



## Responses to Manushi

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### A Supporter's Dissent

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First of all, a vote of support for your disavowal of isms. Being against dogma does not necessarily imply being without an ideology and I for one fully support yours. But on the NRI issue, I wish to offer a slight dissent.

At one level, the NRI criticism is a primal response to a kind of betrayal or abandonment. This particularly explains the resentment against the affluent NRIs, which is understandable but not really fair. After all, the NRI in his or her move follows the same instinct for survival or self advancement as that followed by those in India. Their actions are not any more unpatriotic than the actions of those who stay behind. It is, by and large, a matter of chance or opportunity.

But a far more legitimate critique of the NRI phenomenon, is the disproportionate influence that NRIs wield on the affairs of the state, a sad reflection on the depressed status of the mother country. Whether it is the Silicon Valley super rich with their cliched prescriptions for India's development, or the secularist/leftists with their lily white notions of the Western Humanism, they both help distort the agenda at the nation's table. By doing so, they often become unwitting agents for reinforcing the inequities of the existing world order that forced them to migrate in the first place.

I agree with you that NRIs can be agents for positive change, but only if they see beyond the prism of their own experience. After all, Nehru, Gandhi and others were in some ways, NRIs. But they went back to become RIs. The nation gained from the vision they acquired from a distance because it was tempered with a deep sense of the reality of India. And that, I am afraid, can hardly be said about the lot being put on a pedestal these days by our still colonized minds.

**PrithvirajSharma, Camarillo  
CA, USA**

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### The Upset Continues

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My rather conventional outlook on social morality, though unattached to any taboo or fetishism, got mortified at your 'wargasm' cartoon. I couldn't believe such a stuff, vulgar and of low taste, to appear on your pages. And now reading your defence in the latest issue, the Socrates in me has really got amused. Since when have you started quoting political clowns to justify and defend your (unfounded) moves? Would you strip if he does? Would you caricature two females showing it off, claiming in turns "mine is bigger", etc., if the minister spoke of 'nuclear frigidity' instead of 'nuclear impotency'? No, my Socrates is sure. On the surface, the premises leading to the 'wargasm' conclusion appear really innocuous and reasonably well-founded - phallus is missile, and missile is war; ergo,

'wargasm'! Is sex, then, a war on the female? The tentacles of the psychosis of a patriarchal society with its phallus-insignia, remain deep-rooted. And my Socrates begins to doubt whether your organised feministic concerns are still in the grip of that spell with its (consequent) conventional Freudian envy.

**Dr. Vijayamohanan Pillai N.,  
Thiruvananthapuram**

*This cartoon seems to be misunderstood by so many readers that we feel compelled to clarify all over again: this is part of a series of cartoons made by German artist Tomi Ungerer in the early 1980's. These were not made keeping India and Pakistan in mind but refer to the nuclear arms race in the West during the Cold War years.*

*However, we found it very appropriate for the nuclear race in our sub-continent as well. It is a well acknowledged fact that many men often use sex as a war on the female, and maleness is often associated with aggression and dominance.*

*If depiction of human genitals can only be viewed as obscene or a manifestation of Freudian envy, then clearly we are still in the grip of nineteenth century Victorian values. Let us not forget that the Victorian minded British reacted similarly to the 'nudity' and 'promiscuity' of our gods and goddesses and condemned those depictions as 'immoral' and offensive.*

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## Only teachers matter?

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This is in response to interview with Sushma Swaraj in No. 121 of MANUSHI. Sushma's bland responses show what even a relatively humane and decent political figure thinks when she considers education: make the teachers more content and a drip down effect will happen to encourage them to spend the right amount of time teaching the children. But the concern is always with the so called "public servant" whose job is identified as being in a "service". It is never on holding them accountable for what they are supposed to be doing for the children. In all these fields a set of contingent incentives will have to be constructed, so that if they sit with the children, get them to read, write and hold clinic hours, give immunizations and provide basic services to the sick, they get rewarded with some sort of bonus either publicly or as a private but legal emolument that the parents or relatives of the sick provide over and above their salaries, and if not then a major part of their salaries and perks should be withheld.

A. K. Babul, via email

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## Debate on *Wargasm*

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This is in response to the views of D.V. Gokhale in *A Disappointed Reader* in MANUSHI No. 121.

On the whole I would like to express my own disappointment and unease at the way Mr Gokhale has reacted to Madhu's *Wargasm* article.

Reading his comments: "I see in your writings your version of 'truth' based on your one-sided 'experiences', 'observations' minus history and balance", I feel just the same towards his views.

All of us carry our own versions of the "truth" based on our own one-sided "experiences", "observations",

history etc. But, it seems, Mr. Gokhale believes his are the right ones and here he should understand that he is wrong.

Although a historical perspective is very necessary for any complete analysis, here, one has to accept that there are different interpretations of history by different observers depending on their interests, world-views, goals etc.

Before I go into the details let me say for all others like Mr Gokhale, that all some of us are trying to do, by writing articles like the "*Wargasm*" one and holding meetings like the one Delhi, is to emphasize on the dangerous nature of the nuclear technology. We want to discuss and develop alternatives, which are humane and peaceful.

Mr Gokhale's remark "...dragging the nuclear issue to a male-female level" is both naïve gender discriminatory.

It is naïve of him to undermine the magnitude of problems associated with the nuclear issue and discriminatory because the male-female issue is a separate and serious issue altogether.

The cartoons of Tomi Ungerer, which seem to have disturbed Mr Gokhale so much are very accurate expressions of the male mind-set. Even after staying in USA for 23 years Mr Gokhale seems to have the same inhibitions that many Indians of his generation have — with their suppressed sexuality and false morals in this context. His closely related teenage female children, for whom he has subscribed for MANUSHI and about whom he seems worried now, certainly have a healthier attitude towards the cartoons. I seriously suggest to Mr Gokhale to sit down and meditate on this issue for his own sake.

During my 22 years of stay and work in a German informatics center, I have been a member of a national

working group within the German National Computer Society which deals with the New (Information) Technologies from a feminist and a Third World perspective.

We believe that it is the patriarchal mind-set which is linear, hierarchical, deterministic, destructive, power-hungry and not network-oriented, complex/chaotic, multi-varied, open-ended (no solutions to problems are also allowed), life-enhancing, power (games) denying, as feminists would like it to be.

The two men with missiles as their sexual organs are only a symbolic representation of this mind-set. There is no reason to be shy, if I say that it is a well known fact that for men the size and the potency of their sexual organ is one of the most important things, if not the most important one.

Why else is the whole female world, especially in "third world countries" so obsessed with protecting their daughters, sisters and wives from the tyranny and violence of male sexual behavior? Why else do the male-only discussions and vocabulary, centre around the ACT? It is also a proven fact that for men rape is a way of showing their power over women!

Only such a mind-set can produce this sort of a technology, sorry to have to say this.

Then Mr Gokhale says "your *Wargasm* article lacked awareness of this historical perspective" and "here is the historical perspective." This is too much of paternalism. There is no one and final perspective (e.g. even the eminent journalist Nihal Singh in his book "The yogi and the bear" gives a different perspective of the post-independence Indo-Pakistan-China-Russia" era), as I said this before too and then he is seriously undermining Madhu's capacities too. I have found many articles written by her on various issues very informative, well-researched and very bold too.

Mr Gokhale's remark "I have proved that by my reference to Indira Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto" provokes me to ask him whether one (wrong) example is enough to disprove a sociological theory? He cites the examples of Indira Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto. But has he made the effort to look at the examples of many women's groups' initiatives for peace who are against the use of nuclear weapons? The forum of Informatics for peace (FIFP) and the Maria Janssen group in Germany, the many groups in India and Pakistan who met recently in Delhi — are just a few examples.

How can Mr Gokhale oppose Madhu's "Indians are unwelcome..."

and at the same time say "I have only American friends"?

Nobody can deny the fact, that we can be a great people as far as sciences/arts are concerned, but what have we achieved with all our knowledge? We still are not capable enough to feed, clothe and educate the vast majority of our folk. Isn't that something we should be ashamed of?

Mr Gokhale's equating Sameen's (his Muslim friend in USA) argumentation, which is purely anti-Indian and exclusively pro-Islamic (like that of most Islamic people I have met here in rural India too) with Madhu's analysis again disproves his

capacities for an unbiased analysis.

Lastly, I want to ask Mr Gokhale whether the Tomi Ungerer, cartoon with the mother feeding the baby with a nuclear missile, was immoral? And I want to inform him that when the Russian Tschernobil nuclear disaster took place, the German mothers had to really stop breast-feeding their babies because (due to a vigil public's intervention) they found the vegetables, milk etc., in and around Bonn was also contaminated with toxic stuff from the disaster, only a day or two after it happened in Tschernobil.

Asha Kachru, New Delhi

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