

Responses to Manushi

It was too Crude

I must say that I did not like the illustrations on Madhu Kishwar's article *BJP's Wargasm* in (MANUSHI 106). At the cost of being called a simpleton I feel I must let you know that it was in bad taste. MANUSHI is too fine to be so crude as that.

**Shyam Ashtekar. Nasik.
Maharashtra**

Plain BJP Bashing

I just received my first issue of MANUSHI. I am a new subscriber who thought it worthwhile to subscribe for four years and also purchased gift subscriptions for four friends in Lafayette. Now, with the magazine in my hands, I feel like an idiot. The *article BJP's Wargasm* is so offensive that I want to cancel my subscription and gifts. Your magazine obviously caters to BJP-haters, westerners and pseudo-intellectuals who hate India's independence.

First, the very title of the article and the cover picture of nuclear milk bottle. What nonsense is that? All the previous governments supported the nuclear programme and built it up. Now you blame BJP for testing whether these gadgets work or not. Why don't you blame those governments of the past 50 years which spent the money robbing the poor of the country? Those are the corrupt rascals who created 350 million impoverished souls of today. It is not the BJP, Miss Kishwar! It is the Nehruvian

socialists who created this grotesque poverty of India.

Second, pseudo-intellectuals like you will never understand the need for security. You are totally blind to the history and to the reality of this wretched world. There are cowardly terrorists fighting for their *jihad* who the gutless English-language journalists, like you, call "militants". The USA calls these bastards "cowardly terrorists who bomb and kill innocent women and children", Only recently in Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, these terrorists raped and hacked teenage girls, women and men; and in one gruesome case these cowards put 16 bullets into a one

year-old baby. Why are they able to do that? Because they were taught in their training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan that Allah is waiting to receive them into heaven.

It is a shame that you, gutless journalists, call these terrorists "militants". Why don't you call these baby-killers, and rapists as "freedom fighters"? That is what they call them in Pakistan. I suggest you to please read an article by Yossef Bodansky of the US Congress Task Force on Terrorism on the nuclear situation in Pakistan (<http://www.swordoftruth.com/ARCHIVE/paknukes.html>). The article was written in 1997 and into Pakistan's strategy of terrorism and nuclear



blackmail, a very frightening picture indeed. It should be a compulsory reading for anyone who wishes to comment on the nuclear situation in India.

We have had four wars in 50 years of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. Those were the times when we and our neighbours had no nukes. By the time BJP took over the government, China had a considerable stockpile of nukes and had also helped Pakistan build enough nukes to threaten India. Now pacifists and BJP-haters like you have come out and put out this stupid article.

Miss Kishwar, you claim to support traditional Indian family values. So may I ask you to read the Mahabharata (the greatest Indian epic), Aranya Parva. During the sixth year of forest dwelling of Pandavas, Bhagwan Vyasa visits Pandava and tells Arjuna to go and seek 'divine astras' (weapons) from Lord Shiva, Devendra and other gods. Bhagwan Vyasa explains that his arch enemy, Karna, has many divine weapons he learned from Bhagwan Parasurama and so also other maharathis like Bhishma, Drona and Aswathama have lethal weapons. Bhagwan tells Arjuna to acquire them to deter his enemies from using these monstrous weapons. Modern day Indians are ignorant of our epics and also of our history, particularly the Mohammedan period. I recommend them to read those authored by authoritative western historians, such as A.V. Williams Jackson, Stanley Lane-poole and Will Durant.

Miss Kishwar, I was truly distressed at the utter stupidity and incoherence of your article. Please do cancel all my subscriptions and refund my money. I apologize for the mistake and the inconvenience.

T.R.N. Rao, Lafayett, USA

Manhood Anxieties

This is in response to your article BJP's Wargasm (MANUSHI 106). You claim that your own confused emotional reactions to the nuclear testing in India gave you "quite an insight" into why the Indians living in Europe and North America tend to be such easy prey to aggressive nationalism. And further "it is indeed difficult to think and react sensibly to developments in India".

I am an NRI woman and I suffer from no such schizophrenia. Nearly all of us soon tend to shed our overbearing, morally righteous attitudes which we carry with us as part of our mental baggage from India, once we open out to the culture(s) around us. Distance gives perspective and, if anything, it sharpens our discerning powers.

Soon, we realize there is no need to even attempt to defend the "indefensible" just to prove that we are loyal to our motherland. If you did see any aggressive posturing on this issue it must have been from the males who have always been told by their mothers and sisters that there is nobody in the world who is as great as them. Their manhood anxieties must have multiplied since they left home. And they have misappropriated the title of "patriots" for themselves too.

Do we have any right to object to a rich kid's obsession with dangerous toys? Should we try and compete especially when we don't have enough money to eat. Why would I defend the politicians or others back home on something like this? Does not make sense to me.

Vijay Venkatraman, Boston, USA

Deadly Accurate

You were curious as to what in particular I've liked about the magazine. I'll speak about the most

recent issue no. 106. I have received and am even more than usually glad about that. I'd been waiting for this one ever since the announcements about the successful nuclear tests were made, wondering what all you would have to say, and haven't been disappointed at all. You were in New York, and as it happens I was on a book tour that week and found myself standing in a store in Phoenix, Arizona, observing that we have to be obtuse indeed not to see some connection between the Indian statesman's remark on the one hand ("Now the world will know that we are not a country of eunuchs") and the United States' current obsession, on the other hand, with the anti-impotence drug Viagra.

I wish with all my heart that the work people like you and I are trying to do would be successful enough so that before we shed our bodies there would be a significant number of men, worldwide, who would find it as embarrassing to talk about "missile gaps" and "arsenals" and "strike capacity" as most women do now to use the word "feminism".

The cartoon of the two fellows comparing missiles accompanying Madhu Kishwar's article BJP's Wargasm was deadly accurate and I'm going to show it to my 18-year-old son. I particularly like the fact that there are many short articles in this issue, all of which are informative and bold. I was interested to read the review of Durga Pokhrel's book. I read it more than a year ago and found parts of it really gripping, and wondered at the same time, as did your reviewer, what she's doing now. I look for her name on various websites and never see it.

Carol Lee Flinders, Tomalis, USA

Durga Pokhrel is living in the US with her husband who co-authored the book with her. As per the last conversation I had with her husband, she is not politically active for the time being. Editor

End of Human Race

I continue to enjoy reading MANUSHI. I find that the outlook is very balanced with regard to the gender issue and that it does not have the rather raucous and bitter outpourings of so many other women's magazines abroad, which lack the grace and femininity of MANUSHI.

I want to tell you about a new ballet by Chandralekha in which the dancer very rightly sees how we as women are losing out to the feminine male, who can make a gentler and more pleasant companion to the male in man. The loss will be ours and the end of the human race.

Roshen Alkazi, New Delhi

Garbage Means Money

I am with Gram- Vikas-a grassroots organisation in Orissa working for the tribal and the rural poor. At present, I am associated with its rural health and environment programme wherein we undertake scientific composting and sanitary infrastructure building.

Though I have some knowledge about scientific composting and have read about vermiculture being successfully done b) a few, I wasn't confident about starting something like that on a large scale as I am young and inexperienced. I want to do something about the 'mountainous garbage' heaping around us. I had no idea how to go about it until I read about Iqbal Malik's work in MANUSHI. I would like to get some information from her.

I appreciate her work which is completely motivated by social concerns. But I intend to make a living out of it, to do it on a commercial scale.

I would like to know about the feasibility of such a project. For instance, how much capital is

needed, what is the marketability of the product, how can the product be improved further, etc. She is already doing it on a large scale. Can I start it at least on a medium scale in the beginning?

What is Iqbal doing with the nonbiodegradable/non-recyclable waste like polythene packs and plastic bottles? Is there any way to recycle them also? If not, is there any other way to at least reduce their detrimental effect on our eco-system? I am sure as a scientist she will come out with a possible solution to this.

Tejaswini Dash, Bhubaneswar, Orissa

Iqbal Malik replies : Scientific management of garbage is one of the most important services that needs to be regularised in all residential colonies throughout the country. After exploring all viable solutions to this problem, I came up with the idea of setting up of the 'Cleaning Brigade' scheme which is Gandhian, decentralised, eco-friendly, resident-friendly, income generating, involves communities and tries to bridge the gap between the different classes of society. The scheme adopts different methods for the management of bio-degradables like kitchen and horticulture garbage and recyclables (plastics, etc).

□ Select one residential colony comprising 500 to 800 houses in it. Talk to the residents, explain the working of the scheme and make them agree to pay Rs 25-45 depending upon the amount of work they wish the Cleaning Brigade boys to undertake. Rs 25 for just collecting the garbage, segregating it, composting the bio-degradables and sending the recyclables to the recycling industry. If the additional work of cleaning the stairs, yards, roofs, roads, bylanes and sewer lines of the colony is also to be undertaken by the boys the

contribution by each household would go up to Rs 45 per month.

□ With help from the residents, select a patch of wasteland (approximately 20 ft x 20 ft for every 100 houses) for anaerobic composting. I recommend vermiculture for those localities where there is ample shade and where the worms can be protected from stray animals and rats, etc. (Vatavaran has wormipits only in schools, colleges, cantonments and in those individual households who wish to manage their kitchen waste themselves).

□ Talk to the local ragpickers who are 18 years or older in age. Request them to join your scheme. Explain the work to them and select 10 of them to collect, segregate and compost garbage from 500 households.

□ Get two tri-cycle rickshaw trolleys made (each costs Rs 3,500 in Delhi and Rs 3,000 in Meerut). Buy 10 brooms, five spades and uniforms, boots and gloves for the boys.

□ Contact the local plastic, glass and metal industrial units so that all such recyclables can be sold to them.

□ If you cannot reach the industries directly then sell all recyclables to a reliable local scrap dealer.

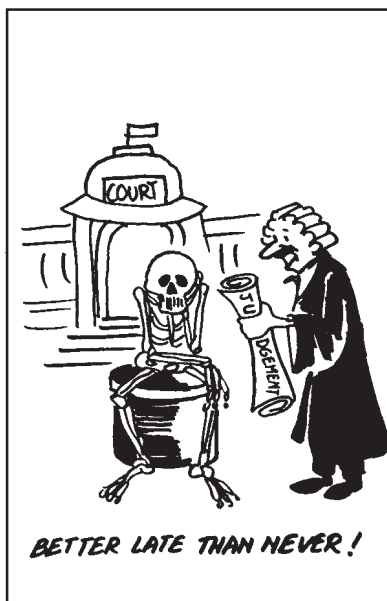
□ From 500 households you would collect Rs 22,500 (Rs 45 per house) and by selling plastics etc to the industries you will earn another Rs 2,000-5,000 (depending upon the weight of plastics, etc being discarded by the colony). The total collection thus comes around Rs 25,000 a month. Rs 18,000 would go as wages to the 10 boys, approximately Rs 3,000-4,000 would be spent on the running of the scheme (repair of the rickshaws, buying brooms and providing tea and snacks to the boys). The rest (Rs2,500-3,500) can be your earning. In Vatavaran's cleaning brigades this becomes supervisor's pay but if you supervise

you have the right over this money. However, the budget would change with the number of houses involved, how much work each house wishes the boys to do and how much can you get by selling the recyclables. If you wish to see how my schemes work contact me through MANUSHI whenever you are in Delhi.

The Ways of Sarkar

I was greatly touched by Madhu Kishwar's article on her discomfort with English and efforts to keep the Hindi edition going (MANUSHI 102). It blows my mind that MANUSHI couldn't get enough articles nor readers for the Hindi version.

I am an American expatriate, having left my country in disgust in the middle of the Vietnam war. I settled in France, where teaching English to adults was the only possible job for me. But about seven years later, I needed desperately to get out of the city. A friend and I bought a farm and tried our best to live off the land. I now give lessons only to adults who want to learn English, usually for travelling. They are fortunately in' no danger of



forgetting their native French.

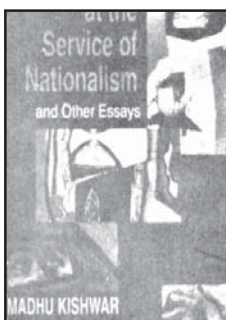
The hamlet where I live is dominated by a xenophobic family, who also abuse and rape their kids. They are supported by the mayor and the cops-and since 1993 they've not let me get to my land on my vehicle, thus preventing me from making my living as a farmer. So, much against my will, I still have to teach English.

You're probably aware of the

rise of the National Front fascist party here. The high school students of the nearby city (Aubenas-pop. 15,000) have been demonstrating against right-wing politicians who won the recent elections through deals with the National Front. This is very encouraging to me.

Your constant attacks on corruption, incompetence, court delays, etc in India always remind me of the country I live in. I filed an urgent case in 1995 to be able to use my vehicle to carry building materials up to my barn, which is' falling down for lack of a good roof. I lost the case. My opponent's lawyer and I are still waiting for the verdict on my appeal. In the meantime, my property is being ruined for lack of upkeep, and the harvests are meagre. So I keep thinking about the cartoon in Madhu Kishwar's article Public Interest Litigation in (MANUSHI 81) of a judgement being handed out to a skeleton still waiting in front of the courthouse! Thanks for that one.

Paula Young, Burzet, France



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Oxford University Press, 1998

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