

The Eklavya Debate Must Continue

I appreciate the efforts of MANUSHI in providing a platform to address various critical issues. Your articles are comprehensive, informative and of high standard. The article titled, "A Black Day in Education" by Ramakant Agnihotri and its rejoinder, "Innovations Cannot Last Forever..." by Amita Sharma in issue No.133 of 2003 were enlightening. I was educated about the limitations of Eklavya and the compulsions of the Madhya Pradesh Government in axing the Hoshanagabad Science Teaching Programme (HSTP). Agnihotri's view on experimentation, innovation, training, and research to find alternative methods in order to reform the country's basic education system, shows his sensitivity towards the 30-year long dedication of the Eklavya activists in the field.

On the other hand, Ms. Sharma's stand defending the axing of the HSTP by the MP Government presented a diagonally opposite view that innovation in isolation merely at the middle school level is worthless. It cannot help in changing the norms of higher education. Also that the proliferation of *kunjis* indicated failure of the HSTP.

I strongly feel that the debate should not stop at this point, as both views have a lot of validity. The issue of axing HSTP has already run into rough weather and is no longer limited to the Eklavya experiment or the MP Government's action. It explains the imperative need to synergise the merits of conflicting views in order to restore the rights of the educationally deprived tribal child.

Education up to primary level is compulsory, and the Government and the NGOs have expressed their concern towards this social obligation. The Eklavya experiment has made history even to the extent that the Central as well as the State Government have

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acknowledged its endeavour. So, instead of sabotaging a creative and innovative programme, the Government and the Eklavya activists should introspect and evaluate their interventions.

If MANUSHI could initiate and organise an open house discussion, it would provide a unique opportunity to various schools of thought, like the Eklavya activists, educationists, academicians, elected representatives and the MP Government, to express their viewpoint. The outcome of the discussions would indeed be a worthy resource for MANUSHI and an educative subject for the readers.

We assure all possible help to get the debate organised at the University of Delhi as well as help in contacting pioneer educationists, social activists and academicians as guest speakers. This would go a long way in helping strengthen the education system of our country.

Vijay Kumar, Delhi

Inter Generational Appeal

I wish to renew my subscription to MANUSHI with a life subscription. My son, Mark Antrobus, has been as interested in MANUSHI as I have. As I am now almost 95 years old, with a life expectancy of nil I guess, I wish to transfer my subscription to him at what will soon be our permanent address.

I shall continue to read MANUSHI with as much appreciation and pleasure as heretofore, as long as I can.

Grace Wardell, Kodaikanal,
Tamil Nadu

Corruption and Cowardice

I have been following your campaign to redress the plight of street hawkers in Delhi. Your raising the issue

went on to extract action from the highest offices of the country. Yet within a year, everything seems to be getting back to square one. I live in Chitranjan Park where the local police are extorting money from street hawkers (mostly vegetable sellers) and regularly threaten them.

The police here do not permit the hawkers to sell their goods unless a 'hafta' is paid. It is not only hawkers, but also casual labourers who are their prey. When the house next door was being demolished, two beat constables would turn up everyday to extract money from the man who was clearing the rubble. I heard them say '*Paise nikaal nahi to tera tyre puncture kar doonga*' (Cough up money or else we will puncture the tyre of your trolley rickshaw). It is distressing to see the taxpayers money get wasted supporting this institutionalised thuggery, guided as it is by an archaic legislation from British times, despite our having declared ourselves independent in 1947. If social justice is one of the goals enshrined in the Constitution of the country, then surely the yardsticks of our erstwhile colonisers cannot be our own!

Since I am personally not the aggrieved party, I do not know if I can register a complaint. Explaining the issues to 'street hawkers' is just not my cup of tea because these people are too scared most of the time. I have a hunch that the vegetable sellers with *pucca* shops pay the police to protect their profits and shoo away the vegetable hawkers who operate on the street.

People of this city are too corrupt. They cannot see beyond their own petty gains. They, therefore, have the kind of police force they deserve. At

another level, I am a little uncomfortable though with the 'value of services provided by vendors' argument. Will the cheap oil we will be getting after the Iraqi invasion justify the massacre of a few thousand Iraqis during the US invasion? If economic benefits start justifying things, I am afraid the entire cultural edifice would collapse.

The present state of the police force in the country makes a mockery of our democracy; subjugation of the society's weakest being their idea of law and order. It is time the police force was remodelled into a real public service institution. I only see the external symptoms. Perhaps more learned experts would be able to point out to the exact source of this malaise. I request you to lend a voice to my concerns, which I am sure must be shared by many of your other readers as well.

Sanjay Ghosh, New Delhi

If we begin writing off all our fellow citizens as either corrupt or cowardly, then there is no hope for India. If you yourself could see the value of services provided by vendors, you might be able to persuade other residents of your locality to come to the defence of vendors when the police is harassing them. The process of social and economic reform is slow and needs a lot of patience since it involves challenging deeply entrenched vested interests. We hope our model market project will help dissolve some of the prejudices against street hawkers.

- Editor

Nation and Family

Despite many of its projected advantages, Family Planning programmes in India have some unintended consequences. The initial "We Two, Our Two" motto of family planning has given way to the one child family norm. Nation as an enlarged

family occasionally has its own population control operations through communal violence. Moreover, egoism, selfishness, arrogance and narrow-mindedness are the motives that activate this operation.

Within small families primarily consisting of only parents and a maximum of one or two children, most demands of the children are met by the former often leading to continuous mollycoddling, thus making them small despots at their own homes. These children as adults play the same role citizens. They see the nation as they see their own estate and place their demands before the nation as they would before their own parents. When their demands are not fulfilled, they become despots and ruin social harmony. In this way small families and communalism have a direct link with the growth of individualism in Indian society.

Ivan Lobo, Puttur, Karnataka □

Available in Paperback

Religion at the Service of Nationalism and Other Essays

by Madhu Kishwar,

323 pages, Price: Rs. 295

This is a collection of essays written by Madhu Kishwar in response to specific situations of ethnic violence and conflict since the mid 1980's. The essays deal with various issues relating to religion, religious sectarianism and nationalism. This collection includes essays on :

Gangster Rule: The 1984 Massacre of the Sikhs; A Day in the Longowal Gurudwara; Changing the Rules of the Political Game; Some Discussions with Sikh Communities in North America; BJP's Ram Mandir Campaign; Criminalisation of Politics: The Murder of Baba Lal Das; Safety is Indivisible: The Warning from Bombay Riots; Ways to Combat Communal Violence; The Shah Bano Controversy; Uniform Civil Code versus Personal Laws; Stimulating Reform, not Forcing it: Uniform versus Optional Civil Code; An Analysis of Sangh Parivar Politics; Kashmir and Kashmiriyat: The Politics of Language, Religion and Region; Voices from Kashmir; To Sing or Not to Sing: The National Anthem Controversy.

'The data provided and the excellently conducted interviews are stuff "real" academic research ought to be based on.'

- *The Express Magazine*

'These essays reveal that Kishwar is no run of the mill "secularist". A sense of fair-play and balance characterises her handling of issues, be it overseas Sikh support for Khalistan or the Shah Bano controversy.'

- *The Telegraph*

'Madhu Kishwar has surely put her finger on the confounding problems of contemporary politics and the human rights agenda.

It is in her masterly analysis of the ills of centralised government that we may seek further solutions for current problems.'

- *Contributions to Indian Sociology*