60-70 साल के हुए या हो रहे लोगों के बचपन से ले कर तरुणाई तक के दौर में जिन कुछ चीजों की लगभग जादुई उपस्थिति हुआ करती थी, उनमें एक खास नाम रेडियो का है। हमसे पहले वालों पर ये बात और भी लागू होती है, पर बहुत पहले तक नहीं जा सकते, क्योंकि भारत में रेडियो की कहानी की प्रायोगिक शुरूआत 1923 में हुई, नियमित प्रसारण का पहला अध्याय 23 जुलाई, 1927 को आरम्भ हुआ और फिर मध्य वर्ग तक इसका प्रसार होने में काफी-कुछ समय और लगा ही होगा। तो हमसे पुरानों के मामले में कई ने वृद्धावस्था में इसका साक्षात्कार किया, कुछ को प्रौढ़ावस्था में इसका संसर्ग नसीब हुआ, तो कुछ की जवानी इससे सँवरी। आज के कई नौजवान यह जान कर चकरा सकते हैं कि एक जमाने में विवाह के उपहारों में रेडियो की बड़ी प्रतिष्ठा थी और दूल्हों द्वारा कन्या पक्ष के सामने रखी जा सकने वाली सबसे लोकप्रिय और कठोर फरमाइशें रेडियो, साइकिल और कलाई घड़ी की होती थीं। बचपन ही नहीं, किशोरावस्था तक वह दौर कुछ-कुछ मैंने भी देखा था।

बहरहाल, अपने-आप पर लौटूँ, तो मैंने अपने होश संभालने के साथ-साथ रेडियो को नजदीक पाया। वे 1960 के दशक के आरम्भिक वर्ष थे। हम तब उत्तर प्रदेश के एक छोटे से शहर हरदोई में रहते थे, जहाँ पिताजी एक इंटरमीडिएट कॉलेज के प्रधानाचार्य थे और पद के मान्य दायित्वों से आगे जा कर खूब पढ़ने, तरह-तरह के खेल खेलने, फिल्में देखने और रेडियो सुनने के शौकीन थे और तब पिता के साथ

रहने वाली एकमात्र संतान होने के नाते इन सबकी विरासत मैं जाने-अनजाने प्राप्त करता गया। हमारे घर में मर्फी कंपनी का रेडियो सेट हुआ करता था और निश्चय ही घर में मौजूद सबसे जटिल आधुनिक उपकरण वही था। मर्फी के रेडियो के अखबारों-पत्रिकाओं में छपने वाले विज्ञापन में एक बेहद प्यारा गोरा-चिट्ठा छोटा सा बच्चा हुआ करता था, जिसके बारे में बाद में सही या गलत सुना गया कि बहुत छोटी उम्र में उसकी मृत्यु हो गई थी। जिस कमरे में वह रेडियो स्थापित था, उसमें उससे जुड़ा एक जालीदार लम्बा 'एरियल' विविध रेडियो स्टेशनों की सुगम 'ट्यूनिंग' के लिए तैनात रहता था। वह वह दौर था, जब रेडियोधारकों को एक निश्चित समयावधि के अंतरालों पर एक 'लाइसेंस फीस' भी भरनी होती थी और जहाँ तक मुझे याद है, इसके लिए पिताजी को पोस्ट-ऑफिस जाना पड़ता था।

उन शुरूआती दिनों में सबसे पहले जो सुनने की मेरी यादें हैं, उनमें फिल्म संगीत के रहे होने का एक प्रमाण मेरा खुद फिल्मी गाने गुनगुनाना और फिर लोगों के सामने भी गाना शुरू करना था। जो पहला गीत स्वयं द्वारा गाए जाने की स्पष्ट स्मृति है, वह था 'तेरी प्यारी-प्यारी सूरत को किसी की नजर ना लगे, चश्मे-बदूर'। यह उन दिनों के सर्वाधिक लोकप्रिय पुरुष फिल्मी पार्श्वगायक मोहम्मद रफी साहब ने फिल्म 'ससुराल' के लिए गाया था। यह 1961 की फिल्म थी, यानी तब मेरी उम्र चार साल थी। तय बात है कि तब इसके विवरण न पता रहे होंगे, न समझ में आ सकते थे। लेकिन धीरे-धीरे रेडियो पर फिल्मी गीतों को

हमारे घर में मर्फी कंपनी का रेडियो सेट हुआ करता था और निश्चय ही घर में मौजूद सबसे जटिल आधुनिक उपकरण वही था। मर्फी के रेडियो के अखबारों-पत्रिकाओं में छपने वाले विज्ञापन में एक बेहद प्यारा गोरा-चिट्ठा छोटा सा बच्चा हुआ करता था, जिसके बारे में बाद में सही या गलत सुना गया कि बहुत छोटी उम्र में उसकी मृत्यु हो गई थी।



सुनने का चस्का जैसे-जैसे बढ़ता गया, उद्धोषकों द्वारा बताए गए उनके विवरणों पर ध्यान जाने लगा होगा और चूँकि रुचि लगातार गाढ़ी होती गई होगी, इसलिए वे ब्योरे याद होने लग गए होंगे। बाद के सालों में कई मित्र इस बात पर मेरी प्रशंसा करते रहे हैं कि मुझे ढेर सारे फिल्मी गानों की फिल्मों और उनके गायक, गीतकार, संगीतकार आदि के विवरण याद रहे आए हैं। इसका पूरा श्रेय रेडियो को ही जाता है, क्योंकि उस दौर में इन जानकारीयों का लगभग एकमात्र स्रोत रेडियो उद्धोषणाएं ही हुआ करती थीं।

पिताजी रेडियो पर सर्वाधिक रुचि और मनोयोग से समाचार सुना करते थे और मेरे कानों में भी वे पड़ते ही रहे होंगे, लेकिन एक छोटे बच्चे के लिए उनसे निरन्तर तादात्म्य रख पाना लगभग असम्भव ही रहा होगा। जिस रेडियो समाचार को सुनने की सबसे स्पष्ट और प्रखर याद भीतर बसी है, वह तात्कालिक प्रधान मंत्री श्री लाल बहादुर शास्त्री के ताशकंद में आकस्मिक निधन का था, जो मैंने 11 जनवरी, 1966 की अलसुबह रजाई में लेटे-लेटे सुना था, जिसने तन-मन को झकझोर दिया था। इसके पहले 1965 का भारत-पाकिस्तान युद्ध हो चुका था और उसकी खबरें भी हमारे घर नियमित उत्कंठा से सुनी ही जाती रही होंगी। लेकिन उस युद्ध की सबसे सजीव मेरी 'रेडियो-याद' धारावाहिक 'ढोल की पोल' सुनने की है, जिसमें प्रहसन शैली में रेडियो पाकिस्तान के तत्कालीन 'प्रोपेगण्डा' प्रसारणों की बखिया उधेड़ी जाती थी। आज मैं जानता हूँ कि वह भारत में रेडियो नाटकों की आदि-विभूतियों में एक चिरंजीव जी द्वारा लिखित और प्रस्तुत शृंखला थी। बहरहाल, रेडियो नाटक विधा से वह पहला परिचय था, जिसमें बाद में और बहुत-कुछ सुनने और फिर खुद कुछ करने के अवसर भी आने थे, जो तब अनजाने भविष्य के गर्भ में थे।

लगभग उसी दौर में कभी रेडियो पर खेलों की कमेंट्री सुनने और उसके जादू में गिरफ्तार हो जाने का सिलसिला भी आया होगा। इसके प्रेरक और मार्गदर्शक भी पिताजी ही थे। शुरुआत में सिर्फ क्रिकेट कमेंट्री सुनने की यादें हैं और वह भी लगभग हमेशा अंग्रेजी में ही। सुनी गई धाराप्रवाह अंग्रेजी बूझ पाने की प्रारम्भिक दीक्षा निश्चित रूप से वही रही होगी। उस दौर के एक कमेंटेटर शरदेन्दु सान्याल की शैली मुझे बहुत अच्छी लगती थी, लेकिन दुख के साथ कहना पड़ेगा कि उनका नाम बाद के दौर में सुपरिचित लोगों में नहीं रहा। इसे इस माध्यम क्या, जीवन की क्षणभंगुरता की एक मिसाल के तौर पर देखा जा सकता है। धीरे-धीरे और कमेंटेटरों के नाम और आवाजों से पहचान हुई। महान खिलाड़ी लाला अमरनाथ विशेषज्ञ के रूप में शामिल होते थे और अपनी खरखराती आवाज और खरी-खरी बेबाक शैली में टिप्पणियाँ किया करते थे। अब तो ढेर सारे पूर्व खिलाड़ी प्रसारक हो गए हैं, पर उस दौर में मुझे लाला अमरनाथ ही उस तरह की भूमिका में याद आते हैं।

और फिर रेडियो पर हिन्दी में भी खेलों का आँखों देखा हाल प्रसारित होना शुरू हुआ और एक अद्भुत नायक हमारे कानों के जरिए दिलो-दिमाग में आ बसे। इनका नाम था जसदेव सिंह और इनकी कमेंट्री जैसे



उद्दाम नदी की वेगवती धारा की तरह बहती थी। जसदेव जी क्रिकेट कमेंट्री भी करते थे और अच्छी करते थे, लेकिन मेरी निजी राय में वे लाजवाब हिन्दी रेडियो कमेंटेटर थे हॉकी के। भारत में क्रिकेट के एकछत्र राज और बेशुमार रलैमर और अकूत पैसे के मौजूदा दौर में अब की और हाल की भी कई पीढ़ियों को यह जानकर अचम्भा हो सकता है कि हम लोग ओलम्पिक, एशिआई और राष्ट्रमंडल और बाद में हॉकी विश्व कप में भारत के मैचों की कमेंट्री किस तरह साँस रोककर सुना करते थे। 1972 से मैं उच्च शिक्षा के लिए बनारस में काशी हिन्दू विश्व विद्यालय का छात्र हो चुका था और आज भी मुझे याद है कि एक बार अगले दिन परीक्षा थी, लेकिन भारत और अर्जेंटीना के बीच हॉकी मैच का उतार-चढ़ाव हमारी साझा धड़कनें बढ़ाए हुए था और देर रात तक उसकी कमेंट्री हम सुनते रहे थे। उस जमाने में हम छात्रावासी विद्यार्थियों के पास अपना रेडियो-ट्रांजिस्टर होना बहुत दुर्लभ बात थी और जिस संपन्न घर के बिगड़े नवाब के पास यह नेमत होती थी, उसके कमरे में हॉकी या क्रिकेट के मैचों के दौरान वैसी ही भीड़ और रौनक हुआ करती थी, जैसी बाद में टीवी वाले घरों में इतवार की फिल्म और 'चित्रहार' के प्रसारण के समय। मेरे लिए हॉकी की सबसे यादगार कमेंट्री 1975 के वर्ल्ड कप के भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच खेले गए फाइनल मैच की रही, जो अब तक अकेला वह अवसर रहा है, जब भारत ने हॉकी विश्व कप का खिताब जीता। जसदेव सिंह की आवाज पर सवार उस मैच के सभी रोमांचक पल आज भी भीतर धड़कते हैं।

तो रेडियो की पुरानी यादों की मेरी कहानी के ये थे कुछ पन्ने। अभी और ऐसी बहुत सी स्मृतियों का दुलार भरा स्पर्श भीतर गुनगुनाने लगा है। पर उनका बयान फिर कभी। अभी आपकी अपनी कुछ रेडियो-यादें सुगबुगाई क्या? उन्हें भी कभी मिल-बाँटिए। अच्छा लेगेगा।

(लेखक प्रेस क्लब ऑफ इंडिया के सदस्य हैं)

लगभग उसी दौर में कभी रेडियो पर खेलों की कमेंट्री सुनने और उसके जादू में गिरफ्तार हो जाने का सिलसिला भी आया होगा। इसके प्रेरक और मार्गदर्शक भी पिताजी ही थे। शुरुआत में सिर्फ क्रिकेट कमेंट्री सुनने की यादें हैं और वह भी लगभग हमेशा अंग्रेजी में ही। सुनी गई धाराप्रवाह अंग्रेजी बूझ पाने की प्रारम्भिक दीक्षा निश्चित रूप से वही रही होगी।

आशा भोसले की बात ही कुछ और थी



प्रदीप सरदाना

अभी लगभग साल भर पहले की बात है, महान गायिका आशा भोसले से दिल्ली के ताज पैलेस होटल में मुलाकात हुई थी। वह एक न्यूज चैनल द्वारा आयोजित कार्यक्रम में नारी शक्ति पुरस्कार लेने आई थीं। राष्ट्रपति द्रौपदी मुर्मू कार्यक्रम में मुख्य अतिथि थीं। आशा जी के मंच पर जाने से पहले और कार्यक्रम के बाद भी मेरी उनसे बात हुई। लेकिन उस कार्यक्रम में, मैं यह देखकर दंग रह गया, जब राष्ट्रपति ने प्रोटोकॉल तोड़कर खुद माइक थामा और आशा जी से एक गाने की फरमाइश कर दी।

राष्ट्रपति ने फिल्म 'लगान' का गीत 'मीरा कैसे न जले' सुनने की इच्छा जताई। आशा जी ने कहा, उन्हें शब्द पूरे याद नहीं हैं। फिर भी उन्होंने इस गीत की कुछ पंक्तियाँ सुनाई तो समां बँध गया। तब राष्ट्रपति ने कहा कि आपने मेरा पसंदीदा गाना गाया, अब आप अपना कोई पसंदीदा गाना सुनाइए। तब आशा जी ने अपना बेहद लोकप्रिय गीत गाया- चुरा लिया है तुमने जो दिल को, नजर नहीं चुराना सनम...।

मैं अपने परिवार के साथ उस समारोह में था। इसलिए मैं और मेरा परिवार उन खूबसूरत अविस्मरणीय पलों का साक्षी बनकर गदगद थे। उधर राष्ट्रपति भी इतनी खुश हुई कि खुद आशा जी का हाथ थामकर उन्हें मंच से नीचे छोड़ने के लिए आगे तक आई, यह भी प्रोटोकॉल से परे था।

यह वाक्या दिखाता है, एक कलाकार का कद कितना बड़ा हो सकता है कि देश की राष्ट्रपति उन्हें इतना सम्मान दें।

आशा जी से कितनी ही मुलाकातें हुई। उन्हें कई बार मंच से लाइव सुना। वह अक्सर अपनी यात्रा और संघर्षों के बारे में बताती थीं, तो लगता था, बिल्कुल किसी आम घरेलू महिला की तरह ही उनके जीवन संघर्ष रहे थे और तमाम संघर्षों के बीच से उन्होंने अपने लिए कामयाबी की बेमिसाल राह बनाई।

जीवन में उतार-चढ़ाव रहे भरपूर

महान संगीतज्ञ दीना नाथ मंगेशकर के यहाँ 8 सितंबर 1933 को जन्मी आशा का पूरे जीवन में उतार-चढ़ाव भरपूर रहे। दस साल की उम्र में अपना गायन जीवन शुरू करने वाली आशा ने सन 1949 में सिर्फ 16 साल की उम्र में अपने से 16 साल बड़े गणपत राव भोसले से प्रेम विवाह कर अपने पूरे परिवार को नाराज कर दिया था। वह अपने संघर्षों को यदा-कदा याद भी करती थीं। बहुत कठिन समय था। उनके तीन बच्चे हुए- दो बेटे हेमंत और आनंद और

एक बेटी वर्षा। उन्होंने बेटी होने के लिए महालक्ष्मी मंदिर में मन्नत भी मांगी थी। पति और ससुराल के अत्याचार के बाद आशा ने तलाक लेकर 1959 में अपनी जिंदगी नए सिरे से शुरू की। तीनों बच्चों की अच्छे से परवरिश करते हुए वह जल्द ही सफलता-लोकप्रियता के इतिहास रचने लगीं। हालांकि इन सफलताओं के बीच उन्हें गम भी मिले। पहले उनके बेटे हेमंत का निधन हो गया और फिर बेटी वर्षा भी नहीं रही। जिससे उन्हें गहरा सदमा लगा। लेकिन अपने दुख और सदमे को आशा भोसले ने दिल के भीतर तक ही रखा, बाहर नहीं आने दिया। कुछ समय पहले तो उनके दूसरे बेटे, आनंद को भी दिल का दौरा पड़ा था तो वह काफी विचलित हो गई थीं। लेकिन यहाँ प्रभु कृपा रही, आनंद जल्द स्वस्थ हो गए। आनंद ही उनका सारा काम और शेड्यूल संभालते रहे हैं।



आशा भोसले के करियर को शुरू से देखें तो उन्होंने उस दौर में इंडस्ट्री में कदम रखा, जब राजकुमारी, सुरैया, नूरजहां, शमशाद बेगम और गीता दत्त जैसी दिग्गज पार्श्व गायिकाओं का बोलबाला था। फिर उनकी अपनी बहन लता मंगेशकर भी 1949 में बरसात के बाद बहुत मशहूर हो गई थीं। इसलिए आशा को अपने लिए अपनी अलग जगह बनाना बहुत मुश्किल था। आशा जी बताती थीं कि बचपन में उनकी और लता जी की आवाजें मिलती-जुलती थीं। खुद को अलग दिखाने के लिए उन्होंने अंग्रेजी गाने सुनना शुरू किया, ताकि वह एक हाई-पिच और अलग अंदाज विकसित कर सके। यही उनकी पहचान बनी और उन्हें गजब की विविधता हासिल हुई।

हालांकि, लता जी और आशा जी को सदियों तक याद रखा जाएगा। लता जी शुरू से अपनी छोटी बहन को बहुत प्रेम करती थीं। हालांकि एक समय ऐसा भी आया जब दोनों के बीच दूरियाँ हो गईं, कुछ मनमुटाव हो गए। लेकिन बाद में सब ठीक भी हो गया।

लता से अधिक गीत गाए आशा ने

इन दोनों बहनों का करियर बेहद शानदार रहा। जहाँ तक कुल गीत गाने की बात है तो लता जी ने सात हजार के करीब गाने गाए, तो आशा जी ने दस हजार से ज्यादा। हालांकि संसार ने लता मंगेशकर को नंबर वन कहा और आशा भोसले को नंबर दो। लेकिन यह कटु सत्य है कि आशा के गीतों में विविधता के हजार रंग हैं। आशा ने सभी रंग के गीत गाए। कई ऐसे गीत जिन्हें लता मंगेशकर नहीं गा सकती थीं या कहें कि उतनी खूबसूरती से नहीं गा सकती थीं। यूँ दोनों बहनें 92 की आयु में संसार से

आशा भोसले के करियर को शुरू से देखें तो उन्होंने उस दौर में इंडस्ट्री में कदम रखा, जब राजकुमारी, सुरैया, नूरजहां, शमशाद बेगम और गीता दत्त जैसी दिग्गज पार्श्व गायिकाओं का बोलबाला था। फिर उनकी अपनी बहन लता मंगेशकर भी 1949 में बरसात के बाद बहुत मशहूर हो गई थीं।



विदा हुई। हालांकि लता जी ने अपने निधन से काफी पहले गीत गाना बंद कर दिया था। लेकिन आशा जी अंत तक गीत-संगीत की दुनिया में सक्रिय रहीं। अभी पिछले वर्ष 2025 में ही उन्होंने अदनान सामी के साथ एक एलबम “आओ ना” किया। इससे पहले 2024 में अपना एक और एलबम सैंया बिना जग सूना भी प्रस्तुत किया। जिसमें उनकी प्रिय खूबसूरत पोती जनाई भोसले का आकर्षक कथक नृत्य भी है।

आशा भोसले की लाजवाब प्रतिभा और अलग अलग अंदाज में गायन की अनुपम क्षमता यूं तो सैंकड़ों बार सभी ने देखी। लेकिन 8 सितंबर 2024 को अपने 90 वें जन्मदिन पर दुबई में लंबा लाइव कॉन्सर्ट करके तो आशा ने विश्व को जता दिया उन जैसा कोई और नहीं। मैं जब भी उनसे मिला, उनकी बेमिसाल ऊर्जा ने मुझे हैरान किया। वह देखने, चलने फिरने और गायन में कहीं से भी 90-92 की नहीं लगती थीं। आवाज में वही खनक और तेज याददाश्त। उन्होंने करीब 20 भाषाओं में गीत गाए। वह बताती थीं, उनके पिता दीनानाथ मंगेशकर संस्कृत पर बहुत जोर देते थे, इसलिए पांचों भाई बहनों ने संस्कृत सीखी। इसी कारण वह किसी भी भाषा में गा सकीं। वह कहती थीं-अगर आप संस्कृत व तमिल में गा सकते हैं, तो कोई भी भाषा मुश्किल नहीं है।

मैं जब आशा भोसले की संगीत यात्रा का विश्लेषण करता हूँ तो देखता हूँ उनकी प्रतिभा को मुख्यतः तीन संगीतकारों ने निखारा, ओ पी नैय्यर, रवि और आरडी बर्मन। यूं विभिन्न संगीतकारों ने उन्हें एक से एक गीत और एक से एक धुनें दीं। जिनमें हंसराज बहल, रोशन, सचिन देव बर्मन, मदन मोहन, जयदेव, सी रामचन्द्र, लक्ष्मीकांत प्यारेलाल, कल्याणजी आनंदजी, भूपी लहिरी रवींद्र जैन और ए आर रहमान तक बहुत से नाम हैं। लेकिन सबसे अधिक गीत उन्होंने पंचम दा यानि आर डी बर्मन के साथ गाए।

उनके लोकप्रिय गीतों की एक बहुत बड़ी सूची है। जिनमें- चन्दा मामा दूर के, मांग के साथ तुम्हारा, गरीबों की सुनो, परदे में रहने दो, झुमका गिरा रे, आओ हुजूर तुमको, दीवाना हुआ बादल, पिया तू अब तो आजा, दम मारो दम, ये रातें ये मौसम, सजना हैं मुझे सजना के लिए, ये मेरा दिल, रात बाकी, जब छाए मेरा जादू, होजा रंगीला रे और शरारा शरारा जैसे गीत भी शामिल हैं।

खूब मिले सम्मान

आशा भोसले को अपने जीवन में कई तरह के संघर्ष और दुख झेलने पड़े लेकिन उन्हें सम्मान भी बहुत मिले। सन 2000 में उन्हें दादा साहब फाल्के सम्मान मिला तो 2008 में भारत सरकार ने आशा भोसले को पद्म विभूषण सम्मान से नवाजा। दो बार उन्हें सर्वश्रेष्ठ गायिका का राष्ट्रीय फिल्म पुरस्कार भी मिला। सन् 1981 में फिल्म उमराव जान के गीत दिल चीज क्या है के लिए और 1987 में फिल्म इजाजत के गीत- “मेरा कुछ सामान के लिए” जब 12 अप्रैल 2026 को आशा भोसले ने 92 की उम्र में दुनिया को अलविदा कहा तब उनके दो गीत तो दिमाग में काफी गूँजते रहे। एक -अभी न जाओ छोड़कर और दूसरा- “मेरा कुछ सामान तुम्हारे पास पड़ा है।” मानो वह अपने हजारों गीतों के लिए हमसे कह रही हों- मेरा कुछ सामान तुम्हारे पास पड़ा है, मेरा वह सामान लौटा दो। लेकिन आशा जी के वे गीत हम उन्हें कभी नहीं लौटाना चाहेंगे। उनके वे गीत हमको सुकून भी देते हैं, प्रेम भी, आनंद भी और प्रेरणा भी। लेकिन हम उनकी इस विरासत के लिए सदा अपना प्रेम लुटाते रहेंगे, उन्हें शिद्वत से ऐसे ही नमन करते रहेंगे। सच कहूँ तो आशा भोसले की बात ही कुछ और थी।

(वरिष्ठ पत्रकार एवं फिल्म समीक्षक)

आशा भोसले को अपने जीवन में कई तरह के संघर्ष और दुख झेलने पड़े लेकिन उन्हें सम्मान भी बहुत मिले। सन 2000 में उन्हें दादा साहब फाल्के सम्मान मिला तो 2008 में भारत सरकार ने आशा भोसले को पद्म विभूषण सम्मान से नवाजा। दो बार उन्हें सर्वश्रेष्ठ गायिका का राष्ट्रीय फिल्म पुरस्कार भी मिला।



دی۔ لیکن جب میں نے بی بی سی اردو سروس کی ویب سائٹ پر بھی 'مذبح خانہ' دیکھا تو اس کے شکایت کے کالم میں ایک مکتوب پوسٹ کیا۔ جس پر ریڈی میڈ جواب آیا کہ آپ کی شکایت پر پندرہ دنوں کے اندر کارروائی کی جائے گی۔ دہلی کے ایک بڑے اخبار میں بھی 'مذبح خانہ' ہی لکھا جاتا رہا۔ ہم نے نشاندہی کی اور بتایا کہ جس طرح مسجد کے ساتھ خانہ نہیں لگے گا کیونکہ خانہ اس میں پوشیدہ ہے اسی طرح مذبح کے ساتھ بھی خانہ نہیں لگے گا۔ مذبح کا مطلب ہی ہے ذبح کرنے کی جگہ۔ اسی طرح جیسے مسجد مسجدہ کرنے کی جگہ۔ بہر حال متعدد بار نشاندہی کے بعد اس اخبار میں اس غلطی کی اصلاح ہو گئی۔ پاکستان کے روزنامہ 'جسارت' کے ایڈیٹر اطہر ہاشمی ہر ہفتے ایک کالم لکھتے تھے، جس کا عنوان تھا 'خبر لیجے زبان بگڑی'۔ اس میں وہ زبان کی اصلاح کرتے تھے۔ لیکن اب وہ اللہ کو پیارے ہو چکے ہیں۔ اب کوئی اس طرح زبان کی اصلاح کرنے والا نہیں ہے۔ بہر حال ایسا نہیں ہے کہ ملک بھر سے شائع ہونے والے تمام اردو اخباروں میں ایسی غلطیاں ہوتی ہوں۔ کچھ اخبارات اسے بھی ہیں جو ان باتوں کا خیال اور لحاظ رکھتے ہیں۔ اس لیے سب کو اپنی ہی پیمانے پر نہیں تولا جاسکتا۔

(سہیل انجم سینئر صحافی اور پریس کلب آف انڈیا کے ممبر ہیں)

دی جاتی ہے۔ اس کو پڑھنے اور اس کی اغلاط کو درست کرنے کی کوئی ضرورت محسوس نہیں کی جاتی۔ حالانکہ ڈیلیک پریٹیجے ہوئے سب ایڈیٹر کی یہ ذمہ داری ہے کہ وہ پوری خبر پڑھے۔ اگر غلطیاں ہیں تو انہیں درست کرے۔ غیر ضروری تفصیلات کو ایڈٹ کرے اور اسے چھپنے کے قابل بنائے۔ اس سے خبر کا بھی معیار بلند ہوتا ہے اور اخبار کا بھی۔ آج کل اردو اخبارات میں زبان و بیان کی غلطیاں تو بہت ہوتی ہیں۔ پہلے کہا جاتا تھا کہ زبان سیکھنی ہو تو اخبار پڑھا کیجئے۔ لیکن اب یہ کہنا پڑتا ہے کہ زبان بگاڑنی ہو تو اخبار پڑھا کیجئے۔

ایک مثال دے کر بات ختم کروں گا۔ جب اتر پردیش میں یوگی آدیتھ ناتھ کی قیادت میں بی جے پی کی حکومت قائم ہوئی تو ابتدا میں جو اہم فیصلے کیے گئے تھے ان میں ایک فیصلہ سلاٹر ہاؤسز یا بوچڑ خانوں کے سلسلے کا بھی تھا۔ (اب یہاں لفظ فیصلہ استعمال ہوا ہے۔ بہت سے اردو صحافی ہندی والوں کی نقل میں فیصلہ لیا لکھتے اور بولتے ہیں، جبکہ فیصلہ لیا نہیں کیا جاتا ہے)۔ بہر حال میں نے ریڈیو وائس آف امریکہ کے لیے رپورٹ تیار کی اور سلاٹر ہاؤس یا بوچڑ خانے کو 'مذبح' لکھا۔ لیکن جب رپورٹ نشر ہونے کے بعد اس کی ویب سائٹ پر لگی تو مذبح کو 'مذبح خانہ' لکھا ہوا تھا۔ میں نے دفتر میں میل کیا اور اس کی نشاندہی کی۔ انہوں نے فوراً اس کی تصحیح کر

بعد فوج کی جانب سے یہ وضاحت آئی کہ یہ خبر غلط ہے۔ ایسی کوئی کارروائی نہیں ہوئی ہے۔ خبر انگریزی میں آئی اور اردو کے صحافی نے جناب گوگل کی خدمات حاصل کیں اور اس سے اردو میں ترجمہ کر لیا۔ اب یا تو نہیں دیکھا نہیں کہ ترجمہ کیسا ہے یا پھر خود ان کی سمجھ میں کچھ نہیں آیا ہو گا۔ یا پھر انہوں نے یہ سمجھا ہو کہ گوگل صاحب تو ماشاء اللہ بہت عالم فاضل ہیں، ان سے کوئی غلطی نہیں ہوگی۔ صبح کو جب میں نے اس خبر کو پڑھا تو اس کا ترجمہ تھا کہ ہندوستانی افواج نے پاک مقبوضہ کشمیر میں 'ہڑتال' کرنے کی تردید کر دی۔ حضرت گوگل نے اسٹرائیک کا ترجمہ ہڑتال کیا اور اخبار میں وہی چھپا۔ جبکہ اسٹرائیک کا لغوی معنی کارروائی بھی ہوتا ہے۔ اسی طرح جب سن دھوزار رسولہ میں ہندوستانی افواج نے پاکستان میں سرجیکل اسٹرائیک کی تھی تو ایک اور بڑے اردو اخبار نے سرجیکل اسٹرائیک کا ترجمہ 'جراحی ہڑتال' کیا تھا۔ ظاہر ہے نہ تو سب ایڈیٹر صاحب نے اور نہ ہی ایڈیٹر صاحب نے اس خبر پر ایک نگاہ ڈالنے کی زحمت کی تھی۔

❖ زبان بگاڑنی ہو تو اخبار پڑھا کیجئے!

ایک بڑی خامی یہ بھی پیدا ہو گئی ہے کہ اخباروں کے دفتر میں باہر سے جو خبر جس طرح آتی ہے اسی طرح لگا

نوآموز اور نئی نسل کے اردو صحافیوں کے نام

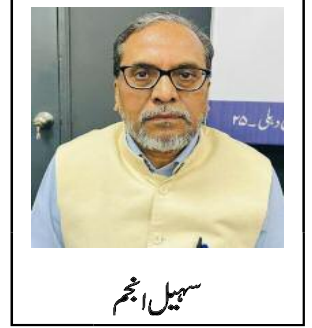
پہلے کہا جاتا تھا کہ زبان سیکھنی ہو تو اخبار پڑھا کیجئے، لیکن اب یہ کہنا پڑتا ہے کہ زبان بگاڑنی ہو تو اخبار پڑھا کیجئے

دوسری ویب سائٹوں سے مواد حاصل کرنے (سرقت) کے فن میں ماہر ہیں اور کمپیوٹر پر صفحہ سازی کر لیتے ہیں تو وہ سمجھتے ہیں کہ وہ صحافت کے استاد ہو گئے۔

❖ گوگل ٹرانسلیشن کا کمال

آج بہت سے اخباروں میں پروف ریڈنگ کی روایت ختم ہوتی جا رہی ہے، جس کی وجہ سے ایسی ایسی غلطیاں ہوتی ہیں کہ سرپیٹ لینے کو جی چاہتا ہے۔ ایسی غلطیاں بعض سب ایڈیٹروں کی کم علمی کی وجہ سے بھی ہوتی

استعمال کیا وہیں وہ مر گیا۔ ان کا کہنا تھا کہ ”بندہ مر جائے تو مر جائے لیکن لفظ نہیں مرنے چاہیے۔“ انفارمیشن ٹکنالوجی کی ترقی سے صحافت کو بہت فائدہ پہنچا ہے۔ آج کے نوآموز اردو صحافی بھی اس سے بھرپور فائدہ اٹھا رہے ہیں۔ نہ صرف صحافی بلکہ اخباروں کے دفتر سے بہت دور بیٹھے لوگ بھی اپنے کمپیوٹر پر خبریں یا مضامین ٹائپ کر کے اخباروں میں بھیجتے ہیں اور وہ شائع بھی ہوتے ہیں۔ کمپیوٹر اور انٹرنیٹ نے اخباروں میں کام کرنے کی رفتار میں زبردست اضافہ کر دیا ہے۔ کم



سہیل انجم

اردو صحافیوں کی جو آخری نسل ہے وہ تو اپنا کام کر چکی۔ دوسری نسل بھی اپنا کام مکمل کرنے کے راستے پر گامزن ہے۔ البتہ جو تیسری نسل ہے اس کو ابھی اس راستے پر بہت دور تک جانا ہے۔ اس لیے ضرورت اس بات کی ہے کہ وہ صحافت کے رموز و نکات سے واقف ہو۔ خبر سازی کیا ہوتی ہے؟ جملے کیسے لکھے جاتے ہیں؟ کم سے کم الفاظ میں زیادہ سے زیادہ اور جامع انداز میں اپنی بات کیسے کہی جاتی ہے؟ کس قسم کے خبروں کے لیے کس قسم کے الفاظ کا انتخاب کرنا ہوتا ہے؟ مضامین کیسے لکھے جانے چاہئیں؟ ان میں ادبی چاشنی کیسے پیدا کی جائے اور اپنی تحریر کو کیسے پر لطف بنایا جائے؟ ان تمام باتوں کو سیکھنے کی ضرورت ہے۔

کم سے کم الفاظ میں زیادہ سے زیادہ بات کہنا ایک فن ہے، جو مشق سے سیکھا جاسکتا ہے۔ یہ بات ذہن میں رکھنی چاہیے کہ اسراف صرف پیسوں کا نہیں ہوتا بلکہ الفاظ کا بھی ہوتا ہے۔ اب یہاں لفظ ”اسراف“ استعمال کیا گیا ہے۔ کچھ لوگ اس کے ساتھ بیجا طریقے سے ”بیجا“ بھی لگا دیتے ہیں، یعنی بیجا اسراف۔ جب کہ بیجا بجائے خود اسراف میں پوشیدہ ہے۔

پاکستان کے معروف کالم نویس اور شاعر و ادیب عطاء الحق قاسمی نے اپنے ایک کالم میں کم سے کم الفاظ پر زور دیتے ہوئے لکھا تھا کہ جہاں ہم نے غیر ضروری لفظ



ہے۔ انٹرنیٹ نے جہاں بہت سی سہولتیں پیدا کی ہیں وہیں گوگل ٹرانسلیشن بھی موجود ہے۔ لیکن اس پر بھروسہ نہیں کیا جاسکتا۔ وہ ناموں کا بھی ترجمہ کر دیتا ہے۔ دہلی سے شائع ہونے والے ایک بڑے روزنامے نے سپریم کورٹ کے معروف وکیل پر شانت بھوشن کا نام ”بحر اکامل بھوشن“ کر دیا تھا۔ اگر کسی کے نام میں ”منور نجن“ ہو تو اس کا ”تفریح“ ہو جانا تو عام بات ہے۔

اس سلسلے میں ایک دلچسپ واقعہ سن لیجئے۔ ہوا ہوں کہ میڈیا میں یہ خبر آئی تھی کہ ہندوستانی افواج نے پاکستان مقبوضہ کشمیر میں اسٹرائیک یا کارروائی کی ہے۔ چند روز

سے کم وقت میں زیادہ سے زیادہ کام کرنے کے مواقع مل رہے ہیں۔ روزنامہ اخباروں میں زائد از ایک ایڈیشن کی تیاری میں بڑی سہولت ہو گئی ہے۔ لیکن اس ترقی کا ایک منفی پہلو بھی ہے۔ میں اخباروں کی حد تک بات کروں گا۔ اب استاد شاگردی کی رویت کمپیوٹر نے تقریباً ختم کر دی ہے۔ میں نے کئی سال سینئر صحافیوں کو اپنا استاذ بنایا اور ان سے میں نے بہت کچھ سیکھا۔ لیکن معاف کیجئے آج کے نوآموز صحافیوں کے نزدیک استاد شاگردی کی کوئی اہمیت نہیں ہے۔ چونکہ وہ کمپیوٹر پر کام کرنا جانتے ہیں،

ہی زیادہ موقع ہاتھ آئے گا۔ آپ کے یہی رابطے آپ کو بریکنگ اسٹوری دلائیں گے، معاشرے میں ہر طرح کے لوگوں سے رابطہ رکھیں، چلتے پھرتے جہاں جتنا موقع ہو زیادہ سے زیادہ لوگوں سے بات کریں ان کے احوال جاننے میں دلچسپی رکھیں، ہمیشہ الرٹ رہیں آپ جہاں کھڑے ہیں اسٹوری آپ کے ارد گرد ہی کہیں ہے اسے تلاش کرنے کی کوشش کریں۔ اپنے شہر یا قصبے کے اہم مقامات پر نوجوانوں سے رابطے بنائیں، خبر تک پہنچنے میں یہ آپ کے بہت کام آئیں گے۔

❖ اپنی اسٹوری کو کئی بار چیک کریں

جرنلسٹ ہونے کے ناطے آپ پر بڑی ذمہ داری عائد ہوتی ہے کہ کوئی بھی اسٹوری تیار کرنے کے بعد پبلش یا براڈ کاسٹ کرنے سے قبل اسٹوری کے ہر حصے کو دھیان سے ایک سے زائد بار چیک کر لیں، دیکھیں کہ کہیں نام، تاریخ، گنتی، پتہ اور اعداد و شمار غلط تو نہیں ہیں۔ اسٹوری کو پبلش یا براڈ کاسٹ کرنے سے قبل ایک بار غور سے تنقیدی نظر ڈالیں پھر اسے جتنا کی عدالت میں پیش کریں۔

❖ موبائل جرنلزم کی چند بنیادی باتیں

اگر مجھ سے کہیں کہ موبائل جرنلزم کی چند بنیادی باتیں کیا ہیں تو میں کہوں گا کہ ایک موبائل جرنلسٹ میں جرنلزم کی صلاحیت اور دلچسپی ہونا پہلی شرط ہے، دوسرا نمبر ٹیکنالوجی کا آنا ہے کہ موبائل جرنلسٹ کو ٹیکنالوجی کی اچھی جانکاری اور اس پر گرفت اور تیسری بات یہ کہ موبائل جرنلسٹ ہونے کے لازمی شرط ہے کہ آپ کے پاس ضروری آلات ہوں اور ان کا بہتر استعمال آتا ہو۔ یعنی اسکل، ٹیکنالوجی، اکوپیمینٹ یہ تین بنیادی چیزیں ہیں جن کے ارد گرد موبائل جرنلزم کا پہیا گھومتا ہے۔

(اشرف علی بستی ایشیانا نامہ کے چیف ایڈیٹر اور پریس کلب آف انڈیا کے ممبر ہیں)



موبائل جرنلزم کے مسئلے کے حل کے لیے گوگل پلے پر ایسے کئی موبائل ایڈیٹنگ ایپ دستیاب ہیں جنہیں اپنے موبائل پر انسٹال کر کے آپ ویڈیو ایڈیٹنگ کر سکتے ہیں۔ Power Director ایک بہت اچھا ایپ ہے۔ اسے خرید کر آپ اپنے ویڈیو کی اچھی ایڈیٹنگ کر سکتے ہیں، اس کے علاوہ Kine

Master ویڈیو ایڈیٹنگ کا اچھا ایپ ہے، اس سے بھی بہت اچھی ایڈیٹنگ کی جاتی ہے۔ ایک اچھے ویڈیو کے لیے تمام فیچر اس ایپ میں دستیاب ہیں۔ مختصراً یہ کہ ایک موبائل جرنلسٹ کو اپنی خبر کے لیے سب سے پہلے اچھی پلاننگ کرنی ضروری ہے، پھر وہ اپنی اسٹوری کے لیے ریسرچ کرے، پتہ لگائے کہ اس کی اسٹوری کے لیے کون کون چیزیں معاون ہو سکتی ہیں، اسٹوری سے متعلق تمام معلومات جانچ پرکھ کر لے، پھر ویڈیو شوٹنگ کے لیے نکلے، شوٹنگ کے بعد اسے پروفیشنل ایڈیٹ کرے۔

❖ رابطہ عامہ جتنا اچھا ہوگا اتنی اچھی اسٹوری ملے گی

ایک جرنلسٹ کے لیے بہت اہم ہے کہ اس کا رابطہ عامہ مضبوط ہو، جتنا اچھا رابطہ ہوگا اہم خبریں ملنے کا اتنا

اپنے دفتر یا گھر جائیں اور وہاں اپنے کمپیوٹر پر اپنی ویڈیو اسٹوری ایڈیٹ کریں، اس لیے موبائل جرنلسٹ کے لیے یہ بے حد اہم ہے کہ وہ موبائل پر دستیاب ایڈیٹنگ ایپ کے ذریعے ہی ایڈیٹ کر کے اپلوڈ کر دے۔

❖ موبائل فون ایڈیٹنگ سافٹ ویئر کا استعمال

آپ نے رپورٹنگ کے دوران جو ویڈیو ریکارڈ کی ہے کبھی کبھی اسے وہیں ایڈیٹنگ کرنا اور فوری طور پر وہیں سے براڈ کاسٹ کرنا پڑ سکتا ہے۔ موبائل جرنلزم اور روایتی جرنلزم میں یہی بنیادی فرق ہے کہ یہاں کم وقت میں تیزی کے ساتھ نتیجے دینے ہوتے ہیں اس لیے زیادہ بہتر ہے کہ آپ موبائل ایڈیٹنگ کسی سافٹ ویئر کو اچھی طرح سیکھ لیں، اس سے آپ میں کافی خود اعتمادی پیدا ہوگی۔ ایک اچھا موبائل جرنلسٹ وہی سمجھا جاتا ہے جو موبائل کے سبھی فیچر س کو اچھی طرح چلانے کی مہارت رکھتا ہو، جس میں یہ صلاحیت ہو کہ اسٹوری کا آئیڈیا سوچے، میدان میں نکل پڑے اسٹوری ریکارڈ کرے اور وہیں ایڈیٹ کرے اور وہیں سے چینل پر اپلوڈ کر دے۔



❖ اپنا فون ہمیشہ پورا چارج رکھیں

کہیں ایسا نہ ہو کہ جب آپ نے کسی اہم اسٹوری کے لیے فون نکالا اور آپ کی بیٹری ڈاون ہوئی پڑی ہے، زیادہ مناسب ہو گا کہ ہمیشہ ایک اچھا پاور بینک اپنے ساتھ رکھیں جسے نکلنے سے قبل چارج کر لیں۔

❖ آپ کی لغت میں ڈیلیٹ کا آپشن نہیں ہونا چاہیے

آپ کو نہیں معلوم کہ ویڈیو ایڈیٹنگ کے مرحلے میں کب کہاں کیا مسئلہ پیدا ہو جائے اور ویڈیو کی فائل کبٹ ہو جائے اس لیے ویڈیو کی اصل کاپی جو آپ نے ریکارڈ کی ہے اسے ہرگز ڈیلیٹ نہ کریں بلکہ اسے ڈراپ باکس یا دوسری ڈرائیو میں محفوظ رکھیں، جب تک ویڈیو چینل پر براڈ کاسٹ نہ ہو جائے اس وقت تک تو ہر حال میں فائل کو سنبھال کر رکھیں۔ موبائل جرنلزم میں ایک جرنلسٹ 'اون مین آرمی' ہوتا ہے یہاں بہت کم وقت اور محدود وسائل میں اسٹوری منظر عام پر لانا ہوتا ہے، اکثر اوقات آپ کے پاس یہ موقع بہت کم ہوتا ہے کہ آپ ریکارڈ کرنے کے بعد

لیں، جائزہ لینے کے بعد اپنی جگہ طے کریں کہ کہاں سے آپ کو بہتر اینگل مل سکتا ہے۔

❖ ایک اچھی ویڈیو

اچھی طرح ریکارڈ کی گئی ویڈیو میں آواز بہتر ہو، ریکارڈنگ کرتے وقت اس کا فریم اور اینگل درست ہو، ویڈیو ریکارڈ کرتے وقت روشنی کا خیال رکھا گیا ہو، ویڈیو میں ہلچل نہ ہو، آس پاس کی دوسری آوازیں محدود حد تک ہی ہوں۔ اچھے ویزوئلس، شاٹس اور بہتر اسکرپٹ آپ کی ویڈیو میں جان ڈال دیتے ہیں۔

❖ اپنے آلات کو اچھی طرح چلانا جان لیں

ایک موبائل جرنلسٹ کو چاہیے کہ وہ اپنے موبائل اور دیگر آلات کو اچھی طرح جان لے، اسے اپنے فون کے ضروری آپٹیکیشن کو چلانے میں مہارت ہو، آپ کو یہ جاننا بہت ضروری ہے کہ جب کسی خبر کو ریکارڈ کرتے وقت آپ پر بے حد پریشر ہو گا تو اس وقت آپ اپنے موبائل کو کتنی تیزی سے اور کیسے استعمال کریں گے۔

ریکارڈ کر سکتے ہیں۔ اس وقت موبائل جرنلزم کرنے والے MoJo Journalists سب سے زیادہ اوپن کیمرہ کا استعمال کرتے ہیں۔

ویڈیو ریکارڈنگ کرتے وقت اگر آپ BOYA یا کسی اور کمپنی کا کوئی ایکسٹرنل مائک استعمال کرتے ہیں تو اس کی سیٹنگ میں جا کر آڈیو سیٹنگ 'External Mic if Present' پر کلک کر دینے سے آپ کے ویڈیو کی آواز بہتر ہو جاتی ہے۔ کیونکہ کسی بھی ویڈیو کے لیے اچھی صاف ستھری آواز کی بڑی اہمیت ہوتی ہے۔ اس کے علاوہ FilMic Pro ریکارڈنگ ایپ بھی کافی اچھا مانا جاتا ہے جس میں آڈیو کنٹرول، ویڈیو فرم، ریزولوشن، شٹر اسپید، زوم کی اچھی سہولت ہے۔

❖ ویڈیو ریکارڈنگ کرتے وقت خیال رکھیں

خیال رہے ریکارڈنگ کرتے وقت موبائل کو ایر وپلین موڈ میں کر لیں اس سے ریکارڈنگ کے درمیان کال آنے سے آپ کی ویڈیو ریکارڈنگ میں خلل نہیں پڑے گا۔ جہاں ریکارڈنگ کر رہے ہیں وہاں روشنی کا جائزہ

موبائل جرنلزم کیا ہے اور اسے کیسے کریں؟

اسکل، ٹیکنالوجی، ایکو پیمنٹ یہ تین بنیادی چیزیں ہیں جن کے ارد گرد موبائل جرنلزم کا پہیہ گھومتا ہے



اشرف علی بستوی

❖ موبائل جرنلزم کی تاریخ

سب سے پہلے امریکہ کے فلوریڈا میں 2005 میں گنیت نیوز پیپر میں موبائل جرنلزم نے آنکھ کھولی یہاں کے نامہ نگاروں نے موبائل سے نیوز جمع کرنا شروع کیا۔ ہندوستان میں این ڈی ٹی وی نے باقاعدہ طور پر موبائل جرنلزم کا اعلان کیا اور پروفیشنل طریقے سے ان کے رپورٹر یہ کام انجام دے رہے ہیں۔

❖ موبائل جرنلزم کے فائدے

یہ ابھی بڑی حد تک آزاد، آسان اور محفوظ میڈیم ہے۔ ایسے مقامات تک اس کی پہنچ ہے جہاں تک پہنچ پانا عام طور پر مشکل ہوتا ہے۔ اکثر ایسا ہوتا ہے جہاں بڑے بڑے کیمرے کی رسائی ممکن نہیں ہوتی موبائل جرنلسٹ وہاں سے خبریں نکال لاتے ہیں۔ بڑے کیمرے کی جہاں بہت سی خوبیاں ہیں وہیں ایک خامی یہ ہے کہ اسے چلانے کے لیے الگ سے ایک کیمرہ پرسن چاہیے جو فوٹیج ریکارڈ کرے، لیکن موبائل سے ویڈیو ریکارڈ کرنا کافی آسان ہوتا ہے۔ خاص طور سے جب اسٹوری سے متعلق جلدی میں کسی کی ہائٹ لین ہو یا ناگہانی آفت آنے کے بعد موقع پر رپورٹنگ کرنی ہو اور کیمرے اور دیگر آلات سنبھالنا بہت مشکل ہو، ایسے مواقع پر موبائل سے بڑی آسانی سے ویڈیو بنائی جاسکتی ہے۔

❖ موبائل جرنلسٹ کو کن باتوں کا خیال رکھنا چاہیے

جو خوبیاں ایک عام جرنلسٹ کی ہونی چاہیے وہ تمام موبائل جرنلسٹ کے لیے بھی ضروری ہیں، البتہ موبائل جرنلسٹ کو ہمہ وقت تیار رہنا پڑتا ہے۔ رپورٹنگ بیگ میں اپنے ساز و سامان پوری طرح تیار

ہم جس دور میں جی رہے ہیں آپ اس کو جدید دور کے نام سے تو جانتے ہی ہیں آپ اس کا ایک اور نام ادھر کچھ برسوں سے سن رہے ہوں گے۔ اسے 'ڈیجیٹل دور' بھی کہا جا رہا ہے۔ ڈیجیٹل دور نے ہمیں جو سب سے حیرت انگیز چیز عطا کی ہے وہ اسمارٹ فون ہے، اسمارٹ فون بہت تیزی سے ہماری زندگی کا اہم حصہ بن گیا، موبائل پر برق رفتاری سے آنے والی اطلاعات نے پوری دنیا میں انفارمیشن ٹیکنالوجی کے میدان میں انقلاب برپا کر دیا۔ اب یہ ہر شخص کے لیے بہت آسان ہو گیا ہے کہ وہ جیسا انفارمیشن چاہے اپنے پاس محفوظ کر لے، اسے پھیلانے اور اس انفارمیشن کا استعمال کرے۔ یہیں سے موبائل جرنلزم (موجود) کی شروعات ہوتی ہے۔

موبائل جرنلزم انفارمیشن کی ترسیل کا ایک ایسا تیز ترین میڈیم ہے جو لگ بھگ مفت ہے، اس پر استعمال کرنے والے کا پورا کنٹرول ہوتا ہے، اسی لیے اسے سب سے زیادہ جمہوری بھی کہا جاتا ہے ایک اور خاص بات یہ ہے کہ یہ قاری یا ناظرین کے درمیان ڈائریکٹ رابطہ بنالیتا ہے جس سے کوئی بھی آپ کے پبلش کی گئی کسی خبر یا ویڈیو کو دیکھتے ہی اپنا تبصرہ آپ تک پہنچا سکتا ہے۔ موبائل جرنلزم کرنے والے صحافی کو موبائل جرنلسٹ کا نام دیا جاتا ہے۔

رکھیں، موبائل چارج رکھیں، موبائل کی میموری خالی رکھیں، ایکسٹرا میموری کارڈ ضرور رکھیں، مضبوط نیٹ ورک کا انٹرنیٹ آپ کی بنیادی ضرورت ہے۔ اس کے علاوہ گن مانک، لیپل مانک، موبائل کنیکٹر کے ساتھ ٹرائی پوڈ، لائٹ مع اسٹینڈ، ایک الگ سے آڈیو ریکارڈر اگر ممکن ہو تو ساتھ رکھیں، یعنی ہر وقت اس طرح تیار رہیں کہ اطلاع ملتے ہی فوری طور پر میدان میں نکل جائیں۔ اس کے علاوہ ایک مینڈی ٹرائی پوڈ یا سیلفی اسٹک اپنے ساتھ ضرور رکھیں۔

آپ موبائل جرنلسٹ ہیں تو آپ کے لیے یہ جاننا بہت ضروری ہے کہ آپ اپنی اسٹوری کیسے بتائیں گے؟ جو کچھ آپ ریکارڈنگ کی شکل میں فوٹو یا ویڈیو فوٹیج حاصل کرتے ہیں وہ ایک کچال ہوتا ہے اسی سے خبر بنانے کا کام ہوتا ہے، عین ممکن ہے کہ میدان سے آپ کو کوئی اچھا ویڈیو مل گیا یا کسی اہم شخصیت کا انٹرویو لیکر آئے ہوں لیکن آپ اس کی اہمیت کو سمجھ ہی نہ سکے کہ کس طرح اسے اپنے ناظرین تک پہنچانا ہے تو آپ کی محنت رائیگاں گئی۔ یہ بے حد ضروری ہے کہ اپنی اسٹوری کو سمجھیں، اس کے بغیر آپ کی رپورٹ متاثر کن نہیں ہو سکتی بلکہ کبھی کبھی ناظرین منفی تاثر لے سکتے ہیں۔

❖ موبائل سے ویڈیو ریکارڈنگ

موبائل جرنلزم کے لیے آج کل مارکیٹ میں دستیاب ہر وہ فون جو 10 سے 15 ہزار کے رینج میں مل رہا ہے سبھی کے کیمرے میں موبائل جرنلزم کے لیے ضروری نیچرس موجود ہوتے ہیں، جن سے آپ اچھی ویڈیو ریکارڈ کر سکتے ہیں۔ اس کے علاوہ کئی ایسے ویڈیو ریکارڈنگ ایپ بھی گوگل پلے اسٹور پر دستیاب ہیں جن کو اپنے موبائل میں انسٹال کر کے آپ اچھی ویڈیو



