# JNANA - Pure Knowledge

## To know that you don't know is the real knowledge

PART IV
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# defaming the democracy

in ramayana when dhasharatha decides that its time to bring rama to throne, he calls a meeting of his ministers and general public. he asks their opinion on this issue and they agree overwhelmingly. just to prove the point that some kind of people participation was present even in those times. but when rama was asked to go to exile, the same people tried to stop him. when the majority of the ministers and almost entire citizenry was behind rama, he did not overturn his father's decision. the wise council of ministers and sages in the court pleaded with kaikeyi but they never overpowered her.

the insistence of rama to travel in the path of dharma alone made him take such decisions. but what was appreciable also was the adherence to rules by those in power. though in a heat of moment lakshmana speaks of overthrowing their father from power, he is advised by rama about the need to preserve the dharma. one big message in ramayana is the need to respect the dharma and follow it even in the most testing times.

democracy has its way of functioning. we have procedures laid down for making and implementing laws. democracy has the capacity to absorb various viewpoints. diversity requires democracy to thrive. here everyone has the right to make their point. but no one has the right to force others to accept theirs. that too when the issue is the prerogative of the parliament it makes little sense to ignite unnecessary sentiments on this issue.

the question here is straightforward. some people want a law in they way they have drafted it. now government is just an organ in this entire machinery. what is the point in targeting ruling party when even the opposition is not ready to agree to all the clauses in the draft? the methods used by the protesters are peaceful but the damage is done elsewhere. general public are made to believe that government can pass any law and is unwilling to cooperate in this case.

this view undermines the entire democratic system of this country. upper house, lower house, president, political parties, judiciary, general public - all are stakeholders in democratic process. the government is but a representational body which though has powers is not all powerful by itself. these days government is projected as sole power of authority and is therefore becoming the centre of hatred.

two options lay ahead and both do not solve the problem. first one is that the present government can be thrown out. but since opposition itself is not in favour of all conditions, what is the alternative? either the agitators should try to evolve a consensus among various parties on the bill. or as suggested by many they themselves should enter electoral politics. in democracy elections are the best way to decide any issue.

the second option is more dangerous. among the section of protesters there is a view emerging that the state is not responding to their pleas. after the initial enthusiasm around the protests die down and tv cameras turn to other stories many may return home. but minority few may take the path of violence to overthrow the state because they might have lost belief in democratic means. how the country tries to avoid people taking this path after this agitation is over is a crucial question.

# null hypothesis

in statistics when there is a need to prove/disprove any phenomenon, a technique called hypothesis testing is used. in its simplest form it can be explained as follows. for any observed event the simplest possible explanation is offered. then the evidence against this is explored. if substantial proof is collected against the first stand only then it is rejected. the initial reasoning which is the simple explanation is called null hypothesis.

in the court of law this theory is put to maximum use. people who are accused are treated as innocent. this is the null hypothesis. only if there is strong evidence against this they are pronounced guilty. even if there is an iota of doubt in the evidence, the judge plays safe and sticks to the null hypothesis.

for many years before copernicus, kepler and galileo people believed that earth was the centre of universe. it was their null hypothesis which could not be disproved easily. the intuitive simplicity of the earth centric system is hard to break. history records the troubles these people had to go through in disproving that null hypothesis.

our culture, individual beliefs, understanding of the world gives us our own set of null hypothesis. often they are not the positions we have adopted after rational analysis. we accept them because they are possibly simplest explanations for the things around us. over the years these positions taken by us become sacrosanct. and any opposition to this will not be tolerated by us.

it is not to say that all the null hypothesis that we develop are wrong. it may sometime be that the null hypothesis is indeed true. but what is argued here is simply that the null hypothesis should not accepted without the test. innocence is presumed but trial should be held. only after a fair trial the accused can be finally considered innocent or otherwise. just because the initial position was innocent we cannot continue to hold the same position forever.

in everyday behaviour this theory is used abundantly. the null hypothesis here is that our individual position is always right and others are wrong. we always assert our supremacy and forever demand strong evidence to reject this view. the righteousness of our action we consider is beyond scrutiny. any questions regarding our uprightness is not tolerated. we simply believe that our sincerity should be taken for granted.

close observation of the behaviour of people spearheading the popular campaign today shows this syndrome. they firmly believe that their version of the draft is superior than others. their inability to go threadbare into the issue is a cause for concern. they are mostly hiding behind popular slogans and public sentiment. rational debate is sorely missing. that they are not ready to put their null hypothesis into test is the biggest worry.

it looks they they want everyone to accept their position blindly. to assert the moral supremacy simply by looking at number of street protesters is misleading. these people on streets are not informed protesters. they are there because they connect to the cause at a different level. they have seen the ugly face of corruption. in the present agitation they are trying to find a solution.

they too have a null hypothesis. it is to follow the leader who they believe will deliver the result. alas they are mistaken and misled. they are also not ready to put their hypothesis to test. so we have a situation where this group is trying to impose its views without thinking of alternatives. the problem here simply is that though they have the right to have null hypothesis of their own they also have the obligation to put that into test to allow truth to emerge.

# challenges of information age

in the schools they may not play quiz any more. it makes no sense today to know anything. type and hit enter in that small space in the top right corner of the browser and boom, you have more than what you asked for. with hand held devices also accessing internet, the party has just begun. and with an entire generation which has grown with these toys coming to age, it is guaranteed that this is the surest way forward.

it is natural for anyone to think that god intended a digital world. that it remained analog was a mistake which is being corrected. text, music, video anything which is digital has to come to internet. and once in internet its permanency is guaranteed and distribution virtually uncontrolled. while information in physical world is strongly associated with its creators, in internet the information gets a life of its own independent of its creators.

the information thus landing on internet is hashed and indexed by various search engines and lechers in many different ways. to control the information once uploaded on internet becomes extremely difficult even for its creator. the information thus collected on the numerous locations over the years has today resulted in the gigantic information repository. the implications of this huge information store and its easy access are being felt today.

the easy availability of any information is indeed praiseworthy. never before internet was information so democratised. traditional barriers to information access are no longer valid. these are positive developments. but the easiness with which the information is being dished out is reducing its value. young people may not be able to appreciate the trouble the generation earlier had to go through to compile the invaluable information. easy availability diminishes the value of the entity and in the case of information it is also free so the problem is aggravated.

when awful lot of food is available around it is difficult for anyone to retain hunger. this is exactly the problem now. since all information is all over the places why should anyone retain the passion for quality information. in this age and times, patient study and in-depth analysis is the last thing anyone would engage in. expert opinions and numerical facts on any topic is readily available. what you have to do is just mash them up and you are an instant expert worthy of making comments on anything under the sun.

explosion is an understatement. it is impossible to even imagine the amount of information added to internet every moment. the over availability and growing information often is the problem. the users of this massive information often get tired with the sheer amount of information they have to grapple with. to select right amount of information which can serve the purpose is the first challenge. the second challenge is to digest the thus selected information to serve some meaningful purpose out of it.

in the earlier times few people had the monopoly to disseminate information. they would carefully chose their sources, check for the correctness of the data, keep the data updated and then distribute the data to the needy. this model worked because someone took the responsibility of adding trust to the information. today there is lot of information available out there but there is also a huge trust deficit. whom and which information to trust on internet is the question which plagues even the most naive internet user.

it is not that attempts have not been done to address all these concerns. but they all have fallen short of expectations. moreover any move to seize control over the content of internet is against its spirit. the very uncontrolled nature of internet is its inherent strength. the human cognition was having limited information to deal with all these years. with internet, it has a new challenge to face. this is the transition state for mankind. in sometime humans may develop necessary skills for navigating through the complex web of information.

# need for schools

a recent study told us that revenues in education overshadows online advertising industry by a large margin. education as a business proposition has some strange features. this industry does not manufacture any product, no process is followed, quality is a alien word here and customers are not treated as kings. still the money it makes is unbelievable.

ask anyone sending their kids to kindergarten or pre-schools. the fees they pay puts profession education fees sound paltry. the tiny tots who are pushed into the school vans in the early mornings are being prepared to long struggle in the name of education. even the fun activities are so carefully planned that one wonders how such a drill can be fun to kids.

one of the leading preschool chain advertises that schooling should start as early as 2 years (1.8 to be precise). the steady drop in the starting age for schooling is alarming. the advertisement for such a program announces that it will help kids master the skills needed to succeed in school and life. pray can someone throw more light on what these skills are?

such empty promises drive education industry. in the absence of any qualitative research, such slogans keep the business afloat. so your pre-school helps preparing for school. school trains for college. college coaches you for professional education. profession studies trains you to get a job. by the way where did life go missing in this mela?

limiting the purpose of education to train students to next stage of learning is wrong. this view makes education a glorified tutoring session. schools turn into coaching centres. exams become sole yardstick to measure success. teachers are forced to teach crap. students gets into rot learning. parents get content with marks. the system of education collapses.

today some serious questions have to to raised into all the practices happening in the name of education. there is a need to question the need to deliver education the way its done today. whether everyone has to undergo the torture under the current system also should be analysed. the outcome of years of schooling has to to measured against the promises. most importantly whether education is living up to the high ideals set for itself has to be checked.

across cultures education finds a prime place among all human acts. because of its noble act in accumulating and disseminating knowledge, education is still respected. the educators have been given the responsibility of grooming young souls into well rounded beings capable of serving society in their own useful ways. institutes of learning are mandated to carry out their task without discriminating among learners and field of study.

with the commercialisation of the education enterprise, it is losing its earlier sheen. no longer can it claim moral superiority. its intentions and means are purely commercial. money has already replaced merit and this has impacted the system badly. those topics which can help reap immediate benefits are encouraged. poetry, philosophy, theatre and even sports are strict no in schools because they don't help students get jobs.

one thing which the education enterprise has been successful in doing is establishing its supremacy in learning process. so anyone outside this system is automatically branded worthless even is he possess more knowledge than the school goers. through the systematic manipulation jobs are declined to such people. their future is shut and they are forced to enter into this system for any hope.

establishing the inevitability of itself is the greatest achievement of school system. that no one today can even think whether they should send their kids to school or not speaks volumes about the inevitability of the system. schooling is no more an option. its a must for all and governments spread this myth through compulsory education programs. human society has lost its creativity in thinking about alternates to schooling system.

if the main purpose of schooling is acquiring knowledge in a systematic manner there can be alternatives. open schooling, home learning, natural grooming can all be tried. literacy as a skill can be taught without going through school. social grooming can be developed in other ways in society. and its not that schools had forever been there to do these things. traditional communities had their own means of educating their kids. sadly today the alternatives are closed.

in the name of universal education one model is forced on everyone. the formal learning factories are doing their best to curb the creative instincts of children. over insistence on uniform model of study is killing the natural urge among kids to learn on their own. more over the formal education sector makes other forms of learning unacceptable.

to critically analyse the myth of compulsory schooling has become necessary today. this may lead us to alternate forms of learning which are far more enjoyable and useful. to force everyone to study same stuff irrespective of ones interest goes against the spirit of education. education should not stop at developing literary skills. the mad commercialisation of education sector and the declining moral standards should serve as wake up call for us to start thinking about change.

# design and market

there is a story about edison's first patent on electrical voting machine. it is said that not many were interested in his idea at that time though it worked. today the electronic voting machines are the order of the day. the failure of his invention made edison resolve that he will produce only those things that will have a market.

edison's later prolific output is well recorded. apart from commercial success nothing seemed to motivate him. his actions during the famous "war of current" were questionable. the point here is not to analyse edison but to analyse the motivations for design and innovation in engineering. in history edison was not alone to be directed purely by commercial interests.

in his excellent book "small things considered - why there is no perfect design", henri petroski has analysed the developments in the design of water cup. it was pure commercial interests that led to the invention of disposable water cups. the utility motives were overshadowed by market considerations even in the invention of packaged water bottle. an engineer is supposed to understand the economic and business factors of his inventions. but the undue pressures they exhort on design process is worrisome.

a recent conversation with a young civil engineer clearly showed this trend. the discussion went into factors influencing the utility of the land and designing of buildings. he was mentioning the cost of land as the primary factor behind the design. the comfort of the people, aesthetics, culture seemed to be completely missing from his design dictionary. this trend unfortunately is more dominant among software designers.

designing software is a complicated process due to two important reasons. the product being developed, namely the software, is intangible. the process of developing software is invisible. these two issues combine to give software developers an unique problem to solve. attempts to broaden the discussions on design issues are not particularly encouraging.

design debates in software is completely divorced from practical considerations. machine performance overtakes any other consideration. designers of software rarely understand that they are developing something for people. issues such as user interface cover these issues superficially. that software development does not take into consideration the cultural background of its users is perplexing but very normal.

in the macro level the companies are shifting the debate to different arena. with the stepping down of steve jobs we have lost a man who thought about utility, aesthetics, design in computing devices. his contribution to the industry goes beyond the devices his company released. he redefined the concept of computer by keeping design at the centre and that is his greatest legacy.

but unfortunately these days are also seeing the ugly patent fight re-emerging in the software landscape. companies are acquiring those holding huge number of patents. future fight for supremacy will not be fought in design tables. customers may not get innovative tools for some time. the companies instead of investing in r&d are shelling out money to buy patents. tomorrow's technology will be regulated by courts rather than shaped by futuristic designers.

patents were originally intended to promote innovation. but today patents are being used by large companies in two ways. on one hand they are mindlessly acquiring patents on every conceivable idea to increase their armoury. on the other hand they are using the patents thus obtained as a means to target, threaten and stop innovations by individuals, startups, small companies and competitors. those companies which want to stay away from this game are also forced to participate because otherwise their existence will be threatened.

engineers are mandated to serve humanity by producing useful things. they have to balance the demands of profession and market. to completely surrender to commercial interests and abandoning the professional obligations is unpardonable. at an individualistic level every engineer has to assert his loyalty firmly to the guiding principles of the profession. companies also have to check their commercial aspirations and atleast be sensitive to the larger responsibilities assigned to them.

seen purely as a biological animal, human being is nothing more than the collection of muscle, blood, bones and other similar parts. he experiences the world purely through the sensory organs like eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin. these organs perform their prescribed functions which a man relies upon to make judgements.

furthering this view, these organs serve as feeders to that unknown power in man. this power is named in numerous ways by different traditions. mind, spirit, soul, atman, prana - whatever be its name there is a general agreement that this is an invisible entity residing in every living creature. the absence of which causes 'death' is that power which collects the information delivered by sensory organs and interprets them for taking actions.

interpreting the relationship between the world view created by sensory organs and the view created by the inner power after applying judgement is at the centre of all belief systems. broadly two schools of thought exist. one which believes that humans have to rely solely on the supremacy of the human body and the world view created by the sensory organs. these people see no reason to reject the world as experienced by them.

labelled variously as 'charuvakas' (those who speak well) or as 'nastikas' (those who do not believe in the supremacy of god and his words) these group had an important place in indian philosophical tradition. these people relied on logical interpretation of the world. they were not ready to believe in anything which they could not experience through their bodies. so god was rejected because he could not be seen and his words in vedas was not acceptable to them.

it is said that their works has been destroyed. however their theory can be found in some texts like 'ramayana'. when bharatha visited rama to convince him, he was accompanied by many sages. among them was one 'jabali' who uses the 'nastika' logic to persuade rama. there he clearly expresses the physical view of the world and asks rama not to worry about abstract concepts like dharma. come to ayodhya and lead a happy life was his advice which rama rejects in strong words.

though this school is presented as purely materialistic, it looks like they were not morally void. they may have rejected the ritualistic nature but not the ethical values. in the core of buddhism and jainism one can see the further development of this theory. instead of worrying about the unknown concepts they stressed the importance of leading a good life in the moral path. in fact the vedas too emphasised that dharma should result in artha (wealth), kaama (happiness) and moksha (salvation). but the rigid practice and rituals seemed to have put off some right thinking people who completely rejected the vedas.

this school was in clash with the second which believed in the existence of the power inside the man. further this school believed in the supreme power from which individual souls derive their power from. various learned men through the ages have been trying to interpret the relationship between the supreme soul and individual soul resulting in different philosophical traditions of 'advaita', dvaita', 'vishistadvaita' etc.

sankaracharya who is the foremost commentator on advaita made the famous proclamation in 'vivekachudamiani' - "brahma satya. jaganmithya. jeevo brahmaiva naaparah." here the physical world is labelled as illusionary (mithya). the individual soul and ultimate soul are said to be same. the only truth being that powerful soul (brahman). therefore the view that our sensory organs give us an experience of real world is rejected.

them what is the world around us? is it not real? acharya says it is nothing more than a dream. but don't we believe in the dream, it may be asked. when we dream we feel the pain, we are elevated, we sweat and we scream. so is dream unreal? just like a man believes that a rope to be a snake in darkness, we believe that the world around us real. the darkness is created by absence of knowledge which makes us believe that world is true.

then what is the reality. krishna in bhagavadgeetha explains this in detail with powerful metaphor. the sensory organs are like the horses tied to a chariot. 'manas' is the rope thorough which the charioteer controls the horses. that charioteer is 'buddhi'. thus sensory organs are controlled by buddhi through manas. but buddhi cannot act independently. it acts upon the orders given by 'atman' who is the owner of the chariot. thus the world experiences given by the sensory organs through manas is interpreted by buddhi upon the instructions of atman.

so how does illusions occur? when manas does not listen to buddhi it starts believing in the senses. therefore the emotional behaviour is guided by manas. when the buddhi prevails over manas, it stops regretting or celebrating merely on experiences reported by senses. but buddhi also believes in unreal sometimes. then the atman should control buddhi to bring it to the path of truth.

therefore perceptions created by sensory organs (visual, audial etc) are results of manas surrendering to senses. buddhi can control manas to remove such misgivings. logical illusions are result of buddhi which is not under the control of atman. jnana (true knowledge) of atman will help it take control of buddhi and resolve the confusions it may have.

judgement is at the centre of every professional practice. to decide the right solution among the competing alternatives is the job of a professional. he bases his judgement on the theories learnt during the training. it will be tempered by the experience gained during practice. over a period of time a practitioner will reapply his successful methods while continuously updating his tool-kit.

in a way professional judgement is a part-mechanical, part-individual process. some part of the conclusion can directly be drawn through the data received. for example parameters in lab report indicates certain wrongs. anyone reading them will automatically arrive at almost same conclusions. but some other conclusions can be drawn only through individual take on the subject matter. individuality of judgement is a result of insights gained through study and experience.

objective decisions can be taken when the property under question is inherent. there can be no arguments over a person has fever or not after reading his body temperature. because temperature is an inherent property such objective conclusions can be reached. the same holds good for other properties like weight, height, composition and other physical/chemical properties of any object or person.

is beauty an inherent property of an object? if yes, then discussions on an object being beautiful should be settled without much debate. that does not seem to be the case. people passionately assert their opinion on whether something is beautiful or not. therefore the initial position seems that beauty is considered as highly subjective, individualistic matter.

to settle the question on beauty with such stand poses many problems. for one accepting the clichéd "beauty lies in the eyes of beholder" leaves us nowhere. debates on aesthetics becomes unnecessary because we should accept the plurality of answers. that looks like an odd proposition because there is some consensus on what is beautiful and what is not. also the success of beauty pageants should warm us up to the idea of objectiveness in this topic.

indian philosophical traditions have accepted the objectivity of beauty. discussing the nature of beauty, theories on 'rasa' have emerged. to invoke appropriate 'rasa' among audience is the main goal of any art form. performer communicates certain thoughts through his music, dance, painting, sculpture and it is considered complete only when appreciative audience feels the emotions conveyed.

strict academic rigour developed in the practice of music, dance and other art traditions speaks volumes about aesthetic judgement of the people of this land. whether it is 'shruthi', 'taala', 'raaga' in music or 'bhaava', 'angika', 'mudra' in dance forms, indian tradition has identified the objective measures of beauty and inculcated the same in the art forms. that is the reason for their enduring appeal.

elaborately carved sculptures in temples, functional grandeur of traditional houses, measured symmetry in construction, their symbiotic relation with immediate nature shows how the principles were put in practice to create the intended effect in great way. it is an accepted position here that beauty can be created in all human activities by following established principles in that field.

this does not mean that the practitioner has to mechanically apply these rules. rigorous training under the master will ensure that he will understand the need to internalise the essence of the art before recreating them in his own way. every traditional form of art provides room for individual brilliance. that can be achieved only after the learner masters the established subject matter in that craft.

but where do these principles come from? largely they are derived from the immediate

surroundings. that is the reason why art forms differ in their rules and practices in different regions. art forms staying loyal to the local traditions are labelled today as 'folk' forms. they are identified by the lack of strict academic outlook in theory and practice. hereditary transfer of knowledge is rarely documented and therefore remains closed for outsiders.

in contrast the established 'classical' forms of art have developed strong theories in their domains. they are influenced largely by the universal principles in nature. their relevance is universal because they free themselves from the questions of immediate need. by developing a sophisticated style they appeal to needs of an intelligent man. beauty becomes natural part of these forms as they imitate nature in all its glory.

humans have no other yardstick to measure beauty other than nature. its grandness, mighty power, symmetry, roughness, simplicity, shape, ambiguity, contrast, calmness defines the concept of beauty. objects and events, living or non-living is considered as beautiful depending on how close they are to their own natural self. in true state of self beauty radiates. beauty therefore is nothing more than being true to natural state."satyam shivam sundaram" – amen.

# regulating human behavior

what is the inherent nature of humans? are they naturally calm or unruly? is following the accepted norms their default behavior? stand on these questions define the norms of any community. in those groups which feel humans are invariably unruly strict rules are framed. when humans are considered as rational souls, relaxed norms accept the individuality.

tough times demand tough rules. in times where war was everyday affair strict adherence to rules were necessary for overall safety of citizenry. it is in this context we should read plato who decried individual liberty. later religions emerging from west emphasized on adherence to laid down rules due to same reasons. suppression of individual freedom was a sad outcome of this historic turmoil of those times.

there is little difference between culture and religion in these traditions. religious beliefs shape the cultural practices. rituals define cultural acts. therefore culture which ought to become free expression of human soul becomes subjugate to religious dogma. it becomes stagnant and therefore faces resistance. since it does not modify according to local needs it becomes irrelevant.

but human spirit has challenged this rigid notion in many ways. therefore we find cultural fusion everywhere in india. prayer services are conducted in local languages, local practices find place in rigid rituals, spices of the land add flavor to the cultural potpourri. strict religions which saw no reason to change felt the need to do so. india therefore has become a land of unique religious and cultural experimentation.

traditions of this land successfully understood the need to separate yet unify the threads of culture and religion. identifying the need to allow individual the required space in the society the concept of individual culture emerged. this will not separate itself from the collective culture of the society but be a feeder to it. to overcome the nature of changing requirements and uphold the eternal moral principles separate conventions are devised.

'samskaara' is the individual culture unique to this land. it is more than the initiation to one's religion. these sixteen samskaaras regulate the growth of an individual and lead him to success. it also provides enough room for his freedom and choice of his lifestyle. inside these samskaaras one gets an opportunity to define his own belief system. individual liberty is thus ensured through this system.

'samskruthi' defines the collective belief system of a community. equivalent to the concept of culture it has broader implications. samskruthi has the flexibility of changing with time and place. it is also tolerant to diverse viewpoints. therefore india has innumerable cultures all of which rely on same scriptures yet differ in practices. also members of a community have the freedom to collectively decide to change the practices of their culture according the changing needs.

'dharma' is the collection of those principles that are eternal. unlike culture they cannot be changed. they represent those values which are relevant to all times and places. though it is inscribed in books it becomes alive only in practice. dharma also resonates in the behavior of great people. by upholding the eternal values they bring order to human society.

cultures which focus only on individual liberty results in anarchy. cultures malleable to uncontrolled changes soon become irrelevant. cultures focussing on unchangeability of principles becomes rigid. it is very difficult to balance the triple demands of individual freedom, responding to changes and upholding eternal values. through 'samskaara', 'samskruthi' and 'dharma' this issue is handled in an admirable way which continues to work even today.

learning

formal schooling system has taken the monopoly over learning today. in this complex system various competing theories are proposed on how best to achieve the goals. in a highly commercialized environment educational institutes are struggling to balance the demands of idealism and market. amidst the existing confusion, western pedagogical methods are forced upon the system.

class lectures have been the most dominant form of teaching. here active learning is not encouraged due to lack of direct interaction. students often compensate this by opting for private classes. overt commercialized coaching centers offer little hope thus leaving students nowhere. though there is will to learn among students to learn there seems to be no way to do it effectively.

krishna has dealt this issue in 'bhagavadgeetha' where he prescribes three paths for learning. depending on the interest of the learner he can choose any path. educators who are looking towards west for pedagogical theories should ponder over these ideas. they will do a yeomen service to students and their profession if they implement this.

working is the essential quality of humans. we cannot stay without working even for a second. while we work we learn. what is labelled as 'learning by doing' is referred here as 'karma yoga'. when the work is carried out with passion it becomes successful. teacher will guide students when they fail in their task. learning becomes an active process because of the involvement of both parties.

some things are learnt by applying thought process. using logic new things are built over what is previously known. when there is no way something can be demonstrated and worked upon, meditating over the matter is the only resort. this is labelled as 'analyze' and in geetha krishna calls it 'jnana yoga'. this is difficult than karma yoga but nevertheless useful in many cases.

faith, they say, can move a mountain. it may be far-stretched but nobody can deny the power of strong devotion. krishna defines 'bhakthi yoga' in this context. here the learner surrenders himself completely to the subject matter under study. this total devotion motivates him to undertake hardships for long periods of time. this single minded dedication to learn enables him to master the subject.

therefore there are three paths to gain knowledge. practice, analyze and devotion are not three independent choices. they compliment each other. krishna reiterates this concept in another way in geetha. he refers to 'pranipaatena' (complete surrender), 'pariprashnena' (debate) and 'sevaya' (service) as three ways to gain knowledge. these theories have to be brought into mainstream discussion among policy makers. this is a proven theory and therefore demands our attention.

# common traps in engineering

nothing is more glorified in engineering than the concept of 'perfect design'. students are told to design solutions which work all the time. when they fail to do so they are accused of being incompetent. success stories are glorified, failures wrapped under covers. engineering education has become one great quest for neat solutions which work in all conditions.

very soon students who start working after college realize how ill equipped they are to face problems in real world. their first problem will be the absence of well defined problem statement. without knowing what to solve they will have no way forward. feeling completely lost they will soon begin their journey afresh cursing their teachers all the while.

instead of giving perfectly defined problem statement students should be encouraged to identify problems. in software engineering there is a trend to blame everything on requirement changes. this is nothing but an escapist strategy by software engineers. by blaming clients for everything they refuse to take genuine professional responsibility.

clients cannot be accused of changing their specifications because like developers they too do not have any clear idea of what to expect. by their prior experience and training software engineers may have some knowledge. but clients will have no clue about software which they desperately want. it is only when they see the first prototype they get clarity on what to expect.

what is referred in software engineering literature as requirement change, requirement creeps etc is incorrect. it should be labelled as increased clarification or improved awareness. software being an intangible entity has to go through this phase. no amount of procedures or tools will help us solve this problem. it is essentially a human problem which demands solution involving humans themselves.

humans cannot run like a cheetah or fly like an eagle. our design does not make these things possible. every design has its limitations. every engineer can be expected to give a 'reasonable solution' to the problem. there is no way an engineer can design things which can work perfectly all the times. to understand that every design has limitations is essential.

another realization which should dawn upon engineers early in their careers is that some problems cannot be solved. it will be very tempting for an engineer fresh with his new knowledge to think about solving all problems with his tool-kit. he should be advised not to attempt such misadventure. to accept the limitations of his knowledge and its applicability will enable him to put them into constructive purposes.

it will do a world of good for an engineer to come out of 'perfect design' mentality. in unix there is a philosophy of '90% solution'. engineers will feel good if they aim to develop reasonably good solutions which will work in standard conditions. engineers are humans too. therefore their designs cannot be perfect. it is futile to search for one and better to settle for working and economical solutions which may be imperfect.

## who failed autonomy?

academic autonomy was a dream come true for colleges. when it began functioning in 2007 there was a hope that engineering education will finally come to track. unlimited explosion in number of colleges, unchecked quality in course delivery, large scale malpractices in exams, unregulated evaluation system had taken toll on engg education. decades of appeasing had resulted in a mess which was thought to be beyond repair.

among many problems that plagued engg education three issues stood prominently - syllabus which was not periodically updated, ineffective course delivery and unimaginative evaluation system. traditionally these powers were vested with universities thus centralizing control. this was identified as root cause to problem and as a solution decentralization was proposed.

with much fanfare and hope autonomy was welcomed. it was projected as a magic solution to all problems faced by institutes. right thinking individuals came with detailed procedures to ensure adequate checks and balances. some used this opportunity to bring meaningful changes but many preferred to wait and watch. with excessive carefulness they duplicated everything an university would do. autonomy was just a marketing slogan for them.

today as our experience with autonomy is over four years we can look back and analyse. people who have been involved with its functioning will agree that progress is far from satisfactory. official reports and numbers may tell a different story. but hard truth deserves to be told. autonomy has weakened engg education and it will take it to depths if urgent preventive measures are not undertaken.

teachers are primary reason why autonomy has not worked. having taught with given syllabus for years they have not still understood why they should take charge of their courses. innovations in course delivery remains on paper. but if they can be pardoned for they they have not done they definitely deserve no excuse for indulging in wrong practices.

with great power, spiderman said, comes great responsibility. unfortunately teachers just saw how much of students future can be shaped by them in autonomy via complete control over evaluation system. they failed to understand that they are now accountable and therefore have to be transparent in their working. their loose morals and low ethics is the primary reason why autonomy has failed to deliver.

poor academic leadership is another contributor for failure. administrators have not put a monitoring and redressal mechanism in place. this would go a long way in ensuring transparency. when a case of misconduct is reported college authorities should initiate punitive action and set an example. by burring serious issues of malpractice in the pretext of protecting college reputation they indirectly encourage such practices.

one most important failure in autonomy is neglect of laboratory experiments. engg by definition is practical in nature. by neglecting hands-on training autonomous institutes are causing long term harm to students. coming generation will not forgive today's decision makers if they do not act urgently regarding these issues. engineers are nation builders. how can we expect country to grow when future engineers are groomed with such contempt?

reading 'reminiscences of the nehru age'

it is a fascination for commoners to know more about powerful people. carefully constructed narratives seldom satisfy us. from kings to presidents people who have enjoyed power have always taken trouble to project themselves in good light. therefore you find most biographies filled with reverence and goodness. seldom we find people penning autobiographies in all honesty.

this makes constructing history a daunting task. especially in india where folklore and almost mythical narratives dominate fact based constructs understanding real person behind that glory is very difficult. aided by outright bans or coercive methods alternate stories are blacked out from mass circulation. after some generations history gets reduced to hero worship and reality will be buried forever.

very few men have dared to speak plainly after witnessing historic events in india. many like narasihma rao refused to write or like advani did not write what was expected from them. indian press too has maintained a dignified silence regarding stories about first families in indian politics as demonstrated in a recent case. it is in this regard m.o.mathai's "reminiscences of the nehru age" (vikas publishing house, 1978) occupies an unique place in indian political writing.

mathai as a close aid to nehru was in a vantage position to see history being created. his position enabled him to interact with all important actors of that important episode. history records that he enjoyed considerable clout at that time and he was ousted after complaints of financial misappropriation. he goes on to defend himself in his book but other issues makes this book a delight to read.

he has a knack to present great people in natural colors. by providing small and everyday details about them he paints them as ordinary souls. their mistakes, weakness, jealousy, habits, dreams, fears - all are given in great detail. for someone used to sugar coated stories of these people, this book may come as rude shock. though it looks like at some places mathai may have exercised some restraint, the book nevertheless is immensely readable.

mysteriously this tell-all book has a chapter whose contents, publisher says, was withdrawn by author at last moment. titled 'she' this chapter is supposed to have contained '...intensely personal experience of the author written without inhibition...'. speculations are abound on its contents even today.

overall this book makes up for missing links in indian history writing. reading this work today gives many surprising insights about politics and politicians of a bygone era. honesty of writer in writing such books should be appreciated. how did people react to this work in those turbulent 70's is interesting to know. one also feels bewildered as to how such a book with such frank revelations made it to bookstores and survive to this day.

many worlds, one truth

in his lecture "three worlds" (university of michigan, 1978) karl popper intended to "...challenge those who uphold a monist or even a dualist view of the universe; and [I] will propose, instead, a pluralist view". he proposed that universe consists of "at least three different but interacting sub-universes".

according to popper universe consists of three worlds - a physical world (world 1), a mental or psychological world (world 2) and world of products of human mind (world 3). materialists hold that only world 1 is real. dualists propose that both world 1 and world 2 are real. popper goes on to establish that world 3 is as real as other two.

what does world 3 consist of? popper includes "languages, tales and stories and religious myths, scientific conjectures or
theories, mathematical constructions, songs and symphonies, paintings and sculptures, world of music and the world of art from the world of engineering" in this world 3. later he even includes computer programs in this list.

there is a strong relation between these three worlds. a man understands physical world by experiencing it. his experience results in he expressing that feeling in many ways. thus a world 3 product is created by combining world 1 objects with world 2 emotions. if he has to communicate his experience with anyone else he has to put it in some physical form thus completing interactive cycle between three worlds.

questions about purpose of literature or arts in general can be answered using this theory. products of arts are members of world 3. when they are expressed in physical form they become members of world 1. when someone consumes them their world 2 gets influenced. arts may not change the physical world directly but it has the ability to change human thoughts and influence them to act in many different ways.

in india this theory is well developed. world 1 corresponds to 'prakruti' (physical world). world 2 is described as 'manas' and world 3 is called 'buddhi'. these three elements interact and influence each other to a great extent. another element 'atman' is also added which popper has not comprehended.

our world view is created by the interactions between these worlds. therefore every individual creates his own version of universe. there is no objective means to determine correctness of these diverse views. this is why shankaracharya proclaimed that such world views are not true. there are just manifestations of interplay between different worlds.

popper recognizes that world 3 is as true as other two worlds. but anything which does not change with place and time can only be considered as true. so it is clear that all three worlds described by popper are not true because they undergo change. therefore indian philosophy rejects all three worlds and establishes that 'atman' alone is true.

# individual and societal goods

society is made of individuals and for society to run smoothly rules to regulate both individual action and collective action is necessary. there have been various attempts among different cultures to formulate rules which bind individual and society together. in india such experiments achieved seamless fusion of individual aspirations and societal responsibilities.

at a macro level societal functions were divided into four streams. education, law and order, business and manual labour was identified as core areas. people were free to choose that profession which appealed to them. there was always an option for a person to switch profession if he wanted. in this way society would always retain balance.

there is a tradition to identify above classification as 'jaati' or 'varna'. today it is a label fixed to a person during his birth. and in no circumstances he is allowed to change that label. over years this has given rise to frustration over this inflexible system and therefore become an object of hate.

but careful reading of this classification tells a different story. it should be considered as equivalent to 'professional guilds' which prevailed in medieval europe. by allowing every professional group to administer itself true democracy was encouraged. every group had an administrative wing set up by experienced professions who would act as its interface.

rulers had single responsibility of maintaining harmony between these different guilds. there is a need for each group to interact and depend on each other. there is also a need to protect people from encroaching each other's territory. rulers had to devise mechanisms that would keep these guilds in peace with each other while retaining their individual autonomy.

then comes an important question of superiority of professions. any right thinking person would agree that all four functions are essential for society. individual temperament and right education alone should be considered while granting permission to practice any profession. all professions being equal, every professional ought to respect every other professional no matter how different their works are.

an individual's life was governed by well established rules called 'ashramas'. every person was encouraged to undergo training initially. then he was expected to perform some function of use to society and make his living. after gaining experience and attaining advanced age he was suggested to engage in altruistic service to society. afterwards he was prescribed to engage in spiritual yearning and end his life peacefully.

societal duties were thus divided into four categories and individual lives were also governed according to four stages. there is a harmonious relationship between these two. it is recognized that an individual has to lead a good personal life and has to contribute positively towards collective good of society. individual and societal good are not seen as opponents here but as feeders for each others growth.

software updates

a city has a lifetime of say, hundred years. city planners have to foresee its growing needs and plan accordingly. building planners are asked to think about next fifty years. machines generally are expected to last at least a decade. but software developers do not seem to think about longevity of their creations.

both development tools and applications are changing at unprecedented pace. you get a new version almost every month. even operation system updates are released within six months. along with frequent hardware improvements, computer users are having tough time to cope up with change.

one may argue that this is good. ultimately customers are bound to benefit out of this mad race among manufacturers. their competition is also resulting in flurry of new technologies. flashy gadgets and innovative applications are creating new possibilities in software usage. so why complain?

well, no one is asking here to stick to enivacs or pdp's. change is welcome. but uncontrolled, fast paced change is doing no good. today with so many choices for everything, deciding on decent combination of software tools is becoming very difficult. there is so many things to pick from and even someone with relatively long experience also gets confused.

when there are too many choices people often prefer some standard player. they trust him to deliver latest and best. this in turn gives rise to monopoly. this trend is clearly seen in software domain. few players are dominating entire scene because they offer all common applications. due to their monopoly they also enjoy clear head-start over others when they enter new domain.

so this fast development is encouraging monopoly. it is also giving no opportunity for people to stay away from this vicious loop. companies are releasing new versions at will and they also stop supporting older versions. in this way they indirectly coerce users to use latest versions. this problem gets aggravated when system software are changed frequently.

there seems to be two solutions for this problem. one, there should be standardisation procedure for (at least) crucial infrastructure level software like operating systems. companies should be forced to release new version only after standardization committee approves those changes. second, users should be given an option to retain older versions and companies should be bound (by law) to provide service up to reasonable, pre-defined time frame.

# middlemen as agents of corruption

voices against corruption are becoming louder. high flying people are going behind bars. nothing in recent history is comparable to what is happening today. suddenly with a combination of active judiciary, people's movement and media hype india is witnessing unprecedented events in its fight against corruption.

leaders are being created to be showcased. when they talk more and embarrass their team members they are forced to undergo 'mouna vrat'. questions of political inclinations of civil society leaders are sidelined. sources of money are not to be questioned. attempts are being made to project leaders as almost divine manifestations.

amidst all this there seems to be no questions asked on whether we are looking at corruption in a wrong way. are we trying to sideline traditional practices of this country and look at whole issue through coloured lenses of western thoughts? why are failing to recognize that we had some indigenous means to control corruption in this country?

look at most of allegations today. they are invariably over people who act as middlemen. ministers, committee chairmen, lobbyists, corporate bosses are being put behind bars. using their position as middlemen they looted by misusing their position. but middlemen were actually revered in this country.

narada is one stalwart middleman. his accomplishments as effective middleman is well recorded. even hanumantha plays this role effectively when he meets seetha. krishna shines in his role as middleman while dealing with duryodhana. our history is rich with stories of effective negotiators and power brokers.

even in times not long ago, people who were traditionally worked as marriage brokers or agents dealing with land transfers were highly respected. it was understood that this is very special job which requires special skills. our films have recorded many such good middlemen. but it looks like with modern times we are looking at them with disdain.

it was a standard practice for elders to give some notes to younger ones when they visited homes. even postman was given small change when he delivered letters with good news. small monetary exchange between service provider and receiver was not considered wrong here. 'bakshis' was how it is still called. it is an act of spontaneous appreciation of a task well done. when it is painted as bribe it becomes criminal. we need to rethink on certain assumptions which are taken for granted regarding this issue.

# why does a child smile?

everyone is charmed by a child's smile. it is a very beautiful experience to see a newborn baby smile. it has inspired lot many creative souls. it is justifiably projected as most innocent thing. but this enigmatic smile of a baby has also been subjected to serious studies.

many believe that child smiles because that is its natural state. this is used as an evidence to state that humans by nature are good hearted. it is often argued that everyone is born good and circumstances make him go astray. so purest form of human nature is said to be exhibited by a baby's smile.

modern neurologists and behavioural scientists beg to differ. they argue that a baby smiles because it imitates (mostly) its mother who smiles at it. a smiling baby merely apes someone smiling, they argue. they further state that because babies receive good treatment when they smile, they repeat that behaviour.

this profit maximization strategy looks very advanced. one may wonder whether a baby can think like this. but people who study brain wiring tell us that neurons in brain do form such patterns very early. feedback mechanisms make these links stronger. same logic also explains why babies cry.

in fact this theory comes handy to explain why children behave exactly like parents. they are just imitating them, mostly unconsciously. their brain wiring forces them to continue their parents habits. behavioural experts as well as moralists have understood this aping nature of man and that's why they insist that parents should not misbehave before kids.

it is common to find people imitating their role models. they dress like them and imitate their gestures and speaking styles. even in literature, initially all writers begin by imitating someone. to come out of your hero's shadows is very difficult. every successful creative personality has to murder his influence to showcase his originality.

indian philosophers have also been interested in this question. reincarnation theorists used this question to explain their views. according to them baby smiles because it remembers its past lives. though it is new to this life its previous experiences makes it to remember things like smiling.

so there are so many different explanations to why a baby smiles. they are many more which are not covered here. it is enough to say that no one reasoning is better than other. we must holistically look at this issue and try to form our own theory that suits our inquisitiveness and temperament.

# nature and software

in a sense all professions are artificial interventions. medicine tries to inject foreign elements into body to fight disease causing germs. modern medicine turns blind to natural forces that can restore balance. chemicals and surgery procedures have made human body fertile ground for grand experimentation on how to distort natural state of health.

laws are also artificial means of creating harmony in society. take any law regulating land usage or human action. they miss something primary. they fail to understand that nature has its own way. by keeping humans at centre of world, they create mechanisms where everything should be under his control.

engineering also can be seen as formal means of meddling with nature. look at buildings being built and one will agree that nature is last thing builders worry about. our cities have being designed with a sole intention of destroying nature. modern society's disregard towards nature is seen in its every endeavour.

rails to roads, factories to dams, cellphones to computers all are causing manifold misery to tender balance of nature. now a question needs to be asked whether software also is also going same way? in times where software is used by all kinds of people to do various kinds of tasks, this question becomes very relevant.

many may dismiss this question by stating software is ultimately an intangible product and hence can do no harm. but some thought on this issue makes things clear. software clearly has contributed a lot for destructing nature. it is because of software, computers became easier to use. and increase in number of computers has added additional demands on power.

energy requirements of computers have not improved significantly. add mobile phones to this list and you will understand how much electricity is needed just to run these devices. so one urgent need is to have energy efficient machines. software has also added to woes by automating work. this automation has made machines work more and hence add to damage.

software has also brought in new possibilities in information usage. now information can be collected in huge volumes and can be preserved for long durations. everyone has become obsessed with this new possibility. therefore large number of such attempts are being carried out. in addition to raising privacy and accountability questions they are also indirectly contributing to natural imbalance. software developers should be extra conscious about their work affecting nature and take proactive steps to prevent it.

new basic needs

for long we have been told that there are three basic needs for humans namely food, shelter and clothing. every thing a man does is seen as a means to fulfil these basic needs. many formal studies have been conducted to understand what motivates man. almost all such studies unequivocally advocate primacy of these three needs.

in today's world where 'more is good' mantra is chanted devotedly by everyone there is a need to redefine these basic needs. actually today there is no dearth of food. old restrictions on food is passé. in fact we are eating so much that we cannot digest what we eat. we have to do many physical activities just because we eat too much.

even housing trends are changing fast. people are not happy with one home. they want a home in every city they visit even for a day in a year. houses are becoming bigger. private spaces are becoming more private. architects are noting that there is a demand for two separate toilets in every bedroom (he and she!!).

less said is better about clothing. to say that we are spoilt for choice is an understatement. a sane person may not be able to completely list out various brands in his category. no longer is buying new clothes restricted to birthdays or special occasions. everyday is a celebration and companies are finding new ways to lure people into shops.

given that we are living in this era of excesses, it is legitimate to ask whether food, shelter and clothing should be considered as basic needs for new, emerging, affluent junta. certainly not. so there is a need to invent new needs. actually behind these three needs there was a logic which is completely missed. this is an attempt to understand it.

food quenches hunger. so hunger is most basic need. but today there is food in abundance. question is whether people are really hungry. those people whom we are talking about certainly do not have hunger. therefore they do not understand why food is important. they indulge in all sort of exercise routines just to invoke hunger for next meals.

shelter is needed for sleep. many people today have big houses but sleep deserts them. shelter should ensure safety and provide peaceful surroundings for oneself to indulge in meditation of thoughts. no effort is done today to design good neighbourhoods. therefore even if one has good shelter, he misses good sleep.

clothes are needed to cover up oneself. food and sleep are individual needs. but clothes satisfy social need. people need to dress in a way which society agrees as appropriate. shyness is a social concept. therefore today's three basic needs are hunger, sleep and shyness. if people have them they will know how important food, shelter and clothing are.

# general practice in software engineering

relationship between profession and public should be governed by trust. every mature profession has developed a structure which has been fine tuned over years to maintain this relation. professional service has been stratified in medicine with jobs neatly assigned among players. therefore public have no confusion regarding approaching medicine professionals.

family doctors and general practitioners provide initial service. specialized practitioners are referred in case of emergency. even in so called super speciality hospitals this layered approach is normally followed. doctors prescribe medicines which pharmacists deliver to patients. paramedical staff and lab technicians add their competencies to make doctors fulfil their responsibilities.

generally people are aware about specialists and refer them to each other. even corporate hospitals advertise their uniqueness to educate public. all these happen within guidelines given by regulatory bodies. even in profession of law, pubic interaction has matured to same level. people are familiar with professional practices and know whom to contact in case of need.

engineering in general and software engineering in particular is very poor in this regard. public interaction is completely absent and people are not aware about anything regarding engineer's work. when someone has a problem with software he rarely has a means to contact qualified professional. general practice which is ubiquitous in medicine is sorely missing in software engineering.

one main reason for this is software engineers work in organizations. this shields them from direct contact with public for long time. they continue to live with imagined world of user requirements. client is a mythical being for most software engineers. even public have no means of contacting individual engineers and are quite contented with corporate names.

developing competency in individual consultancy is very important for software engineering. consultants should engage in first level interaction with public just like general practitioners in medicine. they should serve as a link between public and software companies by prescribing right software to people. only then software engineering community can become relevant to public life.

interpreting social network addiction

history is witness to this fact that person-to-person communication has always prevailed over mass communication technologies. telephone, mobile, email, internet chat and social networking has scored due to this reason. even mass communication media also try to engage users in many ways.

request shows and phone-in programs in radio and tv, readers letters in newspapers, citizen reporting in news channels are ways invented by mass media to stay relevant. as well understood today internet was a game changer. it created a democratic platform for personal exchange never witnessed before.

trends in internet space changes almost everyday. social networking is latest fashion and as always there is a debate around its addiction. importantly an old question has re-emerged. why are people hooked on to these technologies? is it because they are interested in other's lives or because they want to project themselves?

to solve this puzzle we should look at different places for clues. why do people read newspaper and watch news all day? very simplistically it can be argued that it is to know about others. but that is not true. one is always interested in only those news he can relate to. look at one's reaction to news items from his place. that news becomes his news and captures his attention.

similarly a match played between two unknown countries rarely evokes passionate reactions. only when one equates himself to team of his country/club he responds emotionally to that team. even people who watch a film relate themselves with a character and therefore react when their hero is attacked by villain onscreen.

recall that all successful tv serials follow this rule faithfully. they win their target audience by placing their stories in circumstances familiar to them. characters are etched from everyday life and people get hooked on. even brand management is all about creating loyal tribe of customers. they do so by relating to customers at a personal, emotional level.

when someone builds his connections in a networking site he is basically increasing his visibility. he is not particularly interested in other's but does behave so to enhance his status. every individual has a hidden quest for recognition and fame. while one is active in these sites he is simply promoting himself. and regarding one's interest in others updates its simply to receive reciprocal attention.

# ramayana

when sachin scores a century look at how newspapers report this news. you can find that every newspaper will use different kinds of superlatives to praise his batting. why newspapers, look how different commentators across various channels differ in their perspectives about same performance. just because there are different versions can anyone deny that story was untrue?

if you want just numbers, you can look at scorecard. it is only when someone uses his creative skills to narrate an event it comes alive to us. and invariably a narration will be one's take on an issue. this leads us to two conclusions. one, an incident will have many narrations and every narration will be very individualistic.

yes there are many versions of ramayana. every small place in this country relates itself to this story. through their own versions people of this country (and outside too) have made rama, seeta and others their own. this story continues to inspire every creative person till date. poetry to films all art forms here are merely retelling this story in their own ways.

for a text which is alive for this long, controversies are common. people do question a thousand thing but rarely has any accusation stayed for long. many have attempted to rewrite this story and provide justice to characters who they feel are betrayed. while people recite valmiki's work everyday other's works have remained in bookshelves.

there are two groups of people who are equally harming ramayana in their own ways. one group of people who worship ramayana simply do so without reading it in original. even if they have know something about it, they make no attempt to analyse it. therefore they fail to respond to critics who raise questions about ramayana.

there is a second group who are waiting for a chance to ridicule ramayana. they too form their opinions without reading ramayana in original. moreover different versions of ramayana gives them an opportunity to ask whether ramayana happened for real. they also see sinister motives in pushing valmiki's work over others.

both parties should first decide to read ramayana. then they will understand how beautiful a text it is. valmiki has left enough material for us to read, analyse, understand, experience and enjoy that there will be no need to debate on these issues. people of this country have accepted rama and seeta as divine incarnations. if that is not acceptable to some its fine. but that should not stop anyone from enjoying poetry of very high standard and good taste in ramayana.

## space and time

every art form is an exploration of time and space. artists who understand nuances of this exploration become masters in their pursuit. beauty in any art form also emerges from how well space and time is explored and communicated to audience. indian 'rasa' theory which deals with art appreciation lays great emphasis on this aspect of exploration.

in music 'raga' is an attempt to understand space. this statement may sound far-stretched but look at words like 'high' or 'low' note which denotes space. a musician travels in space when he is expanding a raga. what keeps him related to present is time exploration through 'taala'. while indian system of music generally experiments with both space and time western music is conservative regarding space while allowing freedom in time exploration.

dance forms also do similar experiments in different ways. dancers try to conquer space through their moves while rhythm patterns help them maintaining time momentum. different dance forms not only differ in their take on aesthetics but also on how to deal with space and time. therefore western dance forms are more rhythm based and indian forms are more expression based.

painting and other related visual forms can also be understood using this framework. while an artist draws a portrait or a photographer clicks something, they both are identifying space and time dimensions of that subject. scaling helps artists capture space and freezing moments help them master time. master artists use colours effectively to enhance space and time dimensions in their works.

cinema is a form where this skill of space and time management becomes crucial. if a film maker cannot understand space dimension his characters look out of place. timing dictates narration speed. editing enables it. totally all art forms internalise space and time concepts in their own ways and establish them in their formats.

strangely even early fathers of computers found this as good measure to understand software. therefore even today effectiveness of a program is calculated using these metrics. goal of programmers is to minimize space and time utilization. programming is also an experiment with time and space exploration. therefore it is easy to claim that programming too is an art form in all its glory.

## determinism versus freewill

how many times have we felt that despite planning everything to perfection things do not go as expected. how often have we encountered situations which were completely unexpected. looking retrospectively life looks like a mixed bag with planned events and surprises in an uneven ratio.

most religious schools prescribe that life is predetermined. call it god, fate, destiny or anything but that invisible hand is supposed to guide our lives. it is told that we are just enacting our roles allocated to us by a superior force. we, therefore are told, have no freedom in selecting our lifestyles.

this deterministic approach is also applied by humans in carrying out their activities. engineering is all about planning. an engineer is determined to keep every aspect of production under his control. there is no scope for chance or destiny in his canvas. randomness is considered as evil and strict adherence to rules is forced.

there has always been an alternate school of thought regarding life. it has remained sceptical about divine plans and has upheld free will of man. time and again when religious dogma has tried to suppress human liberty these ideas have reincarnated in different forms. they believe that humans are free souls who can determine their course of action.

practice of liberal arts has borrowed heavily from this school of thought. artists believe that they are expressing their free selves through their work. their disregard to societal norms should be seen from this perspective. artists are always at forefront in anti-establishment fights due to this reason.

so we have a 'scientific method' which emphasises on adhering to a plan and 'artistic method' which relies on free will and intuition. new disciplines have always tried to align with either of these schools. while engineering and management stayed with former, media and visual designing joined later school.

software engineering has seen a tension regarding taking a firm on this issue. while there have been attempts to bring this domain under traditional engineering framework by fusing planning methods, they appear forced. seasoned software developers will vouch that this is as creative work as any other and therefore deserves to be in liberal arts category rather than engineering.

individual pursuit

art is always an individual response. training and observation translates into powerful form when artist expresses in his own way. therefore all artists are reluctant towards industrialization of their work. they fell it will force them to work in groups which is alien to them.

another important feature of art is its leisurely pace. it is difficult to bind art in timeframe and schedules. artists find it extremely uncomfortable to work to deadlines. both at learning stage and later during as practitioners of their art, they expect people to respect their pace of working.

art is also practised in whole. there is no idea of sub-tasking here. has anyone heard of classical epics or sculptures being created in parts? it is an impossible theory. individual brilliance always creates complete work of art. combining all three points, works of art cannot be distributed among a group and forced to be finished within a given schedule.

almost all art forms have been commercialized. but that does not mean core characteristics of art has been compromised. it is said that when bhimsen joshi struggled to get a note right, audience used to patiently wait. finally when he hit it right, they would celebrate it with huge applause. such appreciative audience alone can save art forms from gross commercialization.

software development has been recognised as art form from its initial days. brilliant minds combined their creative instincts with deep insights of languages to craft programs and software. when money became more visible, creativity was first casualty. with industrialization came all ill side effects which did not fit artistic nature of software domain.

today it has become a norm to make a team of programmers to develop software, allocate sub-task to each member, create a plan for development, fix time constraints and demand software be produced within this framework. true artists will recognize that these attempts are futile and software can only be developed like any other art work using an individualistic creative process.

## building a tolerant society

it is very natural for people to feel possessive about their land, language and culture. this very possessiveness results in constructive things to keep them alive. in times that we are in, it is a virtue every individual should have. otherwise there is a fear of ones heritage being washed away by powerful forces of consumerism.

but this possessiveness should work at a positive level only. meaning they should make people take proactive steps. it should never make people look down others beliefs. to assert ones right does not mean decrying others. to a large extent people over-assert their love for land, language, culture and religion and create trouble.

india witnessed ugly face of religious intolerance during late 80's and 90's. by systematically poisoning young minds, political leaders created a havoc in this country. attacks and retaliations apart, this created divide among people. looking back one definitely feels this could have been avoided with some good sense.

language should bring people together. being a vehicle for communication, it spreads ideas and binds people. but even language is used by ill-minded leaders to create trouble. by asserting supremacy of language one can never achieve anything. language deserves seat in hearts of people and not in swords and stones.

remember that rabindranth tagore did question overt emphasis on nationality. he was a proponent of humanism and rightly feared that militant posturing of nationalists can threaten larger vision of world peace. all wars have been fought with ideals of nationalism. national interests have resulted in gruesome crimes against humanity.

in a way it looks like man takes every tool of unity and uses it to create divisions in society. there will be people in every society who will be looking for an opportunity to exploit these things. every society should have enough strength in itself to withstand such attempts. only then such poisonous attempts can be resisted.

indian society has been tolerant to plurality from ages. our epics are full of heroes who are epitome of good behaviour. we should continue to draw inspiration from them. instead of looking at these epics as limited to certain religion, they should be considered as part of our national heritage. in times where militant attitude regarding everything is on rise, these epics can serve as healing balm.

## selling software

software gains its uniqueness from two points - as a product it is intangible and its creation process is invisible. much like music or literature it is a creative art. but unlike them it has grown into a huge industry. therefore new business models emerge very often. but software's inherent qualities overgrows these models and right way to market software remains elusive.

when software became decoupled from hardware, its pricing was controlled largely through licensing models. oem's and system integrators were primary users of software and therefore this b2b model benefited both parties. they would pay fees in bulk for loading software onto their machines which otherwise would remain a dumb machine.

once consumers started to buy software from shops many problems emerged. commodification of software took time as no prior experience could be replicated in software market. though music shared much with software, its industry were determined with different parameters. software was in search of an indigenous revenue model.

end user licensing worked for sometime. though piracy was rampant, software industry was able to float because large computerisation was gaining force. even government spending was increasing. before internet dawned it was large corporations and governments which kept software business alive. but with internet things took dramatic turn.

manufacturers were having iron-grip over software economy by controlling distribution channels. with internet their control began eroding slowly. global network of information was also becoming biggest copying machine. leaders of software business found themselves in dark as new players emerged who gave everything for free.

internet commerce took away much of gains made by first generation software vendors. attempts to strike back have been consistent. but nothing succeeded in a big way. today with cloud computing emerging as viable solution there is a new hope among traditional software organisations. but trends prove otherwise. cloud computing is actually creating a platform for others to exploit.

same thing happened during first days of e-commerce. companies laid huge networks with an eye on future. but they gained little while other players who utilised these networks made fortunes. software developers may not be able to use this as alternate distribution channel as expected. instead they will end up as losers in this emerging game as visibility of competitive players increases in this domain.

making history speak

of what use is history? traditionally history is studied because man wants to understand his past. and understand it with all its glory and falls. but vested interests have always played a role in creating uni-dimensional view of history. under a biased researcher history becomes a story of oppressed and oppressor. people who are always interested in creating trouble will seize this opportunity and create animosity among people.

every culture can boast of a glorious and deplorable times. this general framework of narrative can fit into any society. in its long journey human race has seen lot many uprisings and downfalls. many have left their footprints in sands of time while some have carved their names on stones. nevertheless all of them were puppets of their time and circumstances. their heroics or weakness were just responses for challenges of their times.

in hindsight we can debate who made mistakes and who got it right. but understanding that those decisions were taken under unclear situation is important. therefore events recorded in history should not be read with today's lenses. they have to be interpreted using light of those times. it is not good on our part to rakeup old issues and then create trouble today. today's generation should not be held responsible for deeds of their forefathers.

stories of oppression are woven by opportunists to gain sympathy for their cause. they use this as an excuse to alienate a section of people. unnecessary tensions are created and provocative language is used to initiate violence. selective reading of history helps these people to further their cause. gullible population falls prey to these historic evidences and society is divided forever. history thus becomes a tool for causing untold miseries to people.

in these times it becomes very necessary to read history in correct manner. they say you can bend numbers if you try. history similarly can be made to speak any language. when people force it to spread mistrust, it should be resisted. and more importantly history should be made to speak truth. that truth will always be a mixed bag of sweet and sour stories. people should not expect their elders to be all good and others to be evil.

accepting that everyone was human is very important. in enthusiastically painting someone as saint we should be careful not to paint other as satan. those who are standing opposite to us need not be our opponents. lets not stab people standing in front of us but embrace them. let us not force history to tell stories we want to hear but allow it to speak in its true voice. for how much freedom we give to narratives of history determines moral health of a society.

perfect answer

"to forget what we have
and to long for what we don't
thy name is life"
-gopalakrishna adiga (translated from kannada)

we are still 'work in progress' and we should not assume that we have perfect answers for all our plaguing problems. we are constantly in the process of finding alternatives and trying new things. as new frontiers are conquered we have many more still waiting for us. to be on constant move is our only goal.

in this continued learning process we should not use our energies in criticizing past decisions. we have no means to understand the circumstances under which they were taken. therefore it will be an futile exercise to blame each other. it should be understood that all grand theories have their glory days and fallen times.

this is especially true for policy decisions. when there is a pressing need for legislation people in-charge will deliberate all possibilities and implications. it is childish to presume that important policy decisions will be taken in haste. blowing trumpets loudly about conspiracy theory does no good to anyone.

when there are competing alternatives it is natural for decision makers to accommodate best of both sides. major policy decisions will never be a yes/no answer. it will be full of ifs and buts. proper checks and balances will usually be inserted in all major decisions having long term implications.

a democratic system of governance provides enough avenues for addressing grievances. pre-consultation is a part of national decision making here. moreover by distributing powers at various levels to different constitutional bodies fears of misuse of absolute power is allayed. since our country has active judiciary and free press there is no need for panic.

then how should we respond to decisions we think are unfair? simple. active citizenry means not only voting and expressing opinions but participating in decision making process. normally all bills will be in public domain for consultation before entering parliament. also elected representatives can be asked to convey the opinion in suitable forum.

beyond all this we have to remember one thing. perfect solutions exist only in textbooks. all human activities are bound to have limitations. but this does not mean we have to be complacent regarding our work. we have to put forward our best irrespective of what results we obtain for the work.

## arts and science

for a statement to be accepted as a theorem, it has to be proved in a rigorous manner. the fundamental approach for proving in scientific world is induction. here the statement is first verified for the simplest of the data. then it is tested for truthfulness for a generic value and its next value. if the statement holds the ground during this process, it is accepted as a theorem.

the dominance of induction method is known to all. is there a rational basis why we should prefer this over every method? the answers are not easy. it is told that induction is a natural way of thinking for humans and therefore should be accepted. this approach is not without criticism. nevertheless it has been a inseparable part of scientific world.

whatever may be its limitations, induction method tells us the most significant part of scientific thinking. the approach of scientists is to generalise things. by examining the specific cases they try to derive the general working principles behind them. once the general theory is established it is used to explain all further cases. the purpose of all scientific endeavours seems to the establishment of generic theories to explain everything.

when people talk about making something science they are looking at this aspect. for example when they say economics or anthropology or sociology should have scientific approach, they are asking for general rules to be established in that domain. in many cases they are successful also. but trying to apply this scientific notion to every area of human activity should be resisted.

the case in point is arts. arts is an individual expression. in contrast to science which moves from specific to generic, arts moves from generic to specific. artists try to realise the truth in the general principles through individual expressions. so if there is a 'kalyani' raaga in theory which is generic (read science) the singer actualises the raaga in his own way when he renders it (read arts).

one more main differences between scientific and artistic approaches is that science undermines individual whereas arts emphasises individual role. science tries to universalise the experiences when arts demonstrates that experiences have to be personal. scientific processes are repeatable but artistic expressions are unique. when people urge that arts should be scientific or science should be artistic they should be aware of these differences between them.

what makes a book successful? the book should engross you completely and you as a reader should be able to 'see' the characters. while this can be easily achieved by a fiction writer, for someone writing about cancer it is a challenge. the success of 'emperor of all maladies - the biography of cancer' (siddhartha mukherjee, 2010) lies in this fact that the author makes you 'see' cancer.

under his magical writing cancer becomes a living character with its own genetic and mental makeup. its biological characteristics are unveiled like any living being. though you won't hear cancer speak you can listen to its hiss as you read through the pages. it appears like that creature in hollywood films that is bound to appear and strike anytime. the author has really drawn an elaborate biography of the cancer or rather the 'mindset' of cancer.

for a book that could have easily been full of medical jargon and therefore out of reach for common readers, the book is very easy to read. there are medical terms but the narrative is smooth and not jarring. there is the suspense of a mystery being solved and that keeps readers hooked on to the story. the vast set of inventors and their struggle makes this story look like an epic war which is still on.

at times the reader feels that cancer is really a riddle waiting to be solved. the many pronged approaches taken over centuries sounds like efforts done to solve maths problems (recall fermat's last theorem). but unlike mathematical problem, the puzzle to be solved here is not an abstract idea but something which is life taking. the entire battery of scientists and physiologists seem to have failed before this enemy.

this book is also about people who have fought this battle with dignity. all the attempts for cancer cure have the same pattern. initially there is hope for cure but after sometime all hopes are dashed and its back to square one. the book is a neat chronicle of various attempts done by brave hearts to stand and see the enemy in its eyes. unfortunately the puzzle is not yet solved, enemy is still at large and people continue to succumb to this disease everyday.

in a way the fight against cancer is a reminder to humans about their limitations. cancer is a metaphor of things which is visible yet unconquerable. in ramayana when vanaraas express their inability to cross the ocean jambavantha says something which is highly relevant here "when man encounters a powerful opposition he has two options. one he can give up the task and surrender. or he has bow before its majesty and humbly put his best forward and hope to conquer it". hanumantha after some cajoling takes the second path. in humans collective fight against cancer, the world is expecting a hanumantha after witnessing many abhimanyus who have tried to break in but have perished during their fight.

# malls, choice and democracy

modern shopping malls present a perfect example to understand democracy. they have endless collection of everything. in the beginning the appeal of infinite choice is irresistible. newbies will try one after other running between trial room and display areas. ploughing through multiple floors and filling those shopping bags and trolleys are all fun. but soon one grows tired and selects anything that they can lay their hands on.

when one comes back home braving the traffic there is nothing but exhaustion. then if ones opens the shopping bags they will realise pretty much what they have chosen is very ordinary. much of that hype around discounts never translates into profits. one cannot but wonder whether this tiring trip was indeed necessary at all! add to it the salesman's recommendations often fills the bag overruling individual likes and dislikes.

the distinction between no-choice, limited-choice and infinite-choice is not as dramatic as one would assume. remember the happiness one would get while visiting neighbourhood clothes merchant who knows what you purchased last time. surely the joy of receiving clothes as gifts where one has no choice at all is incomparable to all the sweat and pain one has to go through to select one set of clothes in that artificial abundance in malls.

pretty much same thing is happening is politics also. poll pundits are breaking their heads to give an explanation to weird outcome polls that seem to suggest the toppling of mayawati government. the once invincible lady whose delhi march was just a matter of time has suddenly become a sure loser. why did voter behave this way? again apart from complex arithmetic one should acknowledge that there cannot be any logical explanation to such phenomenon.

like in the shopping context, the difference among no-choice, limited-choice and infinite-choice in electoral politics too does not matter much. there would be nearly same progress/backwardness had there been monarchy, presidential, two-party or multi-party governance system in this country. the end result would be the same; only the paths would be different. like a customer dazzled by choices in the mall, we are convinced that multiple parties provide a choice and we as citizens are kings.

nothing can be far than truth than this notion. just like malls who lure us with many offers and discounts which ultimately does not benefit us in any way, political parties in different colours also don't. in the end all turn to be similar in their conduct and speech once they taste power. the loser in any case is already known. it is in these circumstances one starts doubting the intentions of democracy. but unfortunately we have come so far in this path that turning back or choosing an alternate is impossible.

computing in future

circa 2012: if you want to buy a computer you can choose every part to your liking, assemble them, load the choice of operating system and other software, hook to internet if you like and voilà! it starts working.

circa 2022: if you want to buy a computer, you will probably get a one piece gadget which cannot be modified as you wish. the software required to run it will be preloaded. if you want any other software you have to download them from their official online store. and yes, the entire gadget is always connected so that it is monitored for use of illegal software or content.

cry privacy and no one will listen. but 1984 was ages ago you scream. sorry this is reality; take it or leave it. there is every fear that the scenario described above may not even take ten years to manifest. it could be even tomorrow! next month! two years !! well, whatever may be the time required, this definitely will be reality sooner than we expect.

this is what every company wanted from the beginning. thankfully some people stood strongly against monopolization of computing industry. hardware industry saw such attempts in the 70's and 80's. software saw it from day one in 80's. people even tried to make internet private. this would have been successful but for some brave attempts by its creators who demanded that the stack of protocols be kept open.

the free software and later open source software movements tried their best to keep the growth of monopolies in check. but the negligence of these people in allowing the mobile devices go unchecked has spoilt all the gains made so far. with the success in controlling the mobile devices, software companies today want to control the computing industry too. so all software giants want to have their own tablet device because that way they can control entire system.

left to these people, they will bring the future of computing to standstill. therefore there is an urgent need to encourage android. though it too has problems, it is a better alternative than others available today. all hackers who have kept the software world healthy with their unrelenting hard work have to be ready for another challenge. the long march from dictatorship to democracy in computing world has to begin in earnest at least now; otherwise it may be too late to do anything.

contemporizing classics

what to do with classics? they can either be kept up there with all reverence or can be thrown out as old stuff. neither of these approaches will help enhance the appeal of the classics. the best thing to do is to interpret them in their own terms. this requires much effort as studying classics demand perseverance. but some extraordinary men try to do something else. they reinterpret classics in their way.

every good thing begs for attention and imitation. we like to dress like someone and be like someone we admire. when we read a good book we want to write in that way. after watching a good film we (at least for a moment) feel like those characters in the film. in fact studies have confirmed that riders crash more often when speeding in their bikes after playing adrenaline pumping games on computers.

we should understand the urge of a film-maker from this perspective when he is remaking a film in another language. though financial reasons are main motivations for remakes one cannot rule out this infectious urge to repeat something good. but imitations are often second grade and duplicates stand no place in creative industry. finding one's own voice after internalising various influences is the biggest challenge for a creator.

in india, ramayana and mahabharatha continues to inspire people till date. various sub-plots and minor characters in these epics are making people recreate the magic in a way only they can. but most of such attempts are tainted by religious or other similar vested interests. therefore they do not add any value to the epics and do not stay for long time. only few poets like kalidasa were able to stamp their individuality while reinterpreting the epics.

bringing a work from one form to another poses a differnt problem. a novel has a particular format; not only literally but also in treatment of characters and narration style. when someone has to make a film based on the novel the challenges are many. every individual creates his own private visuals while reading. now the maker of the film has to conform to majority of readers vision for his film to become successful.

reinterpreting a story in a different time and context is also highly challenging. to challenge established notion is not easy. mani rathnam tried interpreting indian epics in present times in two of his films but he tasted mixed success (thalapathi, 1991 and ravanan, 2010). raajneeti (prakash jha, 2010) became overambitious and failed to impress. there has been no other major attempt in this direction. the film makers of today can take advantage of this void and create contemporary interpretations of our epics to expand its appeal among today's film goers.

decision

in his book 'blink' (malcom gladwell, 2005) offers some interesting insights on human decision making. using a set of newly coined terminologies he offers two important lessons. one, while taking trivial, everyday decisions use all the power of logical analysis and second while taking some important decisions go by gut instinct. the book is filled with instances where people took stands in crisis in just a moment without burdening the matter with dry logic.

momentary decision making is quite common to indian film audience. here screens are filled with stories of man and women falling in love the moment they see each other. businessman taking high powered decisions in a jiffy is celebrated as visionary. heart and brain are considered as two decision making authorities and going with heart, it is said, is always better than listening to brain.

people studying the brain will tell you that there has been much inroads in understanding how we think and take decisions. mostly all human activities are mapped to certain areas of brain. so a trained neurologist can tell you the series of predetermined processes that are followed before an action. psychologists will add that previous memories which are hidden deep in the mind is actually the force behind the instant decision making.

indian philosophy firmly establishes that there is a hierarchical relationship between manas-buddhi-atma which controls human life. but it is ones karma which determines who is the boss among the trio. so if manas is taking decisions it will listen to indriyas and act according to their wishes. buddhi will use knowledge accumulated via training and practice to decide upon things. atma which is purest form of existence will make one realise the futility of material world if awakened after rigorous process.

this issue is very interesting from software engineering perspective also. while automating an existing system there is always an expectation that it will lead to better decision making. in fact domains like artificial intelligence are involved in creating systems which can think and take decisions. many of the computerised systems today can take routine decisions on their own.

the issue becomes complicated when autonomous, thinking machines are proposed. they usually invite hostile reaction from everyone. decision making is considered to be sole privilege of humans. we want computers to do menial, repetitive, boring, time-consuming jobs for us. moreover we are no where near to understand the complete complexities involved in such things. therefore we can be assured that we humans will retain this special place for many more long years to come.

ambedkar's words on democracy

the debates of constituent assembly meetings make for great read. they show the maturity and farsightedness of the leaders who rose to the occasion. writing a constitution for a large country like india where there is nothing common in 10 km radius must have been very difficult. in some ways constitution is the recognition of our oneness despite all telling differences. but for that effort we may have never become a a nation state.

currently there has been a renewed interest on the way we govern ourselves. there are many alternates proposed for improvement of our governance structure which is believed to be down thanks to corruption. the so-called civil society is beating drums of total revolution. in such troubled times it is necessary for us to go back and see why those men choose this system and what caution they gave us for its good working.

in his concluding remarks on friday, 25th november, 1949 dr. ambedkar made some telling comments on the future of democracy in this country. pointing to the fact that india had already lost its democracy once, he reminded that it can afford to lose democracy again. with his deep study of the beliefs and practices of the people here he pointed three main threats to democracy. and reading them today one cannot but wonder how clearly he had seen the future.

the first ambedkar wanted was to abandon the method of civil disobedience, non-cooperation and satyagraha. while justifying that they were necessary while fighting an enemy, he urged that they be stopped now. he argued that constitutional methods be followed in raising and addressing grievances. his strong dislike to these things came out when he labeled these methods as "grammar of anarchy" and said "the sooner they are abandoned, the better for us".

his second caution was against hero worship. knowing very well that indians are prone to over-respecting everything and thereby blinding their reasoning, he advised strongly against it. liberty, he argued, should be at forefront and not blind following. by quoting john stuart mill his final comments on the matter were very effective - "in politics, bhakti or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship".

lastly he envisioned political democracy blooming into social democracy. he defined it as a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. having personally experienced the traumas of rigid social hierarchy, he took leadership in making constitution all-inclusive. ambedkar's words have turned prophetic. today, more than ever, there is a need to read these words and understand them better. else we will have democracy only on paper.

# dharma

one of the most important contribution of ancient indian intelligentsia to the debate of governance is 'dharma'. it does not cover only spiritual realm as commonly held but has many valuable lessons for everyday living in this material world. in fact majority of issues discussed under dharma are meant to establish order in society. that is why dharma is not absolute but relative in most of its stands.

do we need traffic rules at all? in an ideal situation, no. since not everyone is guaranteed to have same set of morals while driving we need rules regulating traffic. even if all are perfect we still need them because everyone needs to know what is the ideal situation they need to follow. in a way rules are needed because certain minimum standards should be set in the society in order to run it smoothly all by itself.

in the same way dharma is collection of handy rules and procedures which set standards in society. they are established by souls who either have gone through the these situations or have foresight regarding future scenarios. whatever may be the case the rules given by them are to be followed by all since it guarantees certain order in society. at the same time no one should start believing that their rules are superior than others.

take traffic rules again and observe that every country has its own set of rules. in some places people drive in left and in other they take right. does it make any sense to fight over which is good? traffic rules are made according to convenience and local needs. similarly dharma too is highly localised and therefore relative. it is futile to argue why certain procedures and rituals are different across different places and times.

so is there nothing universal and eternal about dharma? they indeed is. the contents of dharma can be classified into two categories. the core does not change but the manifestation of those principles in the form of rituals, observations, taboos vary. they are fine tuned to the needs of the people following them. in fact they should be negotiable because otherwise any dharma is bound to become irrelevant after sometime.

all living traditions have to be responsive to the needs of its believers. as times change there will be a need to redefine the practices and customs. when a majority of people accept certain practice it becomes part of tradition. every dharma should provide scope for this flexibility without compromising on the basic tenants on which it is founded. then there will be no reason for people of different faiths to look at each others as enemies. dharma should make people come together; not divide them.

# hanging the dead soul

when rama killed ravana after a prolonged battle, vibhishana tells rama that he is not willing to arrange funeral for ravana. rama then reminds him that though ravana had caused immense pain to him through his actions, he would not hesitate to perform the last rites, if vibhishana declines to do so. even krishna during the epic war in mahabharatha upholds the practice of respecting the dead. even our political class shows that humanity is above petty politics and pay their respect to leaders of other parties.

though meaningless violence is shunned by everyone there is a consensus that sometimes such acts become necessary. there is a difference between removing thorny shrub and a flowering plant. supporting violence in the name of religion or any isms does not take us far. if death is sanctioned by legal machinery then it should be accepted as matter of fact. necessity of such laws could be debated but none can question the application of such law if it exists. the only concern in such cases should be whether all provisions for relief is exhausted by the victim.

law answers the question of justice and morality is not its primary concern. misplaced sympathy can be dangerous for people who take decisions. what is bhagavadgeeta but a long commentary on the necessity of action to be done in dispassionate manner. codification of accepted behaviour in a society becomes law and the rules and guidelines within it governs the system of justice. rewards rarely figure in book of law which otherwise is filled with punishments of different kinds. to handover the punishment to someone is the duty of the person in the chair and others have no business but to respect his wisdom.

the entire process from arrest to death of a person should be carried with a sense of detached emotions and necessary duty. only then true justice which is close to moral correctness will follow. it is in these difficult times the conscience of the nation will be tested. to collectively rejoice over a death does not bring any glory to the nation. instead the reflective public should indulge in the activities to stop such acts in future. this is the time to mourn the death of an innocent young fellow whose destiny was sealed the day he sold his soul.

nobody till date has earned living paradise with guns. poisoning one's will and soul is the actual act of violence. killing someone is simply the fallout of the corrupted mind. when killing people is considered crime, indoctrinating the minds of young men to carry such acts should be unpardonable act of crime. instead of celebrating the hanging of a hired assassin, public should be worrying about the prevalence of masterminds who are out there creating more such man-machines who do not think twice before gunning someone down.

international organisations who are raising a huge cry on the act have to understand that the legal mechanism of the land provided every possible support to the man. the patience and duty-mindedness of the legal fraternity involved with the case should be congratulated. the lawyers representing the man should be feted for their professionalism. the world should remember that this country did not enter a foreign country and kill a terrorist or murder a president without a trial. the law of the land declared a killer be hanged knowing very well his soul is already dead.

doctor and patient

failure to distinguish between problem and symptom can be disastrous. equally damaging is the failure to identify the patient and the doctor. that is the primary job before solving the problem is to identify what needs to be solved and who should solve. this seemingly innocent issue is the primary reason why many well planned solution fail to deliver.

the person in the higher position assumes that his job is to prescribe solution. therefore when there is an issue between unequals the dominant partner always takes on the role of doctor. the hapless subordinate has to accept that he is the root cause of the problem and hence has to undergo treatment. this position makes both blind towards proper analysis and often the wrong problem is treated.

the default assumption of doctor and patient roles also comes with the rider that doctor knows best. though the patient can give important hints towards understanding the real problem, the arrogance of doctor makes him deaf towards all this. as a result the doctor tends to treat the patient in the way he assumes is best. in the process the problem again does not get solved.

patients on the other hand often involve in self diagnosis. more dangerously they impose their opinions on the doctor. the doctor may get carried away by the words of the patient. what follows is again a solution based on presumptions rather than facts. again the solution prescribed fails to deliver and blame game starts.

some patients also indulge in consulting multiple doctors for a solution. while on the one hand this reduces the morale of the primary doctor it also makes patient suspicious about any honest opinion given by doctors. overall the confusion around the problem is increased and arrival at a solution is delayed. even after choosing a solution doubt persists on its validity and attractiveness towards alternatives continues.

this doctor and patient analogy is helpful in understanding how we approach problem solving. right identification of these roles is important because it influences the solution space immensely. in most social problems presumptions and prejudice determines who should be the solution provider and who/what should be treated. it is important to note that even well intended solutions can deliver only when both these parties co-operate and work in tandem towards solving problem.

business of education in near future

register before this week and get flat 10% on all courses

take course1 and get 30% off on course2

pay with xyz credit card and get 10% cash back guarantee

bring your friend along and register together to get 5% off

get 20% discount on textbooks while your register

food coupons at 10% discount on afternoon courses

register for morning classes and get coffee free with breakfast

pay 999 and get exemption from assignments

pay 1449 to get attendance requirements waived off

pay 1999 to get assignment and attendance exemptions

pay 4999 and get everything exempted for all courses

auto-course selector: select your courses in three steps
step1: choose your comfortable timings
      9 - 12 only
      10 - 12 only
      12 -1 only
      after 1 only
      anytime
      i cannot come to college

step 2: choose your course difficulty level
      damn easy
      easy
      not so easy
      not easy but manageable

step 3: choose the type of teacher
      does not bother anything
      very easy going
      smooth talker
      does not take class
      does not come to college
tell us your choice in these three categories and we will prescribe the correct course for you. standard charges apply.

entertainment

the normal order of things are as follows. people have to work to earn their livelihood. when they are bored of their jobs they need to turn to things that help them relax and rejuvenate. with their batteries recharged they have to continue their works in increased zeal. that which helps masses ease their wok-tensions and in addition give them small capsules of thought is what is labelled as entertainment.

in today's times it is being told that entertainment should not be separate entity but should be part of all mainstream activities. therefore we have terms like infotainment, edutainment, newstainment where entertainment is becoming the unequal partner. now it is preferred that education have a dash of entertainment quotient, information be given to masses in entertaining ways and unfortunately news also be delivered in the same way.

the problem of these mixtures is that there is no space left untouched by entertainment virus. if everything is in same colours it becomes boring and tiring after some time. the novelty of that entity wanes and performers should struggle to entertain people. the sensitivity of audience is very important and if there is continuous assault on ones sensibilities, it gets lost permanently. therefore there should be a check on the overdose of entertainment.

there should also be a distinction between active and passive forms of entertainment. the former should be preferred over latter which assumes audience just as a crowd. moreover the populist forms of entertainment with the effect of market forces looks at audience merely as customer. this downplays the responsibility of artists who consider themselves as service providers satisfying the needs of paying customers.

facts and fiction needs to be treated differently. the general public should be trained enough to separate them when one mixes both. otherwise there will be no space left for projecting reality. if entertainment is considered essentially as an escape route for suffering masses then bringing news, education and information delivery under its realm is dangerous. there is no doubt that these different worlds have to meet. but how should they merge is the question.

if entertainment becomes the dominant partner in the relationship there is a danger of education and news losing its sanctity. the casual attitude associated with entertainment will kill the seriousness required in the perusal of education or news. therefore instead of contaminating them with the virus of entertainment it is better to make entertainment itself more responsible. so the right formula would be to make entertainment more educative rather than making education more entertaining and likewise.

freedom*
*conditions apply


can anything and everything be poked fun at or are something more scared to be touched by comedians, cartoonists, writers and film makers? when a cartoonist was found mocking at the national symbols the state was criticized for curbing freedom of speech. but when a film is banned on the basis of hurting religious sentiments, no one is defending the maker. like with everything else we have also developed double standards on interpreting freedom.

is application of freedom dichotomic? is it either complete freedom or absence of it and nothing in between? or can there be conditional freedom in a society? we seem to have opted for the second one today. there is freedom of so many things enshrined in the constitution but there are way too many restrictions for anyone to enjoy them. even some of the fundamental freedom like life and land ownership are overruled by the state in its attempt to favour the rich and powerful.

freedom is the basic condition for creative minds to bloom. so historically they have been granted that space so that they enrich human lives. but unfortunately the state is increasingly feeling insecure by some harmless fun. the panic reaction shown by the state is rightly denounced by the thinking members of civic society. but the same defence is not forthcoming towards the cases when religious fundamentalists are seeking ban on a film.

now if we decide that anyone should be allowed to make works of art of any kind and show it to the public, then it should be applied to all cases irrespective of who is hurt by such depiction. selective application of freedom of speech principle is not correct. the public based on their own understanding of the art forms will decide whether they should accept or reject the works. why should the state be a player in this game by manipulating the things?

another dangerous trend is people engaging in violence based on the rumours and not individual assessment of the work of art. one has every right to feel offended and criticise a work but he has no right to ask that it be banned. for example the cartoons and the films in question today are very poor forms of art. they are devoid of any artistic merit and are manipulative. someone has created them just to instigate people. but then it is still not a reason to ban them.

hackers have an universal principle to which they adhere to - "all information should be free". this dictum inspired free and open source software movement to keep source code of programs accessible to all. freedom is too precious a thing to be left for politicians. people should take active role in preserving freedom in its purest form. any restrictions on freedom should not be accepted. insecure state, individual fancies or religious hooliganism should not hold freedom for ransom.

freedom in mobile world

during the second half of nineties when computers were began to be seen as an essential device, there were attempts by some companies to monopolize the entire industry. when any business is booming vested interests will try to dominate the market. from diamond to energy industry we have seen this happening every time in human history. but thankfully these attempts were not very successful in computer industry.

the reasons for this were curious mix of developments. computer which was completely manufactured by a company was too expensive for customers in booming economies like india. complex and unclear tax regime too added to the price rise of such pc's. in contrast the existing electronics spare parts markets started focusing on computers. the eastern countries who by now had established flourishing business in manufacturing individual components continued to flood the markets with their products.

customers were spoilt for choices as they had to only give their wish list to these system integrators. in an enterprising way this market still exists in a big way providing technology access to millions of people. there was always a niche market for branded computers who somehow did not do anything dramatic to stop this bazaar of masses. the volume sales kept the assembled market growing while value sales satisfied the pc manufacturers.

the one set of people who had problem with this assembled market was software developers. their grouse that software piracy is norm in such market is very true. there were legal measures that the industry pushed for but they failed in implementation. moreover the emergence of free and open source software provided the much needed awareness regarding the alternate software available for people. so even to this day the desktop computer market is not dominated by few players but is very open thus empowering the masses.

but the emergence of mobile phone industry has posed new problems. from being just a moving telephone today it is virtually another computing device. but the dynamic industry which grew around desktop computers is missing here. manufacturers are taking complete control of the devices. dealers are reduced to sellers and they cannot meddle anything with the device. even the software ecosystem in this case is under the exclusive control of the manufacturer.

the high profile court cases have highlighted the fact that unlike in the computer era where imitation was accepted, in mobile era they will not be tolerated. the free and open source software solutions for mobile devices has lost its steam. it looks like the days of fight between big players for dominance in mobile world has started. unless and until some drastic breakthrough does not come from hackers, the loss of freedom for masses in the mobile world is imminent. and that will wipeoff all the gains that hacker community has gained in past three decades.

free internet

internet is one technology whose growth in reach and influence is maximum in recent history. no other technology has directly impacted the lifestyle of our generation so much. it has silently changed many rules of business and its full impact still has not been experienced yet. the story of internet so far is a like a fairly tale but there is a need to apply caution about its future.

from the time it took its baby steps internet has remained a democratic technology. independent groups of people, institutes and governments have helped its growth. the growth of internet cannot be divorced from the story of free and open source software. they both influenced each other so much that it is difficult to say whose share is more in their mutual success story. internet has grown from being one specific technology to a bundle of services enabling people and devices connect with each other.

when printing press was first introduced, there was a strict licensing on the product. who could own what technology was always governed by state. technology has the power of enabling people and therefore the state always is suspicious towards that. the first wave of internet somehow seem to have escaped the clutches of powerful interests of state and grew independently. most importantly people who were inducted into internet world were made to realise the importance of keeping internet free and open.

but once the internet reached the critical stage with the maturity of technology and substantial user base, states started to circumvent it. given that business and general public were already in the bandwagon of internet, state decided that it had a role to play. the governance of internet till recently was a matter of no concern. but today it has become a global issue with multiple stakeholders insisting their superiority.

there are two sets of players who are playing spoilsport in attempts to keep internet free and open. first are mobile manufacturers. their behaviour is reminiscent of tricks played by yesteryear pc manufacturers. they are trying everything possible to create a subset of internet for their users blocking access to general internet. their ability to control what their users are able to see via app stores is very detrimental to the future on internet because mobile devices are becoming default way of accessing internet.

the second set of people who are posing a threat for free and open internet are giants in search engine space. since they are virtual gatekeepers for internet their role is very critical. they are increasingly listening to the governments and unlisting many websites thereby causing great harm to the cause of internet. they are also becoming more pervasive and therefore their actions will span beyond search space. anyway the financial agencies have come under the spell of government control. if these people also submit themselves to the whims and fancies of state machinery then the future of internet looks very bleak.

who should govern us?

people of karnataka are cursed for sure. there is certainly a complete void in the political scene. the never ending friction in the elected party is giving even its die-hard supporters nausea regarding it. unless there is a dramatic change in the leadership there is no hope for the party in next election. even party insiders seems to know this for sure. but surprisingly the opposition is still in deep slumber.

the principle opposition has tried to strengthen its base from time to time. but there are far too many leaders there who will back-stab each other at any given moment. the attempts by the central leadership to bring in changes in leadership many times have not yielded any benefits. the party seems to be waiting for government to fail on its own so that it can create some space for itself.

but the real problem is with the other party in opposition. the uttar pradesh and tamil nadu experience should have taught the leaders of that party about the need for having strong regional party. but somehow they seem to be reluctant to take on that responsibility. they have golden opportunity in the coming election. but whether they will stand up and be counted itself remains a major doubt.

in all cases another coalition experiment seems inevitable. so people of karnataka should ready themselves for longer period of uncertainty. no one but the present ruling party should be held responsible for this mess. they could not understand the sentiments of the people who have such a majority. they have ruined their chances for a long time to come. their so called powerful leader is spoiling any change of comeback with his adamant and unreasonable stand to get back to driver's seat.

the situation is fertile for a regional party to emerge strong here. karnataka has always suffered from getting its right due from centre because unlike other states here there is no strong local party to sit in the negotiating table. one only wishes the leaders of that party understand the situation and take steps to galvanise the support base. with a leader who commands respect even without office they really have it in them to rule this state.

if they do not take lead now it will be clear advantage to the grand old party. people who are determined to throw away the ruling party will vote for them in case they are not presented with an alternative. but again the old party is overfilled with ageing leaders. even their yuvaraj does not seem to bring any change as proved in uttar pradesh elections. it is pity that we have to literally beg a political party to wake up and do something so that they can govern us.

governance

imagine a country with an active, ideal government. one of the primary tasks of such a government is to see that no one dies of hunger. now what is the actual task before such a government? should it shoulder the responsibility of feeding everyone?  or should the government deal with this matter without interfering directly? or is government irrelevant in this scenario i.e. can we assume that people will take care of themselves irrespective of government's action?

there can be counter-arguments for every stand listed above. if every person in that country knows that government will feed him will he not become lazy? if government does not interfere directly won't the prices be hiked irrationally thereby making many suffer? or if people feel government itself is irrelevant won't it result in anarchy and thereby bring suffering to all in the long term? the analysis of the possible answers to a singe question can teach us a lot regarding the various governance patterns that have emerged mainly from the western world.

on one extreme is the theory of marxism where government assumes the role of benevolent dictator taking the responsibility of all its citizens. on the other extreme there is free market economics where government sees itself as a mediator without any direct role. between these extremes there are many alternates suggested where government's role is in various proportions. amidst all these debates, anarchists question the need for formal governance structure in the society.

the problem with all these western theories on governance is their acceptance that private and public lives of an individual are different. the institutionalising of this notion has resulted in the present mess we are seeing in the world governance. and moreover there is this set of international organisations who take every available opportunity to give unsolicited advice to countries regrading the best form of governance. recently some agencies are also wielding the weapon of ratings to threaten countries to accept various policy decisions thereby undermining the power of autonomous governments.

ancient indian thinking on governance is very different from this. here the individual and public life was not considered different. it was well understood that government should create and implement measures for making the life of an individual easy. to see that every man leads his life in the path of dharma was the main agenda of governance. therefore the entire governance structure was geared up for the protection and propagation of dharma which is both individual and collective at the same time. answering the question raised in the beginning of this writing the indian notion of governance is to enable people earn their own food in their own chosen rightful way by formulating appropriate policies and overseeing its effective implementation.

## human rama

traditionally ramayana is considered as an epic poetry celebrating the greatness of human life. though rama was considered as incarnation of lord himself the poem by valmiki seldom creates situation to display his divine powers. rama remains grounded as a normal person and goes through all the pain and pleasures like any other fellow being. it is told that this incarnation was to specifically teach general public on how to lead life without compromising on the principles of good living.

there are quite a few episodes in ramayana which people may argue is supernatural. the killings of daemons of all hues, the entire story on vanaras, ten heads of ravana surely cannot be real. but that excuse should be given to a great poet. it is these extravagance of imagination which makes such works enduring and enjoyable. such small issues should not deviate a reader from main issue that rama never uses superhuman ability. all his acts were much within normal man's reach.

many hidden symbolisms are embedded in these so called supernatural episodes. reading them as straight narrative can be misleading. many interpreters have tried to decode these symbols in many ways which are convincing. but one episode which has defied many and continue to fascinate writers is the episode of ahalya. even if most writers are able to humanise rama in almost all other episodes this episode has remained out of bounds for many.

the story is a complex narrative with each character developed to its fullest potential. therefore taking a stand on either side of the debate can be offending to the other. the so called feminists have had field day criticising everyone from indra to rama in this episode. for them this is the living testimony to the fact that women were exploited in indian society. the believers are always perplexed by their beloved hero's behaviour and continue to search for a logical explanation.

whatever may the debates on both sides the role of rama remains unchanged. he is the saviour of ahalya. it is said that she was laying there waiting for him from years. valmiki has purified her role by making rama bow to her. in many other versions poets have tried various combinations so as to maintain the dignity of rama. when rama becomes that ultimate saviour he no longer remains human but has to ascend to godhood.

it is a challenge open to all creative souls to recast rama in human form. how can ahalya episode be reconstructed so that the purity of ahalya is maintained and rama not attain divine status even for a moment. anyone who can clear this hurdle can continue to write entire epic in a whole new light. ramayana which has continued to inspire scores of creative minds from time immemorial should be interpreted in modern context too. otherwise this generation of creative souls will have to permanently carry the blame of not keeping the ramayana tradition alive.

# making schools inclusive

the evolution of school education in india makes for an interesting study. the schools developed for masses became exclusive spaces over time. then there were attempts to break the exclusivity and make schools more inclusive. this game of musical chairs is happening from many centuries and the latest legislation has added another chapter in this evolving story.

it is understood that there was no formal schools in this land during the early period. the learner had to find the right teacher to learn the required skills. the apprentice system was mostly happening in the family itself. therefore the learner was merely carrying forward the family profession. if anyone was interested and talented enough to switch to other profession he was given a chance.

the large scale ashrams where gurus were exclusively involved in teaching was developed much later. the scriptures accepted this as first stage in a person's life. the idea of learning centres was taken in a big way by buddhists and jains. all along the way indian schools were open to everyone interested irrespective of one's caste or ability to pay. kings and wealthy merchants would fund these schools which became the torch-bearers of indian tradition.

christian missionaries entry into education system brought some dramatic changes. since they were the rulers the appeal of their education overshadowed the traditional system. but they seem to have divided the schooling system in this county. on one hand they created elite schools for the purpose of rich. and on the other hand they developed schools for masses. that divide haunts our society till today.

following the footsteps of these missionaries other religious organisations in india also started educational institutes. they too followed the policy of two-tiered schools. even after india gained independence the divide between the schools still remained. at one point it was sanskrit which was considered as elite language. now it was english. with the increasing economic divide between people the schools also continued in the same way.

indian legal system has tried to bridge this gap by introducing ambitious and path-breaking laws. though their intentions were good they fail to achieve their goals because of shabby implementations. the new law to bring plurality in classrooms is welcome. but there is also a danger of little ones being intolerant towards newcomers. the teachers and parents have a major role in making kids understand why this integration is necessary. otherwise we will lose a historic opportunity to create inclusive society which is so necessary for the success of democratic india.

# interpretation

how should a true connoisseur appreciate the arts? the dominant version followed in the academic circles is to understand the context in which the piece was written or performed. understanding the life and circumstances of the author becomes crucial in the study of arts. works of arts there are understood as the artists reaction to the influencing forces acting upon him at a particular period of time. the learner is urged to explore these situations so that he can relate to the work better.

that a work of art emerges in a specific temporal and spatial dimension is unquestionable. but whether an incident/person affect the artist directly or whether it continues to harbour in his unconscious self to indirectly influence his thought process later is the question. valmiki is said to have been moved profoundly with grief after watching the bird die from hunter's arrows. the question is whether this understanding is necessary for someone to appreciate ramayana or not.

to investigate the meaning the writer/artist wants to bring in his work does not leads us to completely understand the work of art. a gifted artist will definitely present multi-layered meaning in his works. to see only one dimension and claim to have comprehended the work will be outright disrespectful to the art and artist himself. any work of art should lend itself to many interpretations among different people.

works of art like poems and novels differ from official notices and circular in this sense. while official circulars intend to convey a singular message across to many people, poems don't. they encourage myriad responses from people. if any poem is understood in a same way by everyone then it should be termed as failure. it must be said that poet has failed to invoke the power of the form to create magic among the readers.

a poem gets interpreted in many ways when every individual reading it can relate to it in his own way. that can happen when the poem can capture the universal emotions in a way that anyone can experience it in their lives. when a reader reads a poem he should not just interpret the grammar of it but start experiencing it. only then the reader will cry, laugh and feel all those events in the poem. that individual response is the hallmark of a successful poem.

this theory is valid for every art form. the artist loses the ownership of the work once he finishes his work. the readers/viewers take over the work from then onwards. through their own individual lenses they first try to understand and later experience it in their minds. the total interpretation of an art form should be the result of this process. otherwise the appreciation/criticism will be limited to superficial levels. neither the artist nor the connoisseur will gain anything from such futile exercises.

# paths for salvation

the beauty of indian philosophical tradition is that it does not impose any particular path on believers. though it prescribes some standard techniques it largely leaves interpretation to oneself. the three schools of 'karma yoga', 'jnana yoga' and 'bhakti yoga' are considered as three paths of salvation. some persons are involved in unwanted debates on whether one path is better than other two. but in reality there is no dispute between these schools of thought. they are just different manifestations of same truth.

'karma yoga' does not restrict itself to prescribing work. it goes on to classify the works to be done by an individual and grades them according to their merit. some works are to be done by everyone and some are limited to those who qualify. overall the aim is do those tasks which are beneficial to the society at large though the individual doer many not get anything in return. this altruistic nature of work which is considered the high point of this category is called 'nishkama karma yoga'.

'jnana yoga' does not oppose 'karma yoga' but makes one understand the futility of work. after someone works relentlessly on something over a period of time it is natural for him to feel the limitations of his efforts. this feeling should propel one to seek higher meanings of life. so 'karma' done as a 'yoga' should lead to 'jnana yoga'. few enlightened souls will understand this relation early and therefore will do 'karma' in an uninterested manner focussing on 'jnana' as a means of salvation.

'bhakti yoga' prescribes unquestioned worship of godhead as a means of salvation. though one can reach 'swarga' through this path it does not guarantee 'moksha'. one is forced to go through the cycle of birth and death until he realises that 'jnana yoga' alone can propel him towards ultimate destination. though 'karma yoga' and 'bhakti yoga' are useful they are mere stops in the ultimate journey towards salvation. all paths therefore lead to 'jnana yoga' which is the ultimate 'last mile' connection to salvation.

it is understood by thinkers of this land that every person has his own temperament. therefore imposing one rule on everyone is impractical. everyone needs to be given space to explore their beliefs and an option to settle down with their own private truth. the different schools of thoughts provide this luxury and therefore stand as unique point in indian tradition. all efforts should be made to preserve this plurality of thought and any attempt to narrow down the choice should be opposed as it is against the founding tenants of the tradition of this land.

leisurely class

the players of 1983 cricket world cup winning team are blessed lot. their stories have become legendary. kapil's catch is explained in vivid details by enthusiasts most of whom saw it much later. narratives of that epic climax are included in textbooks. the memory fails to fade away and brings a breeze of freshness whenever the memories of kapil's devils are invoked.

no such luck for the cup winning squad of last year. there was celebrations at the moment but no follow-up. before the memories of win could sink-in players geared up for another gala events. several series débâcles happened and today after a year there are no nostalgic memories. there are no stories being told and there is sense of accomplishment. ditto was the absence of rejoice after india topped the test league.

epics are results of their times. it is not enough to have gifted writers to weave an epic. importantly there is a need of an audience who can soak in the work in a leisurely pace. when was the last time we saw a classic coming out of press? is there any cult cinema running currently in theatres? where is the best musician of gen-next? poets, painters and all those people who have to enrich our lives - where are they?

these are best times for business in art scene though. in cities there are plays happening everyday. there are many art galleries, music concerts than you need. but are they enriching our everyday lives? flooding of films in theatres and computer screens are not being savoured but merely seen. books are flipped through the covers without soaking into the words. before the batsman finishes bowing after hitting a ton he is forgotten.

the lack of immersion in any art form is today's major problem. leisure has become a rarity. it is not that there is any external force which is making people run and run so fast. it is the race which they have volunteered to participate. they seldom understand that they are running towards infinity; there is no finish-line here. you run, run, run and just collapse. then you realise it was just not worth it.

to measure the love of poetry by the number of covers one has in the collection, to demand the label of film enthusiast by the number of tickets, to profess the love for game by the number of matches one watches is stupidity. whether one can actually enjoy the experience an art form provides and share the joy with like minded people should be the lone question asked in this context. what we urgently need is a leisurely class of people who can enjoy good things in life at their own pace and then get inspired enough to retell them in their own ways.

burning libraries, again

there is a story in indian mythology where demons steal the collective knowledge of this land called vedas and hide them deep in the sea. it is believed that lord took form of horse-man (hayagriva) and got the vedas back for the good of humanity. the episode reminds us that attempts to control knowledge has a long history. even in medieval times the first job of conquerors was to demolish the libraries and other seats of learning including temples.

from takshashila to alexandria libraries have borne the brunt of aggression. in days where manuscripts had to be copied manually destroying few copies would mean end of a branch of knowledge. the inter-community clashes often resulted in the complete destruction of works of the opposite party. this may also be the reason why ancient indian knowledge was transmitted mainly through oral tradition. this spared them from being destroyed by vested interests.

with the introduction of printing press knowledge truly become democratic. for the first time in the history people could read texts on their own rather than depending on interpretations by clergy and clerics. the enlightenment in europe and the resulting scientific revolution which heralded the growth of modern era is the direct result of this democratization of knowledge. it was only later that artificial measures to control this spread of knowledge was introduced through copyrights.

the early history of copyright tells us that it was intended to keep knowledge in public domain. how such an idealistic law became a tool for corporate greed is an interesting story. with the expansion of schooling education became business and textbook publishers started controlling the system using perpetual copyright laws. today the publisher lobby has grown so strong that they have the final say regarding copyright laws in most governments and international organisations.

technology has always remained a step ahead than law. when new technology comes to the market it will disrupt the existing system. people of old order who have reaped benefits from the limitation of that system will do everything to stop the change brought by technology. by using money and political power they bring laws to control change through law. recent developments in the changes to copyright laws in countries and through international treaties are an example for this unholy nexus between greedy publishers and hapless governments.

internet has remained the battleground for supporters of democracy and governments interested in complete control. the governments try to enforce their diktats via laws which hit the very democratic foundations of internet. they see the non-centralised, distributed control model of internet as a threat. their attempts have largely been circumvented by enthusiastic hacker groups advocating complete access to all information on web.

but recent developments are largely worrying. the closing down of library.nu comes at a time when powerful governments across the globe are trying to enforce laws which will have far reaching consequences. internet of tomorrow may not look like the place where information can be shared freely between consenting individuals. every attempt should be made to keep the core principles of internet going even if it means breaking laws because as st.augustine proclaimed "an unjust law is no law at all".

# manual and natural processes

as engineers we build things. whether it is tall buildings, new machines, fast cars, useful software, flashy website or cool apps engineers follow the same approach to build them. in fact every made man object seem to have been developed from the same set of first principles. and the most common principle in this set is 'build in parts'.

the hallmark characteristic to problem solving by humans is 'divide and conquer'. the problem in hand is broken into smaller ones till each one can be independently handled by an individual. the answer each one develops is later merged into one big solution. any man made object is the sum of parts. by fixing many components developed independently companies are able to fasten the manufacturing process.

modern industrial world thrives on this principle. by dividing the task into multiple blocks, it is able to export the tasks to places where it can be done cheaply. what was earlier limited to manufacturing segment has today moved into knowledge industry also. today's software companies thrive mainly because they are able to specialise in one niche domain and cater to global needs in that domain in economical ways.

this manual way of doing things has to contrasted to the way things are done in the natural world. nature also produces things but it does not follow the process followed by us. grass, flowers, plants, fruits, animals and humans are not manufactured but evolve. how does nature organically make these things from a small seed is a riddle we still have not solved. and maybe it is something which we will never know.

artists believe that their creations too follow the natural process. singers do not sing songs in parts, painters see their canvas as one whole, poets write their works as one complete work and so on. there is no distinct parts in an artists work. everything merges into one whole and emerges as one undivided piece. this is very crucial for an artist because he sees his creation as a natural product of his involvement with his art.

today there are attempts by technically inclined people to create music by mixing different sounds. the end result of such attempts may be good but somehow this process does not respect the spirit of art. music should evolve from the soul of the maker and grow into a full-fledged song. the rough edges can be polished later but attempting to create music like an industrial process by subdividing it should not be encouraged.

nature and software

in a sense all professions are artificial interventions. medicine tries to inject foreign elements into body to fight disease causing germs. modern medicine turns blind to natural forces that can restore balance. chemicals and surgery procedures have made human body fertile ground for grand experimentation on how to distort natural state of health.

laws are also artificial means of creating harmony in society. take any law regulating land usage or human action. they miss something primary. they fail to understand that nature has its own way. by keeping humans at centre of world, they create mechanisms where everything should be under his control.

engineering also can be seen as formal means of meddling with nature. look at buildings being built and one will agree that nature is last thing builders worry about. our cities have being designed with a sole intention of destroying nature. modern society's disregard towards nature is seen in its every endeavour.

our transport system to roads, factories to dams, cellphones to computers all are causing manifold misery to tender balance of nature. now a question needs to be asked whether software also is also going same way? in times where software is used by all kinds of people to do various kinds of tasks, this question becomes very relevant.

many may dismiss this question by stating software is ultimately an intangible product and hence can do no harm. but some thought on this issue makes things clear. software clearly has contributed a lot for destructing nature. it is because of software, computers became easier to use. and increase in number of computers has added additional demands on power.

energy requirements of computers have not improved significantly. add mobile phones to this list and you will understand how much electricity is needed just to run these devices. so one urgent need is to have energy efficient machines. software has also added to vows by automating work. this automation has made machines work more and hence add to damage.

software has also brought in new possibilities in information usage. now information can be collected in huge volumes and can be preserved for long durations. everyone has become obsessed with this new possibility. therefore large number of such attempts are being carried out. in addition to raising privacy and accountability questions they are also indirectly contributing to natural imbalance. software developers should be extra conscious about their work affecting nature and take proactive steps to prevent it.

# new basic needs

for long we have been told that there are three basic needs for humans namely food, shelter and clothing. every thing a man does is seen as a means to fulfil these basic needs. many formal studies have been conducted to understand what motivates man. almost all such studies unequivocally advocate primacy of these three needs.

in today's world where 'more is good' mantra is chanted devotedly by everyone there is a need to redefine these basic needs. actually today there is no dearth of food. old restrictions on food is passé. in fact we are eating so much that we cannot digest what we eat. we have to do many physical activities just because we eat too much.

even housing trends are changing fast. people are not happy with one home. they want a home in every city they visit even for a day in a year. houses are becoming bigger. private spaces are becoming more private. architects are noting that there is a demand for two separate toilets in every bedroom (he and she!!).

less said is better about clothing. to say that we are spoilt for choice is an understatement. a sane person may not be able to completely list out various brands in his category. no longer is buying new clothes restricted to birthdays or special occasions. everyday is a celebration and companies are finding new ways to lure people into shops.

given that we are living in this era of excesses, it is legitimate to ask whether food, shelter and clothing should be considered as basic needs for new, emerging, affluent junta. certainly not. so there is a need to invent new needs. actually behind these three needs there was a logic which is completely missed. this is an attempt to understand it.

food quenches hunger. so hunger is most basic need. but today there is food in abundance. question is whether people are really hungry. those people whom we are talking about certainly do not have hunger. therefore they do not understand why food is important. they indulge in all sort of exercise routines just to invoke hunger for next meals.

shelter is needed for sleep. many people today have big houses but sleep deserts them. shelter should ensure safety and provide peaceful surroundings for oneself to indulge in meditation of thoughts. no effort is done today to design good neighbourhoods. therefore even if one has good shelter, he misses good sleep.

clothes are needed to cover up oneself. food and sleep are individual needs. but clothes satisfy social need. people need to dress in a way which society agrees as appropriate. shyness is a social concept. therefore today's three basic needs are hunger, sleep and shyness. if people have them they will know how important food, shelter and clothing are.

the power of networks

people tried many tricks before but none worked like this one. the blogs, tweets and likes never made any real impact. the holiday crowd which were seen in parks were wrongly considered as support base. people said that clicks were being converted into campaigners. no, all these were simply false. fast-unto-deaths became symbolic dietary routines signalling the end of hype around cyberactivism.

and then all of the sudden railway stations became crowded. the hysteric reporting and instant analysis pointed at many things. but very few understood this as first case of powerful demonstration of information power. people were taking real action based on the message they received. the messages came from their peers and not any top level official in power. in fact they are returning surely on the reports they received from their sources and definitely not because some ministers told them to.

many lessons can be leant from this episode. fist the government should understand the power of information network which is truly in the hands of masses. newspapers, radion, tv and even internet are under some kind of government control. but what about mobiles? this new tool is increasingly becoming more capable than simple talking device. if it can start exodus it can even trigger progress.

no more should the policy makers of this country count technology as luxury. there is ample proof now that people are in possession with powerful tools which helps them not only consume information but produce and propagate them too. administrative delivery can now take the advantage of mobiles to reach the last man of this country. radical changes in the judiciary and policing too can be enabled with this technology.

business establishments are not taking mobiles seriously. the huge benefits derived from mobile booking of lpg cylinders should be an eye-opener. the days of mobile money transfers is becoming nearer. when mobile phones become money cards the imminent advantages are too much to be neglected. the resulting business environment should be taken advantage of by preparing the groundwork at least from now.

history is witness to the fact that peer-to-peer have always triumphed over one-to-many communication models. the network created by technology today is very powerful than what was earlier assumed. mobile phones are becoming more important in our lives. we are hearing only the bad news from them but they can do lots of good to us. its after all a tool; one needs to use it in a proper way.

nothing for free

the one mantra by which everyone swears today is free services on internet. it would be weird to think one would have to pay to check email, transfer and download files, watch videos online or connect with friends. free is something as natural as oxygen in cyberworld! well think again!!

we go to our favourite search engine countless times everyday and its true they do not bill us for anything we search. too good to be true! actually you are doing a great benefit to the company. how? well, by typing your search keywords you are telling them what you think, what you want and what you don't. when billions of people do this everyday in every part of the globe its information goldmine for any company.

imagine what would happen without this. companies would have emailed you forms asking to fill your preferences. bet how many of us would even bother to open them. sending people to physically collect the information may work for census, but then it is once in a decade experiment. how to get sense of people on real time basis? that is a trillion trillion dollar question.

and we, damn fools that we are, are giving this information for free! the company then uses all this data to do many things from selling keywords for advertising to predicting the spread of flu. agreed there are some social goods that emerge from this. but the overwhelming benefit that the company derives from providing 'free' service is immeasurable.

same with emails. no not that someone is sitting there and reading our mails but there is definitely a possibility of using 'aggregated' information for some business benefit. ditto the advantages of blogs, social network updates and all those things which come up every other day. those millions of followers of high profile people are actually well primed to accept the trends started by their heroes.

targeted marketing, creating loyal user base, customer locking, creating switching costs - all may appear complex business terms. but all these things are bundled into some sweet candies and handed freely to millions out there. and we, the pampered and spoilt kids of virtual world, are more than eager to accept them. one would be aghast by knowing in real terms the benefit he has provided to companies by using all those free services.

# individual pursuit

art is always an individual response. training and observation translates into powerful form when artist expresses in his own way. therefore all artists are reluctant towards industrialization of their work. they fell it will force them to work in groups which is alien to them.

another important feature of art is its leisurely pace. it is difficult to bind art in timeframe and schedules. artists find it extremely uncomfortable to work to deadlines. both at learning stage and later during as practitioners of their art, they expect people to respect their pace of working.

art is also practised in whole. there is no idea of sub-tasking here. has anyone heard of classical epics or sculptures being created in parts? it is an impossible theory. individual brilliance always creates complete work of art. combining all three points, works of art cannot be distributed among a group and forced to be finished within a given schedule.

almost all art forms have been commercialized. but that does not mean core characteristics of art has been compromised. it is said that when bhimsen joshi struggled to get a note right, audience used to patiently wait. finally when he hit it right, they would celebrate it with huge applause. such appreciative audience alone can save art forms from gross commercialization.

software development has been recognised as art form from its initial days. brilliant minds combined their creative instincts with deep insights of languages to craft programs and software. when money became more visible, creativity was first casualty. with industrialization came all ill side effects which did not fit artistic nature of software domain.

today it has become a norm to make a team of programmers to develop software, allocate sub-task to each member, create a plan for development, fix time constraints and demand software be produced within this framework. true artists will recognize that these attempts are futile and software can only be developed like any other art work using an individualistic creative process.

challenges before software engineers

software industry always has an eye on future. since software becomes obsolete when it is deployed for first time there is a constant need for reinvention. companies not seeing next big thing and hanging to old beliefs have perished. embracing change in radical way is a survival strategy here. trends change everyday so caution is necessary to plunge into next big thing. recognising next big challenges and devising methods to handle them is important for future of professional community.

that desktop computing paradigm is coming to end is long known. computing devices are taking more innovative forms. primarily mobile devices and other hand-held, portable equipments are definitely here to stay. therefore software applications have to be interoperable. also necessary is to exploit new interactive mechanisms specific to these machines. coming out of keyboard-mouse mentality will be one big challenge for software developers.

large scale computing is also turning really big. number of processors on a single chip is increasing by day. enormous computing power is not limited to niche areas like gaming. with amount of everyday computing needs on rise, these giant processors are entering into drawing rooms. but software developers are still lagging behind. to upgrade software development paradigms into multi-processor environment is next challenge for developers.

software deployment mechanisms are also undergoing huge changes. gone are those days when software was circulated in an optical device. today global networks are becoming faster and computers alone are not connected to them. they are changing old rules of business also. with people opting for this networked economy, establishing credible software delivery systems in a demand-intensive, multi device environment is also a challenge.

standards have always been software industry's weak point. in an industry driven by innovation standardization was considered an unnecessary roadblock. slowly and painfully industry has understood why standards make sense. but for a community of developers who have had free run, adjusting to new demands will be difficult. how fraternity of software developers will stand up and answer calls for maturing their profession is a challenge of a different kind.

from its inception software industry has developed an elitist attitude. software was a luxury for long time but no more. as software is entering people's lives questions of accountability are raised. this profession has largely remained unregulated by law till today. it is surprising that even self-regulation too is alien to software community. how this profession will withstand demands for abiding laws governing professional activities is another major challenge for software engineers.

## abandonment of seeta

popular account of this story goes like this. spies were assigned by palace to report people's views to rama. one day a spy named bhadra reluctantly told rama about a dhobi who refused to take his wife after she was away for few days. when persuaded by his neighbours he angrily commented that he was no rama who accepted his wife despite she living under other man for long time. when rama heard this he asked lakshmana to abondon seeta in forest.

while a section of people have used this episode to highlight male ego of rama. many works in this line have accused rama of falling prey to words of fallen man. highlighting seeta's plight as suffering women they have shunned rama as divine incarnation. believers have been weaving defences on rama's behalf. their arguments and counter-arguments are of little use. in poetry doing justice to theme is important than telling truth.

in valmiki's work bhadra happens to be rama's friend. rama was casually chatting with his friends and enquiring people's opinion about his family. when bhadra told about seeta rama was worried. when his friend reported this matter to him he felt that this issue is important. therefore he decided to abandon seeta. later poets have used all their imagination powers to bring various dramatic narratives of this incident.

remember that shurpanakha was alive even after ravana's death. some poets have brought her into this story. shurpanakha wanted to avenge her brothers death. so she came as a gypsy fortune teller (koravanji) and entered seeta's palace. she asked seeta to draw picture of ravana and then blew life into his eyes. rama was shown this as a proof of seeta's love for ravana and therefore he ordered her exile.

in some other stories it was seeta's in-laws who hatched a plan to send her out of rama's life. seeing rama's overt love to seeta they became jealous. so they asked seeta to make a painting of ravana as they had not see him but had heard about his bravery. unaware of their motives she paints ravana and then these ladies show that to rama. in a typical daily mega-serial style these vamps plant a story about seeta's secret love for ravana and rama becomes enraged and does what is expected by them.

whether rama knew seeta was pregnant when he sent her for exile? again there is no consensus. valmiki says rama did not know about seeta's pregnancy. when lakshmana tells her about rama's decision first thing she tells him is about her pregnancy. but most other versions tell that rama was very aware about her status. which of these are correct? that is not important question. what is important is enjoying good poetry without worrying about authenticity debates.

# cloud computing

in computing world which thrives on buzzwords 'cloud computing' is latest fashion. high and powerful people are wearing this tag proudly praising it as saviour. if you are not there you are finished, they say. as usual media is beating drums and creating hype. but silently there is a side act of this drama which is emerging and threatening to take over central role in this story.

## what is cloud computing?
every one is defining in it in their own here. here is one more addition for this. it is nothing new as people expect. when you hit http or www in that address bar of browser you are accessing something in cloud. to keep something in cloud means outsourcing content and application to other party for hosting and maintenance. mostly everyone outsources their web presence and therefore are in cloud from day one.

## then why this hype?
because e-com was losing its sheen there was a need to invent some magic. also new possibilities in web-services could not be captured by old terms such as portals. new generation of applications which aggregated services from various sources was becoming a reality. therefore there was a need for awareness of new heights reached and maturity gained. creating hype around cloud did exactly that.

## has something changed fundamentally?
yes and no. yes there has been large improvements in background infrastructure. clusters and grids are redefining server landscape. distributed computing in large scale is today a reality. what was limited to b2b domain today has expanded to b2c and c2c domains. but fundamentals of client-server computing paradigm has not changed much. in that way nothing really has changed.

## is this a passing fad?
with billing rates of cloud computing services having remained stable for some time now, it is cleat that this is here to stay. many technologies used here are tested ones and therefore reliable. middle tier software which is crucial for success of cloud computing services are firmly in place. they are now capable of taking huge loads and perform effectively utilising improved hardware infrastructure. since entire stack of cloud has been integrated with steady players it can said that this will stay.

## what is the side drama here?
cloud computing is silently creating level playing field in next generation web services. internet created a democratic system in cyberspace. here every player had same tool - url. but with increased penetration of internet, there was a need for upgrading hardware, software and service offerings. early on only companies with deep pockets could afford this. now with cloud computing offered to everyone competition is wide open again. and as always smart people who utilise established infrastructure will emerge winners rather than people who created it.

# leadership void

democracy is a strange business. on one hand there is an urge for collective action and on the other there is a demand for strong leaders. politicians who have tasted power through party politics tend to see themselves above their parties after consolidating their position. powerful leaders who come to power on their own do not see a need to build strong base for their party. in the process the aspirations of true democracy is slowly strangled to silent death.

in a sense india never had a party which thrived purely on its principle. even the leftists who are proud about their cadre based structure had on rely on stalwarts. if there was none they were invented. in some cases they were imported too. the right wing parties which tried to consolidate their base around religious identity has failed to sustain solely on the based of its manifesto. it too needs mascots even if it is an unwilling deity or a temple.

charismatic leaders are the ones who help their parties form governments in centre. post 2000 there has been no leader who can command the attention of entire nation. subsequently there is attempt by every national party to create leaders. unfortunately till date such attempts have become unsuccessful. there seems to be no hope either of someone emerging in near future. the attempts by some 'civil society' members to raise hue and cry over nothing should be seen from this perspective of attempting to fill the vacuum in national leadership.

the one man show is becoming more common in regional level. while this can be argued as good for local improvement the increase in its bargaining power is posing problem at central level. parties with 20-30 m.p.'s can easily get lions share in the central ministry and their constant pressures will effect national governance. the pressure of coalition politics is today understood after more than one decade of experimentation. outside support and the politics around it is also witnessed from long time.

no one will advertise for leadership position. leaders should always emerge from masses and claim their rightful place in the top. political parties are responsible for identifying and nurturing future leaders. but they are failing in their duties. power politics is luring leaders to create a niche for themselves forgetting the party altogether. such parties which rely on single person will not thrive for long. there should be some constitutional way by which these one-man shows be curbed at start.

collective leadership is an eyewash. there should be one mouth and many ears to run a country. a strong leader with unshakable allegiance to his party alone can rule this country. while leader should be strong he should not become dictator. there should be system in place to control leaders who try to outgrow their parent parties. there will be a national crisis if parties do not act swiftly to address the leadership void.

pedagogy

in this age of abundant information questions are raised on the relevance of formal learning methodologies. western pedagogy theories focuses mainly on testing outcomes. in contrast indian theories on the same issue deal mainly with ways in which learner can internalise knowledge. primarily three methodologies are prescribed in indian tradition which can be chosen according to the temperament of the learner.

learning by inferential logic is dubbed as 'anumaana'. by building upon the initial axioms the learner acquires deep knowledge upon a particular subject. the classic example given in the traditional texts is as follows. by looking at the smoke in the distant mountain the observer concludes that there should be fire up there. though he never really witnesses the fire directly he uses deductive logic to conclude so.

in all modern scientific domains any new knowledge is obtained using this approach. incremental growth is achieved by applying inferences from known results and connecting hitherto unconnected branches of learning. this method comes into force through relentless questioning and dogged pursuit despite all oddities. though this category is well enshrined in modern learning methodologies the other two are entirely neglected.

learning is nothing but an act where one convinces himself of something. you learn when you start believing something wholeheartedly. in 'anumaana' logic is used for convincing self. but what to do when logic reaches its dead end? 'aaraadhana' is the second way of learning where the learner submits himself to the teacher. by doing so he convinces himself of the truthfulness of his teachers utterances and hence obtains new knowledge.

the teacher in 'aaraadhana' need not be a human teacher but can be a book or gospel. whatever it is in this method the learner becomes believer and thus prepares himself for absorbing the teachings without an iota of doubt. though some modern sentiments may stop some from accepting this as blind faith some reasoning will unveil the relevance of this method in a society which necessarily does not contain only reasonable individuals.

'anubhava' is the third alternate mode of learning. here the learner experiences the process and convinces himself of the truthful nature of the subject under study. this is considered as ultimate learning method but is not always applicable. therefore apart from few individuals who can rigorously practice often for a long time others usually take up the other two paths. it would be better if modern pedagogy theories integrate these ideas into theirs so that practitioners can get best of both worlds.

perception

a company with a global footprint wanted to challenge another leader in its home turf. it invented the better formula and thought it had a winner. the product was launched with much hype. though initial trends were encouraging the product was soon declared unworkable. today the leader still occupies the coveted position and the challenger is long forgotten. do you recall the name 'savlon'?

savlon was strategically positioned to challenge dettol. what its makers thought would be its core strength turned out to be savlon's single cause for failure. unlike dettol, savlon gave less burning sensation when applied on wounds and it had a pleasant odour. but people equated absence of burning sensation to less powerful action. they were also used to the typical dettol smell so much that anything else was unacceptable.

now who told people that antiseptic lotions 'should' smell like dettol? no one exactly. but everyone started thinking so. the same thing happened in other scenario. when pepsi was catching up with coke's market share coke decided to change its trademark formula. it went pepsi way and diluted its drink and made it lot sweeter. what was considered as master-stroke turned to be a dud. coke was forced to bring back its original offering to remain in the contention.

in kannada cine industry there were guys like ramakrishna and ramesh bhat who were extremely talented and were far more dashing than the heroes of their days. but somehow they never clicked. take praveen amre or sanjay manjrekar who had loads of talent and better technique. why did they fail to raise to their potential? and who can forget a self-proclaimed superstar management guru who claimed to have made a film in a methodical manner which did not survive the weekend of its release.

we do not pick up our favourite batsman looking at record books. our screen idols have nothing to do with talent or friday collections. when we enjoy the food in a restaurant we don't ask for health ministry clearance. we do not look for iso certificate while selecting products. we rarely think about classical correctness when we enjoy music. we never use a formula to calculate the compatibility while selecting a friend.

most of our decisions are based on instincts. instincts are based on perceptions. perceptions are beliefs accumulated and reinforced over a long period of time. they are shared beliefs of a community which are planted by its opinion makers. more than media stories it is personal narratives which spread these beliefs which after sometime becomes very difficult to erase from public memory. therefore organisations should take extra effort to create positive opinion about themselves in order to avoid the jinx later.

philosophy

modern education system depends on too narrow specialization. any new development will soon be carved into a niche area of study. by building strong walls around a field of study the chances of sharing knowledge between different domains is minimized. therefore the graduates coming out of years of formal education will lack essential primary know-how of even some basic topics necessary for everyday life.

if beneficial-oriented education suffer from this problem those subjects which can no way generate direct employment suffer from another problem. in these times where everything should adhere to the single point agenda of high benefit from low investment topics like philosophy is dying slow death. someone has said that philosophy is the pursuit in leisure and they were correct. in today's now-and-here-urgency there seems to be no time to sit back and meditate on greater purpose behind everyday events.

stranger is the development of the market that has emerged around philosophy. today one can get a package deal to engage in anything ranging from yoga, pilgrimage, meditation to pranic healing. the ability to pay will determine how much advanced courses one can attend to gain transcendental knowledge. for the right price there are people ready to perform all those obscure poojas in some unheard puranic texts.

what many fail to understand is the uniqueness of indian tradition. here nothing is mandatory and for everything an alternate and contradicting theory exists. every person can develop his own set of beliefs from this assorted array of offerings. so a complete non-believer and a total devotee can study the same text as main inspiration and yet stick to their beliefs. that may be the reason why study of philosophy was never an exclusive exercise here.

though an elaborate classification of different schools of philosophy was done they were never taught in isolation. an intricate system of learning made sure that everyone got an introduction to every theory and then choose any system which fit his temperament. and moreover philosophy was never taught in isolation but with other skill based education imparted on learner. as such everyone was encouraged to find his own philosophy through the path chosen by him.

it is here indian thinkers put into action the truth they found after much exploration. they had realised that same truth can be arrived through many ways. and anyone who is soaked in the continued quest to find real knowledge in any field must find the same truth. therefore there was no need for any special training in philosophy. every one could get his own version of philosophy and realize his own private truth in his own way doing the work of his interest. here philosophy was never removed from everyday life; but a part of its every living moment.

# idealism in poetry

poetry is the result of fertile imagination in some creative mind. the otherwise unconnected words gain new meaning in the hands of creative writer when he blows life unto them. while a poet is bound by the laws of grammar while writing he does not have limitations in exploring the emotional world of his characters. that a poet can transcend the limitations of physical world itself is the greatest strength of a poet. great poets have given us an insight into unexplored territories thus enriching our lives.

creating an imaginary world where men can fly, animals can talk and sea can split is very much under the power of poet. he is very much within his rights to create characters which are either too good or too evil. we should not expect that a poet create 'balanced' characters. the poet is not a judge nor he is a chronicler of events. he has no business to whitewash all his characters nor does he need to explain his position to anyone. his loyalty lies firmly with 'poetic truth' and creating a work of poetic beauty.

questions are often raised whether ravana had to be all evil or whether rama is all good? attempts are made by people to do 'justice' to ravana by elevating him as ideal person with a tragic flaw. there are also people who have tried to highlight the mistakes of rama thereby stripping him of his godliness. all these attempts carry no value because a bad ravana and good rama are essentially characters in a good poem. they are so because the creator of that work intended them to be so. they cannot be independent from their creator.

the question that really needs to be asked is whether 'poetic truth' has been compromised or not. if every character was good there would not be a story of epic standards. there has to be good and evil roles for multi-layered storytelling. a learned reader will understand that ravana's acts are done in a context and rama also acts according to the situation. they are not characters from everyday life. they need not necessarily exhibit qualities which we expect them to. their behaviour is controlled by the temperament of writer and his narrative style.

poetry can reflect reality but cannot be forced to do so. ultimately the reader should be satisfied that the poet has done justice to the theme handled in his work. the ultimate judgement of poetry lies on creative imagination and its narration. a meals full of sweet dishes will not satisfy anyone. there needs to be a balanced offering on the plate to get a sense of satisfaction. similarly in a poem there need to be assorted 'rasa's so that the readers poetic appetite is satisfied. idealism in poetry need not mimic those in real world but should stand up to the private truths laid down by the poet himself.

## problem and symptom

the failure to distinguish between problem and symptom will be disastrous. wrong diagnosis will lead to incorrect prescription of solution. many a times solution itself will bring in more grief than the problem itself. the resulting situation will be one of great mess which cannot be cleared in long time.

take for example the so called 'traffic problem'. worldwide every city is facing this problem and everyone is trying to handle the issue in their own ways. here as usual we are trying to import solutions from elsewhere giving very little thought to its viability and relevance. but the question that really needs to be asked is whether this is a problem or merely a symptom?

number of vehicles on the road does not increase on its own. there is a whole system which is fuelling this growth. booming economy, easy availability of loans, concentration of employment opportunities in select cities, failure of public transport, changing social status - all are equal contributors for this but we are focusing only on one issue - traffic.

the larger issue is the failure of proper planning in employment generation opportunities. because cities continue to greatly contribute to the economy, they attract more people. the mass migration to cities is a worldwide phenomenon. therefore town planning activities should be taken up with new vigour and vision. trying to merely cure symptoms will cause long term problems.

we cannot widen the roads forever. flyovers and underpasses provide temporary relief but infuse long term irritations. alternate public transport facilities like metro and mono takes years to complete. therefore looking at changing policy decisions itself can be a remedy measure to manage this issue.

creating self-sustainable neighbourhoods and townships seems to be only viable solution here. future dwelling places should not be concentrated in few crowded cities but should be evenly spread with independent pockets developed to meet all needs of its residents. only then there can be a living atmosphere which can sustain interest in life. else these cities will squeeze all humanity out of people and make them machines, which we are fast turning into.

## purpose of arts

unlike the professions which are means for livelihood perusal of arts are usually a hobby for many. today the practice of arts is a lucrative professional option but for rasika there is no direct monetary benefit. then why should one read poems and novels or watch dance and drama? of what use is watching films and serials? why should one be interested in arts at all?

the first reason that is given by most is personal enjoyment. arts are a way to satisfy ones urge to escape from reality. engagement in arts helps one to forget the hardships in life and help one get involved in imagined world. this notion is so powerful among mainstream film makers that they dish out no-brainers in the name of entertainment.

in indian tradition arts are not looked only from this perspective. here arts are means to achieve some higher goal in life. the nearest thing to self-realization can be attained by a true performer. it is this every artists strives to achieve in practice of his art. the artist once immersed in his art forgets the world around him and becomes one with his art thereby reaching the higher truths.

the individual heights an artist reaches should be transferred to audience. this is the hallmark of a great artist. how effectively he conveys the ecstasy which he enjoys to true rasikas determines whether the artist is merely a performer or a true guru. like spiritual gurus who help their disciples to experience ultimate truth, true artists help rasikas to enjoy sublime beauty of higher reality.

writers too follow this pattern. a true writer will write only when he experiences the higher truths. the power of his writing should be such that the readers should experience the same feeling when they read his works. in indian tradition we have poets like valimiki who can be counted in this category. even the words in the vedas are said to be uttered by souls when they attained enlightenment.

that which makes poem from words, painting from colours, dance from movements, music from sound, dress from thread - is the soul of those art forms. practice of art is a journey to discover the soul of that art. once the artist realizes it, he becomes nothing less than a liberated soul. the ultimate purpose of art is to help us realize mystic self-transcendence in an enjoyable manner.

what is the purpose of life?

in some rare cases like this analysing the question is far more interesting than answering it. this question is heavily loaded with presumptions. for one it assumes that anything and everything should have a purpose. and for something as serious as life, it assumes should definitely have a serious purpose. the only thing it is not sure is what that purpose is.

that very assumption should be called for serious questioning. it is because everyone has taken it for granted that life should have a purpose that they start giving their own piece of mind on the same. the inevitable differences in the answers to this question has led to serious clashes among men from ages. for what they believe is the purpose of their lives men are ready to defend it till their last breath.

religion has the single point agenda to answer this question. but their overwhelming differences have added more to confusion than bringing clarity on this matter. taking advantage of limitations of religious thoughts alternate materialistic theories emerged time and again. they give scant respect to such question and limit themselves to maximizing individual happiness. neither the over obsession of believers nor the disregard of materialists give us satisfactory answer regarding the validity of the question.

both believers and materialists agree that life should have a purpose. they just differ in their opinions regarding the same. the problem is that there is fear among both camps that without a well defined purpose human life will be wasted. defining a purpose becomes essential for them not only for the sake of individual discipline but to maintain social order. they presume without a well defined purpose human life becomes nothing more than an animal's life depending on chance to survive and perish.

of what use is this identification of purpose? human powers are very limited. and the social structure in which he lives adds lot of limitations on his free will. therefore the identified purpose gives him an aura of superiority. he starts feeling far more stronger than his real self thanks to the higher purpose. his life is tailored around the means to reach the purpose. therefore in some ways we can claim that having a purpose can have a positive impact on humans.

life's uncertainty should help an individual to put these things in perspective. life perse does not seem to have any higher purpose. but for the sake of maintaining certain social order artificial arrangements like these seems to be preferable but not absolutely essential. therefore an individual seeker in the path of liberation should identify the futility of these issues while not completely rejecting or overindulging in them.

# rama rekha

ramayana has been the living tradition in this country and for this reason alone it has been re-interpreted many times. people have added many subtexts into the main narrative of valmiki. the only parameter with which we can judge the appropriateness of such acts are to study whether there is any deviance from the original characterization of primary actors. even if some deviant viewpoints can be accepted as poetic freedom they will not reach the heart of devotees of ramayana.

one such later addition is the metaphor of 'lakshmana rekha'. this episode is not mentioned in the valmiki's text but has gained huge popularity over years. the idea of a women crossing the limits imposed by man and thus committing 'the original sin' may have appealed to many. it also adds lots of drama highlighting the helplessness of sita and villainy of ravana. the episode has given field-day for analysts who have continued to debate to this day on who was the main culprit behind sita's abduction.

for those who want the metaphor of line-of-control (rekha) there is another place where they can find a better one. in deciding the line a king has to draw between his public and private life, rama demonstares the real rekha which we can aptly call as 'rama rekha'. the episode refers to the later half of ramayana where rama decides to send sita to exile. this episode again has been taken by critics to highlight how a hapless pregnant lady was banished to woods by a heartless husband because someone doubted her character.

careful reading of the text in original reveals many aspects. for one rama did not know that sita was pregnant. second it was not a single man who was complaining. in fact as opposed to popular opinion there is no mention of a dhobi in the text. the poignant narrative says it clearly that in an early morning briefing the head of the spy squad mentions to rama that entire citizenry is talking wrong about him and sita. this revelation puts rama in a dilemma since as a king it is his primary duty to secure the goodwill of his people.

the tightrope walk he had to make while balancing his role as caring husband on one hand and dutiful king on the other was extremely tough. he had to draw the 'rama rekha' deciding what should be public and what should be private. he could have reasoned that his private life should not be of any interest to others. but he did not do so. he understood that for a king living a righteous life is not sufficient, demonstrating it often is important. he therefore decided to send a clear message to his citizens that he is mindful of their concerns by sending away sita.

he did not send her alone but asked his trusted brother to accompany her. rama wished that sita be looked after well and therefore he clearly instructed that she be left near valmiki's ashrama. he was careful enough to see that such act does not appear calculated and so made sure that sita be dropped near ashrama and not directly into that place. when the news was broken to sita she reacts in a manner befitting to her status. more than lakshmana rekha which symbolises control for women, we today need rama rekha which tells us how to balance private and public obligations without sacrificing any.

rama's dharma

it is often said that the main purpose of rama's life was to showcase how a normal man can lead principled life. rama's sense of righteousness and his adherence to path of dharma is exemplified in his each and every step. not only in major crisis situation but in every small incidents his sense of dharma comes out nicely. it is in these small actions we get to learn many great lessons regarding dharma.

his practical view on life is demonstrated in his asking for a shovel and basket while going to exile. in the forest even when they build a small cottage for themselves rama does perform all the rituals prescribed in the sacred texts. just because it is a temporary shelter does not make rama neglect those vastu related sacrifices. even while stepping into a boat or while crossing a great river like ganga he makes sure all due respects are paid to them.

when bharatha comes to his place to inform him about dhasharatha's demise rama instantly decides to perform the required rites. when nothing was available for offering he decides to take some seeds for the purpose. his famous uttering at the time that we shall offer what we eat to gods stands as a primary guiding principle regarding this matter. even in those trying times he is compassionate enough to make kaikeyi comfortable by saying soothing words to her.

though he releases ahalya from her suffering he is duty minded the very next moment and bows down seeking her blessing. the man is also gentlemanly in his interaction with shurpanakha initially. his interaction with guha and sumantra are lessons regarding how a person should interact with people from different strata of society. his relationship with seeta demands a complete thesis as it is a study in ideal marital relationship.

ramas interaction with hanumantha also is very special. initially he talks to hanumantha via lakshmana respecting the protocol. his friendship with sugreeva was not merely notional but the pact was testified by taking vows before sacred fire (agni-sakshi). once this is complete his relationship with hanumatha changes dramatically. the adherence to rules of dharma is evident in crowing vibhishana soon after he surrenders himself to rama.

after the execution of ravana he does not indulge in celebration. his immediate concern is the proper funeral of ravana. when vibhishana raises some objections rama stands firm and says in case vibhishana has problems he himself will carry on the task. such is his regard to dharma that he is not ready to compromise it even for his enemy. it is not for nothing that a man like maricha who was in the opposite camp exclaimed that rama is the manifestation of dharma (ramoh vigrahavan dharma).

## rama's exile

as a literary text the enduring legacy of ramayana is its ability to engage us in endless debates about its central themes. every major event in the epic can be subjected to analysis from various perspectives. in addition to being beneficial in understanding the essence of characters these debates are also helpful in teaching the intricacies of dharma. one such episode lending itself to good analysis is rama's exile.

in valimiki's text the episode is narrated sans any great emotion. when kaikeyi summonses rama and informs him about the matter rama does not utter anything but agrees for the same. in the later stages there is fierce opposition from lakshmana regarding this. he even goes to the extent of asking rama to take arms and if need be take the throne violently. but rama rejects any such move.

the main text does not give any hard reasons for rama's stand. the situation if analysed legally proves that rama had all chances to oppose his father. dasharatha had merely inherited the land and the crown from his ancestors. so he had no business to impose his personal view on who should succeed him. prevailing laws was clear that the eldest son was the default inheritor of crown. so rama had all reasons to oppose his father.

even if dasharatha had promised his wife something it was clearly a private affair. when private wishes and public good are at odds public good should always prevail over the private promises. so dasharatha was obliged by larger law to hand over the reins of the kingdom to rama. the promises could have been handled in a different manner or still better could have been denied as part of king's authority.

and even dasharatha had not taken decision on his own. he had consulted the ministry and the council had overwhelmingly approved the decision. the question now is whether the leader can overrule the majority decision and take his own course. in political theory such gross misadventure is termed as authoritarian and is condemned. therefore even in this line of argument rama had the opportunity to overrule his father's words and remain in the kingdom.

but rama's acceptance without mincing a word speaks volumes about his understanding of dharma. 'pranipatha' is the principle of total surrender to guru. rama considering his father as guru had decided to accept his word whatever the circumstances be. this is the symbol of his respect to the dharma and his never-say-no attitude towards guru's words. this reason is better than the explanation that rama went to exile to kill ravana and fulfil his obligation of that incarnation.

religion

packaging is the buzzword of the day. everything needs to be packaged well in order to be presented in the market. and things which are packaged well sell in large numbers irrespective of the quality concerns. nothing has escaped this trend and unfortunately religion also has become a victim of this. today religious practices are packaged in new avatars so as to attract more people to it.

historically people with money always have tried to create niche practices for themselves. they patronise singers, painters, performers and create value for their creation. for a long time art remained within the walls of the rich. even in recent times one can see the deliberate attempts to create exclusive space in art circles by rich. the same practices have also been followed in the religious spaces from time immemorial.

public places of worship are often built by the rich and powerful. kings who wanted their names to be permanently etched in the minds of people more than their devotion built majestic temples here. the exclusivity preferred by them in the temples they built was considered as natural request. the practice has continued till date where the administrative authorities of temples see themselves more privileged in the access to inner sanctum of temples.

with the emergence of new rich in the post-liberalised india there is a resurgence in religious practices. with the inflow of more material prosperity it was believed that people would shun religion. but in india the opposite has happened. there are more temples being renovated even as new temples are being erected. practices which were long forgotten and buried deep in the scriptures are given new lease of life. there are more godmen today than in any previous times with everyone enjoying huge following among masses.

celebration and public display of religious obedience is not new. but the scale in which things are done today is surprising. crowds thronging to pilgrimage centres show no sign of coming down. with each passing year the celebrations even in small temples are increasing by an order of magnitude. there may be rarely any idols which is not covered with gold from head to toe. there seems to be an open competition among devotees to fill the coffers of some famous temples.

indian tradition does not deny the public display of devotion. as a tool for social mobilisation and mass education such acts are deemed necessary. but the notion that gods can be satisfied only with material goods should not be encouraged. more than anything creating exclusive spaces in religious places should be stopped. the stratified access policy brings discontent even among religious bent people. religion is essentially an individual pursuit and collective practices should only help strengthen it.

## research publications

the standard process of disseminating research result is to communicate the same to standard journals in that domain. however it looks like the journal publishers are caught in time-wrap and are not ready to change their style in information era. the rules they follow have served their purpose in a time where publication meant printing hard copies and posting them to individuals. but today with internet being the primary distribution medium, these rules are becoming stumbling block for the progress of knowledge.

the primary problem is with copyrights. almost all publications ask the authors to submit their copyright of the articles to them. by surrendering their rights the authors are no more in the position to reprint, redistribute their own article in the way they wish to do. moreover the copyright transfer terms are inflexible to accommodate the alternate distribution terms like creative commons licence. by giving up their rights upon their own works authors lose something more precious than simply a notional thing like copyright.

most of the publications do not pay anything for the authors if they accept their work for publication. the authors generally understand that they are not paid because the publication incurs costs in distribution of their work. but the cost of access to each article fixed by publications are very high. in standard journals the cost may go up to $20 per article. so on one hand the publication makes money on every single sale of article while it gives nothing back to author. and this is the perpetual right of the publication to mint money for onetime transfer of copyright from author.

the other problem with research publication is their insistence on incremental work. they have limited scope for their publication and will reject anything which has no formal proof. this excludes new ideas from getting published since they have no way of testing their effectiveness. the high importance given to formal methodologies restricts the authors to try any innovation. since the stated objective of research publications is to expand the horizons of the subject, this is retrograde step.

unfortunately the alternates emerging are even worse. in the name of open-access journals the researchers are expected to pay, often a hefty amount, to get their works published. since money is involved quality is definitely compromised. research publication should not become a business affair. it is necessary to uphold professional and moral ethics in research. and therefore the professional bodies have a responsibility to manage quality research journals where the authors need not pay to publish nor general public pay to access the works.

how can such a model sustain today? it is simple. the refereeing process for selecting articles have followed a time-honoured way of voluntary evaluation. this process should continue. the entire process once automated required very little money to maintain. the publication should be all web-based and therefore the distribution costs can be nearly zero. this way the sanctity of research publications can be maintained while not burdening the authors. this is also necessary to stop the uncontrolled growth of paid publication which is threatening to collapse the entire research community's moral stand which is carefully cultivated over years.

# right to criticize

lot is being said about the performance of the sports persons of our country in the olympics. the usual criticisms and counter arguments are all being said again. it looks like professional commentators and public in general are at loss with what new to offer regarding this matter. but amidst the screaming no one is bothering what right they have to comment on the sport played at highest level without having first hand information on what goes on in the field.

many observers are happy commenting on sports just by watching the proceedings on tv. they fail to recognise that tv cameras present the things to them in an excellent manner because cameras are placed in vantage points. the players on the field do not have the access to slow motion replays and they do not have special sight so that they can get bird's view of the ground. so what one sees on screen is not what the players see in real time. without knowing this the viewers pass comments on players which is very unfair.

moreover one can never get the feel of the speed in which the ball moves or the force with which a tennis player takes the serve by watching it from outside. the feeble sound heard on the tv does not do justice to the actual speed with which things happen on ground. one has to understand there cannot be any rehearsed moves on ground. everything happens in real time and there is split second window available for players to react. and the funniest part is most of the professional commentators have no experience in playing the game at any level!

if these things can be tolerated to some level, posing balance sheet before the players and asking for explanation is stupidity. from when did sports expenditure become answerable to mean minded businessmen in this country? to call support to players as investment and asking players why there is no return on that is a shame. we cannot get lower than this while demoralising the already down players. it is the national duty to spend sufficient money on infrastructure and other required support facilities for the players so that they can go about doing their business without thinking where their next meal will come from.

like people who never played the sport have no right to comment, the retired players too should refrain from taking potshots at current players. they may have played the sport but that was in different time and place. when every game is different for a player, how can they use their experience which is timed to pass comments now. agreed they may know a thing or two about the game but they should limit their talk to certain things. going overboard with venomous comments does no good for the sport and players will despise when they hear such things from their seniors.

after all we should appreciate that players are committed as anyone to give their best. in a one-sport country like india the sheer number of people still pursuing other sports itself is a miracle. we should try to give them better life. if not we better not wake up once in four years, watch spectacular opening and closing ceremonies on tv, watch random sport here and there and lament the bad state of our country in sports. if we cannot do any good, to do nothing is a better choice in such cases.

## defying logic

how often have you seen a shop full of customers while the adjacent one struggling to survive? the favourite eating joints of many will have nothing more than two items in their menu. they sell their wares in paper plates. the only luxury is to stand in the footpath and savour the items for which they travel miles. the neighbourhood plush eating joint will have swanky seats, variety in menu card and best cooks. yet it fails to attract people.

the good looking heroes have not always ruled the friday collections. best of writers fail to sell. nasal singers suddenly become popular while classically trained ones languish. a planned marketing campaign fails to sell while a local manufacturer whose publicity is limited to handbills sells everywhere. batsman who has mastered all shots in the books goes for a duck while the man for whom batting means swinging the bat as hard as possible scores century.

sometimes the most logical of the decisions seems to fall flat. people around seem to have got everything wrong and yet they succeed. logic defying acts are denied as flukes or momentary flashes. the regular phenomenon of this world is very precise, so people claim. the days, nights and everything in between goes on in pre-determined, calculated fashion. there is no chance for chance in this world. even random number generator programs are written in a structured manner!

physical sciences thrive on this notion that everything under the sun can be measured, understood and labelled after a series of experiments. in fact the main endeavour of any scientific fraternity is to understand the commonness of the matter under study. specifically this is labelled as generalisation. the science of everything is to generalise the phenomenon to such an extent that it can be taken for granted. special cases are treated with extreme caution and are not encouraged.

the problem with successful formula is that people want to repeat it everywhere regardless of its limitation. the gains made by physical sciences in terms of its application has made people from all hues thronging to it. the unthoughtful application of the generalization approach in social sciences has created a big havoc. in a long run it has suffocated human thinking and has made man intolerant towards individualism. herd mentality is considered as norm and genuine need for space is mistaken for arrogance.

it should be understood that human behaviour cannot be studied using the tools which are successful in physical sciences. social sciences need to have its own toolkit. and that should not depend on generalizations and logic. humans behave in a wide, wild and different ways and so it fails to count as science in traditional sense. it is futile to try and explain human nature using logic in the way we know it. the best course is to accept things as they are as long as one's action does not cause harm to others.

resolving scientific problems

consider that there is a new disease that has gripped the nation. who should decide on the best possible cure for that disease? definitely it is doctors and not any one else. professionals are trained to understand the complexities of the matter and should be left alone to take better decisions. general public, however knowledgeable they are, should limit themselves to giving as little comment as possible. that is the gentleman's agreement society should have with any professional group.

the problems in a dam should be resolved by structural engineers. dam building has rich history of few hundred years. there is no dearth of experts in country and outside who can give studied opinion on the matter. if ministers and public of both states are fighting about the matter in media little will be achieved. general public should be advised to respect the opinion of qualified professionals. otherwise sensationalism and slogan shouting will drown the scientific underpinnings of the issue.

this situation is not new at all. recently there was a debate on nuclear energy. starting a new reactor in any part of the country today invokes same set of debates. the arguments are sounding familiar and there is no fresh perspective offered. finally the government will do what it does best - postpone the matter. there are many committees and agencies in this country which are filled with qualified nuclear scientists. but by leaving the decision making process open, science is undermined and chaos prevails.

the same story repeated during genetically modified food debates. the well intending minister started open consultations. the result was all familiar chest-beating fight and not academic debates relying on proof and logic. again the issue was put into back burner and given silent burial. whatever may be ones stand on the issue, the process to reach the end was not encouraging. it shows how the people who should be taking decisions are being held back.

the matter is not simply about lack of scientific temper. this is a symptom of larger problem plaguing our society. right people are not taking right decisions. and therefore the entire governance structure is failing. in turn people who are desperate for change are taking up any alternate source of hope. so people who are using undemocratic ways are entering into bargaining with government.

krishna was in the powerful position while talking to arjuna in battlefield. but while arjuna pleaded helplessness, krishna advised him many ways to resolve his problems. but never did he propose a solution directly. his advice to arjuna was to chose his own path. the belief krishna had on arjuna is something we as society should have on qualified professionals while they are solving scientific problems.

# shraddha

the first principle of every religion is to demand unconditional surrender of the wannabe believer to itself. whether it is professing supremacy of its prophet or undertaking a vow not to jump camps the initiation ritual into any religion emphasises trust. in islam the term used in this context is 'shahada' which according to wikipedia means "to know and believe without suspicion". the ten commandments also ask for unconditional belief.

in vedic tradition the word commonly invoked in this regard is 'shraddha'. the saying of krishna in bhagavadgeeta "shraddhavan labhate jnanam" is taken as testimony to the primacy of shraddha. but it is important to note that shraddha is not simply a blind faith but involves something more than that. unlike its counterparts in other religion, vedic tradition does not emphasise on unconditional trust.

to better understand this let us take the example of 'punarjanma' (rebirth) as explained in vedic tradition. rebirth is an accepted notion here and forms one of the most important characteristic of the pan-indian belief system. now if one has mere belief in this notion than he will accept it as part of life and do nothing about it. moreover there may be a tendency to blame actions of previous births as reasons for today's miseries and stay aloof from present responsibilities.

in contrast if one has shraddha in this principle then he will not only accept it wholeheartedly but do something more. he will actively do things that will enable him escape from the circle of rebirths. salvation being the ultimate goal of human life he will indulge in acts that will enable his progress in fast rate. therefore if not in the same birth he will be in a position to attain salvation in next few births.

the difference thus between faith and shraddha is that while former is passive the latter is active. while one emphasises on inevitability of an event the other motivates one to look beyond the obvious. mere faith cannot move mountains; one has to initiate strong action to move it. faith should motivate action not withdrawal. in its ability to make man see higher truths faith becomes a means of gaining jnana.

# software benefits

very often we hear government announcing its list of achievements. one cannot but laugh at seeing at almost everything being listed there. it seems like government wants to take credit for everything from rains to improved scoring rate of batsmen. they would want us to believe that the super cool images appearing in those ads are results of good governance and policy decisions. while there may be some remote connection no one in his right sense would attach a causal relationship between the two.

the same is true about many other things. the impact of iconic figure on general public, influence of superstar on his fans, power imparted by back door negotiations by nations all cannot be quantified. though everyone would agree that good music or a well prepared meals can be satisfying it will be difficult to quantify the happiness. to try and put numbers to experience is very foolish and meaningless exercise.

unfortunately this is everyday practice in software. trying to quantify the benefits of software is the first thing any company should do. no one sells software; they just sell benefits. if the customer is convinced about the pluses the software would bring he will go for it. the algorithmic sophistication or the breakthrough in technology is no reason for someone to go for a software. the strong business case alone can strike the deal and its here many fail to deliver.

though in some sense software pricing is relative like music or painting, there are some major deviations. painting is something physical and therefore has some advantage. music is intangible and so more closer to software. but in both music and painting the reputation of artist determines the price for his work. and that reputation is build by aggressive marketing and talent alone cannot guarantee good price in market.

though music has developed into formidable industry it is nothing like software. the recording companies may hold the say but it is still individual artists who are the face of industry. and more over neither musicians or painters are asked about the possible benefits they can bring to purchaser. but software has to first answer this question. and moreover brand building around individuals is almost unknown. so software industry has no where to look for precedences in solving its problems.

this industry has come from too far from its early days where software writing was just a hobby. the multi billion dollar industry cannot rest on sentiments but needs hard numbers. quantifying the benefits is first problem for which all the efforts should be put in. some breather has come in the form of increased acceptance of software among general public. no more do people ask why they should own computers. now the software developers need to find more quality reasons why they should continue to stay that way.

crown of thrones

when the united opposition against indira gandhi came to power, there were many expectations. but the first non-congress government in this country did not live long. in fact it provided a platform for resurgence of the lady. the same was the fate of political experiments after bofors. the parties so vocal in opposition fail to deliver when given a chance. the fruits of power turns sour after initial hoopla dies down.

the huge victory for mayawati in the previous assembly was supposed to be just the beginning of her inevitable march to delhi. but even she who had been in the hot seat before could not resist the temptation to glorify herself. the over the top celebrations with statues and parks seemed to have gone completely wrong. the promise of a dailt women reigning in delhi has to wait. if akhilesh falters which he may considering his age and inexperience, it is a matter of time the lady will again storm to centre-stage.

mamta banerjee's struggle to come to power toppling the left is nothing short of a epic. the lady's courage and determined fight has to be appreciated but now in power she seems to have become a different person altogether. the developments in bengal curbing freedom of expression has to do mainly with insecurity. her intolerance is same as mayawati's interest in statues but in different colours. the thought of losing power makes leaders do things which they may not even think when they are seeking power.

this matter is well known to people in tamil nadu. the two parties which alternatively come to power stick to single point agenda. for each government the first task is to nullify the ambitious projects of the previous one and announce its own. in the time of election they just announce slew of freebies to win the votes. the opposition there seems to come to life only during elections. other times they are happy taking a break for they know their time is sure to come in the next elections.

the problems of power is best experienced by bjp in karnataka. from the day one the government here is working without any agenda. the party which came to power thanks to large sympathy factor has not cashed the belief people put on it. the leaders in the party who formed such good opposition have failed while in power. the situation has turned so bad that there is no way the party can even dream of winning decent number of seats in next election.

political parties have to understand that their real test comes while in power. it is easy to talk big while in opposition. once in power they need to conduct themselves. otherwise like nda in centre they may have to just keep waiting for power. the voter will chose the lesser devil if he is has no choice. if they treat power as bed of roses instead of crown of thrones they are bound to be stung by it badly.

truth

once there was this famous female actor who was accused of dressing inappropriately in a political function. a leading female leader later commented that it was the same people who made her wear that kind of clothes. had she worn anything formal, people would not bother to come to function, she said. how true she was! we have mastered the art of creating gods out of mortals and then discrediting them at will.

privacy is a precious entity. privacy is needed to maintain healthy relationships in a society. there is an amount of goodness in maintaining privacy in everyday lives. unfortunately today nothing is considered as sacred. intrusion into ones privacy cannot be justified at any cost. to do so in the name of uncovering truth is unpardonable.

truth cannot be so cheap. to know what you hitherto did not does not make it true. the 'aha!' moment created by such things are very temporary. the only thing achieved by these things is spoiling someone's name. if one can enjoy fellow beings fall it is not a cultured society. laughing at the fallen and pointing fingers does no good to anyone.

it is fluke to argue that strict punishment will deter others from repeating same action. if that was the case we would not have a villain after ravana. moreover bringing all kinds of wrongs in same bracket is also not correct. there is a difference in someone willingly doing thousand crores scam and doing something in private.

the childish prank of 'i caught you doing that' has no place in mature society. there may be problems in someone's behaviour but that should not be exaggerated. to forgive and forget should be the right policy in such cases. to expect everyone in the society to be good is not right. humans are not perfect beings and their limitations have to be accepted.

there is this zen story about the master who carried a girl while crossing the river. the disciple who was worrying about the masters behaviour dared to ask him about this after long time. master replied that while he dropped the girl after crossing the river the student still carried her. so who has done bigger mistake?

from walled garden to walled world

the term 'walled garden' is used by info-tech writers to describe the closed ecosystem created by companies. we have accepted that manufacturer will decide what we do with the devices which we legitimately own. we are also resigning to the fact that we no longer own the data created using these devices. after paying a bomb for these well marketed products we end up signing ourselves as slaves for these companies. what a price to pay for momentary infatuation!!

recent experiences prove that their game plan is much deeper. the manufacturing companies now take control of computers from the time the power is switched on. the old good friend bios is replaced by uefi which for all practical purposes is a way to stop users from installing rival operating system. though tweaking this one is possible it is living hell. general public who do not have patience to carry the lengthy procedures to do this will ultimately shun their plans to use dual operating systems.

device manufacturers too are slowly shying away from supporting all operating systems. they are happy if their devices work for ready-made boxes and do not encourage any experimentation. to get the machine to work with software of one's choice in satisfying condition takes long time today. this is throw back to the days of late 90's where computer was considered as holy box which could not be meddled upon.

getting public distracted by creating artificial hurdles is a old trick of the trade. earlier they used the term 'lock-in' now its called 'walled garden'. whatever the name be this trend which was resisted by the free software movement (fsm) is seeing its glory days again. unfortunately the fsm which spearheaded the choice of customer over might of companies has become voiceless. the long term effect of this unresisting acceptance of 'walled gardens' will be disastrous because computers are ready to shun their box look and will move closer to us.

desktop, laptop, netbook, tablets, smart phones - not only the size is decreasing in the evolution but they are becoming more intrusive. naturally they will continue to come closer to our bodies. the big companies have already filed patents for 'augmented reality glasses' which is expected to hit the markets very soon. then we will be witnessing the next wave of wearable computers. the utopian dream of having computers embedded in our brains too may not be that far away.

our perception of reality is shaped and altered by the technologies we use. when technology becomes part of our everyday being in the form of glasses and earphones mediating what we see and hear, where will be the place for real world? today we are complaining that walled gardens is stopping us from talking to each other. if the overt monopolization of companies is not stopped they will end up creating their own 'walled worlds' using augmented reality devices and just imagine the horror of such times!

# whose data is it anyway?

computing devices have come a full circle. first there were dumb consoles connected to powerful servers. the huge machines powered the needs of the organisations and simple consoles were used by people to access the machine. the client-server paradigm was deemed over with the arrival of personal computers. they gave the power of computation to individuals. with the arrival of internet the network computing rose again. today we are living in the world where computer is just another device used to connect to the network, nothing else.

native or desktop computing is slowly being replaced by hosted or networked computing. today there is no need to install any software on a computer. a browser is all you need to do everyday tasks. even professional works can be done over a networked device. code development too has gone online long ago. even digital music and movie making can happen online. powerful computers/devices and faster networks will surely rewrite the rules of tomorrow's computing.

one fallout of this development is the changes regarding data ownership. today there is clear trend towards storing the data in third party server with the label 'cloud'. storing in cloud offers many benefits over storing data in one's machine. clouds have better data management system and recovery protocols. it is easier to search the data stored in cloud rather than digging one's own machine. there are many companies which are seeing the future in this area and are already doling out irresistible offers.

everyone from apple to ubuntu and google, amazon, ibm in between are active in this space. the chromebooks by google comes with 100 gb google drive offer valid for two years. clearly these players have understood the rules of the game and are playing it smartly. the native data storage will become passé and accessing data via cloud will become standard practice. the proliferation of hand held devices in every size and format will only fuel this process faster. but there are reasons to be sceptical regarding these developments.

in a country like india where 2g auctions itself are under cloud till date, the future growth of network remains sluggish. adding to the vows is the slow growth rate of cellular companies which have reached stagnation and may soon follow the airline industry. the capacity of the carriers to accommodate the bandwidth hungry citizenry is in doubt. without adequate reach of good internet connectivity the adoption towards cloud based storage will remain difficult.

but the main problem regarding this is the question of proprietorship of data. though users may naïvely think that they own the data stored in cloud, they better be aware. there are painful experiences from past where owing to many a reasons courts have ruled that such claims are not entirely correct. there are also issues regarding lock-in and cross-compatibility between different players. so we better watch out how this is going to play out as it will impact the future of our lives in great deal.

bane of cloud computing

the development of cloud computing is seen as a boon by many. but as with many things the truth is far from such simplistic statements. centralisation of power is at the heart of cloud computing. and with central power comes the problems of dominance and dictatorship. the first signs of this evil design in computing is already being seen.

software industry has thrived because unlike in other fields the ground is fairly open for competition. garage startups becoming global giants is a common phenomenon here. the indian it industry too has gained a lot because of this openness. programming languages and supporting tools like compilers, ide etc., operating systems, databases and application servers were considered infrastructure using which service providers were developing software.

software thus created were distributed to individual clients in many ways. the independence of developing and operating environment were clearly understood by all. there was never an obligation by the infrastructure providers that they should be the sole distributors of software created using their tools. but this period of innocence is about to end. companies are hell bent to control the entire ecosystem of software.

cloud computing in its dual avatar of being a infrastructure and service delivery medium is surely going to help creation of monopolies. the build-up for this happened over the years. the digital rights management covered the legal issues surrounding this matter. the emergence of hand held mobile computing devices signalled the emergence of exclusive store for apps. slowly but surely the independent software distribution channels have been closed down.

in this changing environment small and medium software development companies will face threat to their survival. no more can they distribute their software on their own. they have to host their software applications as services in the exclusive stores owned by biggie's. now since they have to share the revenue between them, the prices definitely will increase. and moreover the hosting company may not be willing to host some application due to various reasons which will leave companies no where to go.

so this cloud computing business will create a closed economy for software monopolised by few, big players. all others will be left at the mercy of these global giants. for many companies which survive by developing applications there will be tough times ahead. the new world of software which is being scripted will announce the doom of flourishing software industry and this unfortunately cannot be stopped now.

## working without benefits

krishna's words in bhagavadgeetha about the primacy of work is well known. twelfth century revolutionary saint-poets in karnataka used the same as central theme of their philosophy. the same spirit is also echoed in the main entrance of vidhana soudha. there is a great deal of questions on why is it wrong to seek benefits for work done? in the wake of new-age movements these questions are asked in different contexts.

in today's world where working is the most dominant part of everyone's lives this statement looks absurd. how can one be forced to work and not expect any benefit. is this a statement promoting slavery and bonded labour? in mega-competitive environment which exists today large heartedness is a sign of weakness. and you don't need a business guru to tell you that there is nothing called as free lunch.

proponents of free and open source software are familiar with these debates. why should talented programmers work for something which is free is baffling and suspicious for many. it looks like someone has planted a malware in those free downloadable stuff and sniff out your passwords and account details. all good things costs money and quality stuff demands a premium. in a world where there is price tag on everything, krishna's words really sound outdated.

or is it otherwise? lets see. the context in which krishna said this was in battlefield. arjuna is advised by krishna to do his job and forget about returns. here arjuna's job is to fight. being a supreme warrior if arjuna puts his best show he had no equals. so krishna is sure that instead of thinking about results it is better to focus on task in hand. even in worst possible scenario if arjuna is losing there is krishna to save him. so arjuna's only duty now is to get the job done.

the same holds good for all of us. we may not be the best in whatever we do but that does not mean we should not try. by unnecessarily worrying about outcomes we should not delay the task in hand. any work done with sincerity will give immense satisfaction to the doer. all of us have experienced this many times in our lives. competitiveness breeds jealousy. if you are running to win then you are bound to suffer from either joy or sadness both which are temporary. whereas if you run for yourself you will have satisfaction which you can cherish forever.

but will this work in modern world? very much yes. experts in any field will concede that they are doing that job because they enjoy their work. people who do not mix play and work rarely succeed. money does not motivate champions; but money follows them because they are best. so working without thinking about benefits is a mantra which helps one to conquer self-doubt and therefore is relevant even to this day. this can be a saviour to all those who complain about work-life imbalance and dissatisfaction in their everyday lives thanks to workaholic culture which is all prevalent.

# work and life

study of history tells us that earlier there was no distinction between one's life and work. work defined one's life. and that work was taken up in a hereditary fashion. this enabled transfer of skill-sets down the generations. there are theories that this was done deliberately to keep some section of society in poverty. others argue that people could move between works and best were allowed to do the job irrespective of their birth.

whatever be the arguments it is clear that a social arrangement for distributing the works in a society did exist. most of the early craftsmen employed their entire families in their profession. practitioners of same profession tended to stay together. this gave rise to guilds which controlled the practice of profession. royal sanction gave these guilds privileged position in society. guilds also took the responsibility of training new hands for the work.

the seamless integration of work in everyday lives can be found in the eloquent literary works of twelfth century saint-poets of karnataka. using the new literary form of 'vachana' (words of wisdom) they showed how their worklife helped them seek higher truths of life. in fact many people of this cult took upon the name of their profession as part of their identity. the same phenomenon can be found even in early western societies where people identified themselves with their work.

with the advent of machines this integration of work and life changed forever. large machines necessitated that people come to place where it is installed to work. people began to move out of their houses for the first time to work. even though it happened in agricultural societies, with machines the scale and effects were much different. agriculture inspired a culture which was landed firmly in ground but machine culture forcefully uprooted people from their homes.

machines led to factories and factories created cities where people just worked. the changed world order faced resistance from traditional practitioners who became irrelevant. in the course of time their voices became feeble and slowly have fallen silent. today the madness of work has consumed everyone. all are working but have no time to reflect on its purposefulness. asking whether one is enjoying the work is taboo. world seem to be resigned to the fact that they have to work for it is a curse bestowed upon them by forces above.

gandhi was right when he was talking about gram-swaraj. it is only in self contained village communities we can recreate the joy of working. industrialisation cannot artificially recreate that experience no matter how much efforts are put by imaginative h-r managers. when people think about work and life as two unconnected entities problems will occur. to seamlessly integrate work and life is what is necessary and for that we have no option but to listen to wisdom enshrined in our traditional texts.

# process over product

software engineering is nothing but a collection of theories on how best to create software. software engineering textbooks are full of process models, methodologies, best practices, guidelines on writing software. this in some way contrasts the goals of other engineering domains where process is a given thing. but software engineers can feel proud from this fact that they are in a elite company by declaring the supremacy of process over product.

indian thinkers have given great importance to process to be followed in every ritual. the detailed instructions are meant to guide the doer in performing the process in perfect ways to realize the intended benefit. in most of the cases the end product is immaterial compared to the process involved in obtaining it. the process itself is the product. any work done with all sincerity definitely yields intended results. this is the basic premise of every activity, spiritual and personal, which is prescribed by traditional indian texts.

take for example the process of 'mangalaarati' (worship) done in temples. the entire ambience is optimized to enhance devotedness. the studied darkness of the inner sanctum and the mild brightness of lamps create intended effect on viewers. the aural and audio arrangement creates almost supernatural aura around the mere stone idol. remember also that worship itself is a culmination of a series of processes which starts from the point of one deciding to visit the temple.

visiting a shrine or a temple is also an elaborate process. in some cases a long ritualistic process is prescribed to tune the devotees. the strict rules to be observed during prescribed time is seen as a cleansing process. by the time a believer reaches the temple undergoing this process he is primed to receive the magic of worship in temple. by situating themselves in isolated places, temples are able to distance people from everyday world they indulge in.

following these steps reverently is necessary to experience the promised goods of the entire process. but today the entire psychology of such processes are neglected both by believers and sceptics. market economy asserts the importance of product over process. this is reflected in the way people are approaching sooth sayers and pundits with the intention of warding off evil with minimal of efforts. the rise of television astrologers can also be attributed to the same wrong priority.

taking a devotional trip, bathing in a scared river, tonsuring one's head, undertaking fast and many other similar acts should not be done in haste. believers today are increasingly trying to find short-cuts to reap promised benefits. they should try to understand the reasons why previous thinkers have formulated such elaborate ritualistic processes. the primacy of process over product has to understood to retain the sacredness of such acts. otherwise such rituals become mere dumb acts and over time will lose their appeal and value even among staunch believers.

# three characteristics of hindu tradition

as a religion hinduism is very difficult to define in few principles. like its counterparts it does not have a single prophet and therefore there is no single authorized text. therefore what forms the core of hindu tradition is debatable. this is not to say that there are no fundamental theories; in contrast there are many. add to it the epic narratives and the works of early poet-dramatists and we have a large corpus of moral treatise to chose from.

patanjali's 'astanga yoga' is a neat arrangement of principles of good living. in itself it is a complete work. but there are far too many things defined in that work and to just initiate in all of them will be tiresome for a beginner. a simpler and compact version would help. it is therefore the trio of 'yagna, daana and tapas' is often quoted as the supporting pillars of hinduism. in themselves they provide a holistic view of ideal life as envisioned by great sages of this land.

'yagna' literally means sacrifice. but unlike today where 'yagna' means pouring cans of ghee and other things into fire, the original interpretation of 'yagna' is something else. 'yagna' means to give up things. though sacrificial offerings are part of it, it is expected that a person seeking ultimate liberation will offer himself to the higher self. the fire and the offerings are nothing but an indication of how an individual should burn everything he has in the fire of 'jnana'.

to offer something with an eye on returns is not encouraged. it is prescribed that a person should offer everything he has to god and accept only what little remains as his share. this same idea is elaborated in more detail in the concept of 'daana'. to consider oneself as mere care-taker of whatever one possess, he should distribute the same to anyone worthy of receiving it. unlike some religions where a percentage of earnings are to be shared, here the focus is on sharing everything one has.

'tapas' refers to relentless quest to gain something. the dedicated process one follows to reach his destination is 'tapas'. in mythological stories there are instances of 'tapas' being distracted by worldly pleasures. they are just indicative of troubles one should withstand to achieve his goal. the caution we get repeatedly in such stories here is that one should not keep the powers gained through 'tapas' to oneself. he should use it to betterment of society.

these three principles should be blend together and only then their true benefits can be reaped. so one should win all troubles through hard work and perseverance to gain greatness in life. using the special knowledge or power thus gained one should do works that benefit all. this entire process should be done in a selfless manner sacrificing oneself to betterment of society. this can be labelled as ideal way of life according to hindu tradition.

appeal of new

every month there is a new mall, every quarter a new product launch, every friday a new hero, every day a new villain - the world we are living is changing rapidly. the pace with which new things are flooding the market is increasing by day. even before one has completely inspected a new gadget it is labelled as old since new one is already there.

we definitely are living in future; today is history. if you cannot adjust to the pace, sorry you are a misfit. no where is this trend more visible than in electronic gadgets, especially in the mobile segment. the moment you have made the payment for your new mobile it has already become obsolete. paying customers look perplexed when the same item which they bought for a premium becomes half priced within no time. welcome to the world of new ! sorry, there is no place here for old.

even the unbridled growth in the software market is creating new problems. the new upgrades arrive without any notice and suddenly the gadgets stop working unless they are updated. the steep learning curve aside, think about the frustration of doing all that geeky things. initially all these things appear very nice but soon the enthusiasm will die away and you will demand some stability.

it is meaningless to ask people to replace their devices every six months (too long!), upgrade software every month and so on. the problem actually is more acute in free software domain. the dependencies between software makes the problem more acute if every player in the chain upgrades the software at his will. there seems to be no respite for consumers from this problem as of today since every player is trying to outdate each other in releasing new products.

the poor paying customer is actually taken for a ride by these people who are releasing new products at will. if i buy a product today only to find that there is a new version released within one month i will feel cheated. some players promise free upgrades but these things are easier said than done and usually will just be an enticement to discard old one and buy latest product. the poor returns electronic gadgets fetch in the market even if they are sparely used is another big problem that needs to be tackled.

in a society where affluence is a forced norm this seems to be a normal phenomenon. consumers today have accepted this as natural part of modern market ecosystem. there is a need to make both sellers and buyers realise that this will do bad to both in long term. also the users have to develop a pragmatic viewpoint regarding using gadgets. probably kalidasa's words may be helpful - do not discard anything just because it's old; do not accept anything just because it's new; accept things only after apply judicious thought.

changes in the technical world

this year may well prove a turing point in technical world. many old standing rules have been rendered false. new rules are being written amidst the continuing uncertainty. while old players are found wanting someone in the fringes are emerging as future leaders. within next year we may also witness the crowning of a new industry leader. in indian it industry too there are definite changes which are long overdue.

first major news came from microsoft. by reporting their numbers they indicated what was predicted for them from long time. their slip may be marginal but the significance of that one has been understood by all. the breathtaking expansion of armoury by google also seem to have taken a break. that means the guys may have finally understood that digging in many places does not necessarily fetch water at fast rate. yahoo being where they are are and facebook still looking for that elusive money spinner are no good signs for the industry.

the curious case of apple deserves some space. they are used to releasing blockbusters but this time they did not get anticipated response from china. whatever be the reasons it is becoming clear that post-jobs apple needs a major design revamp to come out with next winner. apple has to understand that they have made whole lot of people addicted to new toys. and now people are hungry for more and if apple cannot deliver others will be there to take advantage. samsung and htc are already gaining from apple's losses. we just pray that the competition gets best out of apple's dna and we get one more object to love.

is the entire tech business undergoing a metamorphosis? yes it seems. the companies are rediscovering the advantage of being all round payers. so the google and microsoft are joining the tablet war. apple is fast coming with new operating system updates. the entire eco system of computing is moving towards integration. google and motorola deal should be seen as indication of consolidation of industry. stand-alone players in hardware and software domains may be forced to join hands in order to remain relevant in this new order which is emerging.

an entire new game is unveiling in german courts where major players are battling a patent war. this old trick of fighting out indirectly using patents has surfaced again. and regardless of the outcome the one sure possibility is the resurgence of players who have collected patent armours over the years. customers will be the losers since the fight will not lead to improved devices but increased monopoly. how chinese customers are embracing non-classy players should also give headaches to industry leaders  who had taken their acceptance for granted.

meanwhile indian players are feeling the pinch, finally ! their long romance in stock markets are showing signs of waning down. their fundamentals may have to be reoriented in the wake of changing definition of software services. the traditional verticals may no longer remain sure source of business as cloud based solutions are maturing. top mnc solution providers who had to lose to indian players due to cost factor may have an upper hand in this changed scenario. how local biggies will respond and stay relevant will be interesting to watch. may the better one win!!

democracy

all systems of governance try to balance the requirements for allowing individual aspirations and obligations of collective welfare. each differ in their way of prioritising between these two competing alternates. while communism leading to socialism insists on good of whole, free economy supports individuals over society. these distinctions are not etched in rock and as times demand the balance tilts to either side of the debate.

with democracy this question may appear settled. but in reality we see that the last word regarding this issue has not yet been spoken. democracy in its various forms lends itself easily to be identified in either of the camps discussed above. hardcore dictators too declare that their countries are as democratic as others. countries practising universal franchise may also sink to hereditary rule as witnessed in our country and our neighbours. in such circumstances it is natural to question whom democracy prefers? individuals or society?

it is an accepted norm that when individual and collective interests are at clash, collective wish should prevail. but in recent years with the awareness among masses increasing thanks to literacy and media outreach we are witnessing a strange phenomenon. groups of people coming together in the name of caste and religion are demanding special privileges in the name of social justice. more often than not if their demands are met it will affect the larger group outside the myopic vision of caste equation. also there is a trend of people affected by some policies demanding retreat from those issues in the name of democracy!

take for example the case of free and universal education programme. the well intended legislation is facing teething problems in implementation. private players who have created a niche for themselves over the years are not ready to accommodate those from whom the upper clan wanted distance. as it is there is a huge trust deficit between haves and have-nots in this country. the forced integration will create more flares and will take time to create real impact. amidst the chaos created by private players one question remains interesting - aren't they within their rights when they demand exclusive space in the name of democracy?

also interesting is the debate regard the contentious land acquisition bill. when the state wants to acquire the land for some developmental purpose what chance do people who own those land stand? can they revolt in the name of democracy? for them state is nothing short of dictatorship. do citizens enjoy any freedom in a democratic country other than those decided by their leaders and legitimised by official instruments like court and constitution? then what use is democracy if the condition of common man is almost same there as it would have been in any form of governance?

this debate between individual rights versus societal obligations mandated via duties and implemented by state through law has been debated within and outside highest court of this country. it is almost a settled issue in law that democracy does not give a blank cheque to individuals to exercise unlimited freedom. restrictions on individual freedom through laws have stood the test of law from time to time. individuals have various others means in a democratic system to exercise their protest. taking salvage for everything which goes against their wish in the name of democracy is foolish.

education politics

policy makers do not tire trying new experiments in the education sector. the tag of being the largest democracy in the world gives us the luxury of debating the possibilities endlessly. experience has shown that these debates generate more smoke than any useful spark. but that has not dampened the spirits of habitual debaters who are  continuing to beat their own drums regarding what is good for indian education.

there is no doubt that an integrated policy framework is a must for education sector to remain competent. but the slew of rules being crafted in the recent years is pulling the sector in various directions. the states are having their own say in education matters. there are also global obligations which the country has to fulfil. the growing demands from students to continuously improve the content and delivery also have to be met.

india has a fairly sound control mechanisms in place for monitoring the standards of education delivery. the multiple agencies ensure that the minimum standards are maintained. of course there are lacunae but having no regulations is no panacea either. the need of the hour is to strengthen, streamline and synchronise the working and scope of these agencies.

instead the focus right now seems to be creating on one hand more controls for public institutions and provide liberal working conditions for private colleges. the attempts by government to undermine the autonomy of premier institutes is well known. but what has not attracted much public attention is the fact that government has worked overtime to ensure that foreign and private institutes can go scot-free in this country.

the foreign university bill has its share of problems and is languishing in the parliament. private universities had a problem when their recognition was recommended to be withdrawn. in the increased global world many foreign institutes want to enter the lucrative Indian market. both private and foreign players want the advantages of unlimited access to resources here sans the controls of governmental bodies.

in its attempts to woo these moneybags government has attempted two paths. one is the tested state university route. even in states like karnataka which has a long history of private participation in education, university was alien phenomenon. but today there are many private universities being considered at various stages. the more dangerous is the innovation university proposal. it is worrisome that government itself has created a regulation where anyone with money can setup an university and not be accountable to any regulations of the land forever. this madness needs to be stopped at once.

leader

there seems to be a great confusion today regarding the role of the leader. history if full of heroes who are celebrated for their courage and valour. from  krishna to christ all our religious figures are also powerful individuals. there is a general trend to worship greatness in men. the process of 'herofication' of an individual is an important part in creating history around him.

our films have fed this imagination about great heroes. so our film heroes have an obligation to be nothing but super humans. in fact once a hero is successful he is expected to be the same off-screen also. even some heroes seem to think that their invincibility on-screen can be extended to real life. this thinking prompted many heroes down south to start their own political parties also.

in politics too there have been attempts by individuals to build an aura around them. many countries in the west have openly embraced presidential form of government which thrives on individual charisma. even though india has resisted pressures to go same way many people have tried to emulate same things here in different ways.

the majority of regional parties today thrive on individual's image. even some big national parties are trying to project powerful leaders as their mascots. but in a nation as big and diverse as ours it is very difficult to find a leader who has national appeal. but that has not dampened the spirits of self-proclaimed leaders claiming to enjoy the love and respect of entire nation.

a nation of one billion people is today facing a serious leadership crisis. there is genuine lack of individuals who can demand the trust of common people. intelligent opportunists are trying to take advantage of this situation. so we have people who should have no place in serious politics giving advices and threatening the due political process in this country. a nation with living democracy should make all attempts to curb this unhealthy practice.

there is no doubt that the country needs a strong leader. but the over enthusiasm should not lead us to the trap of selecting a dictator. the country is in real danger of being insensitive to any development because of over-cynicism we are exposed to. the misplaced trust and breach of confidence should not make us turn blind to manipulative games of some politicians. india has a cherished democratic history and we should make attempts to save and grow it rather than encourage dictatorship in the name of strong leadership.

# methods of learninm

humans learn in many ways. some skills are learnt by instinct and observation. eastern schools which believes in reincarnation conclude that the things infants do is thanks to the acts in their previous lives. modern science has not offered a good explanation to unlearned behaviour among toddlers. though they demonstrate early that they can learn on their own there is an urgency in todays world to push the children into formal education system as early as possible.

it is amazing how much we trust the schooling system to deliver. so regardless of the parents condition they send their kids to schools hoping that education is the sure route to escape from poverty. as usual the money around this has attracted touts who are exploiting this mentality among masses. so dismal is our primary education today that it looks impossible to do anything about it. the systematic failure at root level has effected higher education system too.

formal learning systems like schools thrive on the principle that anyone can be methodically taught to do anything. but unfortunately today the constant focus of schooling systems has been on content and not method of delivery. so we have teachers dryly taking the students along the beaten path hoping that they would would acquire these skills as they have received it. the reluctance to acknowledge the non-working of the system is the major problem plaguing us today.

we humans have an extraordinary ability to learn new skills. we are wired to adapt and survive in extreme conditions. but our formal education systems does not acknowledge this at all. for them children are empty souls to which they have to feed everything from start. this assumption has led to a system where teacher plays a dominant role while muting students learning ability. over the years the children slowly lose this ability and become completely dependent on external internal intervention like tuitions and coaching classes.

the existing system of taking the students from easier lessons to tougher ones is one more attempt at suppressing students creativity. in fact this method is useful not to students but their teachers. the structured approach helps less developed souls. young minds which have infinite ability to process information gets bored with the mundane details. by the time the teacher reaches to the real issue they would have lost interest in the matter. to get students attention it is necessary that they be involved in the process from early stages.

indian system of instruction can be a guideline in this matter. here the toughest among the lessons were given first. students who would crack the complex problem would feel motivated and get the confidence to go ahead. it also gave an opportunity for people to understand what lay ahead so that they could decide whether to continue in that field or not. what happens today is when students are taught easier things in the beginning they feel they can do anything. then when they encounter real issues they falter. the indian system of starting from tough to easy is better than present system of going from easy to tough.

ned for rituals

imagine a scene where a king appears in public without wearing any royal dress. while this may appeal to idealists as a symbol of ultimate equality, it is not advisable to do in this real world. although the monarchy is almost non-existent in the modern world people do expect some ceremonial positions so that they can bow their heads to them. and people in such places are supposed to behave in a manner befitting to the stature of the seat.

it maybe argued that as much as people in power want it, it is the common citizens who expect pomp and grandeur around their leaders. more than the actual leaders arrival it is the festive atmosphere created in such times which attracts people. if a leader arrives in a motorcycle or car alone sans any chamchas he would not get any serious attention from even his own people. cars without red sirens may be dubbed as public nuisance but a city without those sounds will be difficult to count as a capital.

sanyasis are supposed to be people who have rejected all worldly pleasures. in fact the scriptures are clear that they are not bound by any rules whatsoever. but today they are seen everywhere in the flashiest best possible within the restrictions. even if their attire is simple, their vehicles and silver seats are nothing close to humble. today it is becoming rather difficult to differentiate between them and politicians anyway. each one is trying to outdo the other in maintaing an expensive lifestyle. in such times the saint with genuinely simple ways may not be able to reach the masses.

from a daily ritual to olympics therefore requires some elaborate festivities. without them we would not spend our energies in watching them. no religion in this world has survived without supporting the festivities. thought leaders who have looked down the natural urge of humans to celebrate have gone to oblivion. so commentators who are questioning the need of expensive ceremonies in olympics should be told that there is nothing wrong in them.

the same holds good for almost religious ceremony during taking over of president in our country. in fact all countries have their own laid down procedures regarding these things. and everyone takes it quite seriously eventhough in hindsight they may look as something silly. in that count all the things we do in everyday life may be irrelevant but nevertheless we continue to do those things. it is the irrefutable fact that rituals surrounding the events make our lives colourful.

it may be fashionable to talk about removing differences in the society. but such an artificially created equality will do no good to anyone. the world is inherently imbalanced and there is no need to panic about it. to celebrate the differences in style is everyone's right. so when there is grand celebration around something it need not be looked down. the onlookers do feel included in the process when they are part of celebration. if not for those celebrations they would not have any chance to be part of these processes. so why deny the fun and other benifts that come from these celebrations?

service oriented society

during the early vedic period there were only three categories in the society. one group took the responsibility of knowledge management. they were involved in the process of discovering new things and teaching the required skills to people according to their needs. the second group was in charge of statecraft and the third was responsible for agriculture and business. it has been well recorded that the movement between these group were allowed.

as history records the fluid movement between the groups soon froze and the classification became rigid. hierarchy was created and soon the idea of work groups reduced to that of caste labelled at birth. with this deterioration emerged the fourth group whose main job was to assist other three groups. though indispensable, their labour was taken for granted and soon the society had created a class of untouchables.

whether it was historical necessity or whatever, the fact that a group of people were made to suffer because they were born to certain parents over which they had no choice was surely a blunder. ironically, attempts made by various great people later to bring the downtrodden to mainstream created further divisions in the society. government attempts to uplift the marginalised through affirmative action have been facing resistance from sections of society.

it should be noted that these people who faced discrimination from fellow beings were treated so low because of their work. and their work was to serve others. so service was considered lowly work which made them lower citizens. they say time is the greatest dramatist and how true this statement is in this context!

today almost everyone is in the service industry. service, in fact is the only profession of today. whether you are doctor, lawyer, engineer, teacher or even a film maker - you are simply serving some one. the changed notion of profession has made everyone work for someone. the so called self employed  entrepreneurs also are serving someone, albeit independently. so today the entire world in a sense is engaged in a giant service industry.

the new awareness should be satisfying for those communities who were discriminated for ages because they were in service profession. in fact in the new world the service provider and service receiver roles are played by everyone in different stages. so while receiving service one becomes king and while giving a service the same person becomes a slave. but unlike in olden days we do understand that these are merely roles played by individuals and have to do nothing with their persona as such. there lies the true triumph of new market economy which usually gets battered in this blog!

s&t communication

language is an amazing tool developed by humans. the vocal sounds which were used for communication came into written form much later. the general language used among masses becomes incapable to communicate knowledge of specialised domains. therefore we have scientists to lawyers using their own subset of language to communicate among the peers.

it is not simply the jargons but a different tradition altogether that a professional group develops over time. people who are initiated into that profession slowly learn the new language. language becomes more than a means of communication, it becomes culture. and understanding any culture demands patience, sympathy and open mindedness. it is these things which becomes important in communicating domain specific things to common man.

case in point in 'the god particle'. however attractive the term is professionals will feel uncomfortable referring to these generalisations. but science writers find it easy to coin such terms because they are catchy. using purely technical jargons would put most of them off. writing popular science and technology is no easy task. but there is a group of people who have masted this art from quite some time.

the advent of mobile phone happened in this country coincided with the rise of market economy. for people who believed phones as luxury mobiles were unnecessary. but private companies have strived hard to make people realise that mobiles are indeed handy and useful devices. so big is the mobile growth story of this country that every major player wants to be here. surely the bulk of appreciation should go to those copywriters for crafting catchy lines.

more importantly the service providers have been educating masses on so many technical things. take for example the difference between 2g and 3g. college professors take dull technical path to explain these terms. but company communication via print and tv ads has made the learning fun. and definitely today the customers are empowered through these infoads. the same holds good to development in computers and internet domains as well. the unorganised markets which sell assembled computers has comtributed so much to computer literacy in this country.

these developments have raised some interesting questions. medicine and law have community angle to their profession. community medicine is an established brach in medical studies. similar course can be started in enginceering too. it can help create a pool of technologists who will be able to communicate the development in their fields to masses. in a rapidly changing technical world there is a need for such trained people and definitely something can be done within the existing system regarding this.

an unfortunate necessity

2012 is an eventful year but there are hardly any celebrations. even december 06 did not hog limelight. it's twenty years since the narasimha rao team ushered the new era of reforms in this country. the late 80's and early 90's were filled with debates on what these reforms will do to us. leaders who opposed the entry of anything foreign are long forgotten. manmohan singh and chidambaram who were key players then still remain powerful. in the fragile political scene they have again set into motion another important policy.

compared to last time the opposition is not quite visible. opposition parties are doing their mandatory duty in the parliament. but their intentions do not look honest and if they were in power they too would do the same thing. the so called civil society which also has a political face now has remained silent on this issue. may be it knows the middle class will not oppose foreign money. after all the generation which has grown in the post-liberalisation era lives in the global village where america is merely a hop away.

the militant opposition against the kfc, ibm, coke etc. may be unfamiliar to today's youth. but they form the dominant memory of people who grew up in 80's and 90's. the film 'ddlj' captured the arrival of new generation which had global aspirations. in these twenty years the foreign brands have flooded  indian markets. not only have they influenced the lifestyles even in remote places, they have adapted themselves to local needs. we have reached a stage where it is difficult to distinguish local and foreign brands.

not only the urban landscape but even the small towns today have supermarkets and malls. when everything from our dress to gadgets has a foreign label, is they any way we resist the entry of fdi in any field? forget retail as indirectly all majors have a presence here. the retail revolution in india is bigger than the software story. today the big shopping malls have become a place where people meet and spend time. they are promoting an unique way of living to which the generation of today for completely fallen for. now will they hear anything against their way of life?

so not only retail, even in insurance and later in pensions, fdi will become a reality. there are many hidden forces which will play the game in a way that will benefit them. rating agencies, media, international organisations, banking and financial institutions are all players here. they know the art of pressuring the countries to dance to their tunes. willing governments are only happy to share the dias with world leaders. what they forget is while they extend their hands for friendship the dominant opponent will use this as opportunity to twist their arms.

sometimes it may look like there is no other way but to go through these troubles. one has to only look at south american countries which have successfully withstood global pressures. even china can provide some ways to check these temptations. saying complete 'no' to foreign money may not be practical. but that also does not mean there should be no checks and balances in the system. understanding the needs of the country the government and opposition had to work out a formula which would deliver good things. instead petty politics overtook long term thinking and country has to suffer for giving the decision making powers to these small people.

# cash transfer

elections act as great force for pushing the policy decisions. in a short span of time the central government has initiated so many path breaking reforms. unfortunately all of them are meant to please either a big boss or the average voter. the rational thinking which is required before implementing such decisions are missing. also building the national consensus is completely forgotten. this is not good for the country as governments in future will not think it is necessary to carry out the well laid process of consultations before taking major policy decisions.

from fdi in retail to direct cash transfers , the government has taken a strategic decision of bundling all issues together. this gives them an advantage of praising them by cleverly hiding the problems. no where is this issue more clear than in the case of cash transfers. it is very difficult initially to reject the case for this one as it looks like the perfect solution the country is obsessed today – corruption. but dig a bit more into the issue and the whole issue will look so damaging that it makes sense to drop it right now.

governments have assumed the responsibility of catering to the neglected sections of society. they are the guardians of poor and trustees of public wealth. it is their responsibility to see that money is well spent to and maximum good is achieved. after a series of experiments over many centuries there is no clear answer to the question of how to carry this responsibility. but it is generally accepted that government should create infrastructure so that general public can utilise them. so we expect government to create its own army, build hospitals and schools and even roads and drainage.

subsidy is an economic tool through which government performs its moral responsibility of serving the poor. by providing things at a rate lower than the market prices, it protects them from harsh forces out there to swindle them. the power of collective is in action here. by having the advantage of numbers, government bargains with suppliers to procure goods at cheaper rates. with its own distribution and logistics network it is able to deliver goods till last man. be it roads, fare price shops or schools it is not the profit which is the intention here, it is serving the citizenry.

over the years these institutions have been destroyed in a systematic way. today the prefix of government to any institution is a symbol of bad service and corruption. so except elite higher education institutes, government schools are in miserable  condition everywhere. ditto is the case of  government hospitals. utility services like transport, energy, water provided by government leaves lot to be desired. the public are made to believe that private institutes will serve them better. slowly every area which was governments concern has become ground for private monopoly. now government want to escape from its primary responsibility.

if cash is transferred to people, it need not give it food grains. so slowly our already dying pds will die forever. give people health subsidy and they will become second class patients in private hospitals. in the name of education subsidy private universities will flourish. food subsidy is the most dangerous of all these. by giving cash directly to people they will be pushed to still lower levels. politicians may have felt that since they pay voters during elections, why not pay them while in power too!! governments are supposed to be welfare agencies with power at their disposal. they should not reduce themselves to the level of cash dispenser machines!!

experiment and experience

the emphasis of science is to demonstrate the universality of a phenomenon. it puts forward the most probable outcome of a situation under controlled conditions. so science can tell us about light and life or it can predict the rainfall and earthquake. but in its quest to universalise it makes humans redundant in the process. or more specifically the emphasis on universal experimentation neglects individual experience.

indian system of 'yoga' tries to fill this gap by uniquely combining the individual with the universal. one of the primary meaning of yoga is the approach by which self can connect with the eternal. this path is multi dimensional and all inclusive. any act done with complete selflessness, full control of mind and senses and with all consuming passion which results in natural perfection is labelled as yoga. and such acts do have the power of granting the performer the joy of everlasting bliss.

this powerful sense of happiness is the destination of yoga. more rightly, by practising yoga one enjoys the state of transcendental peace where mind is calm without the sense of pain or pleasure. if someone can obtain this mental state by playing cricket or singing rock music - no one can deny that they are not doing yoga. this stage which is labelled as 'ananda' therefore has many manifestations like 'kavya ananda', 'nritya ananda' meaning one can reach that state which everyone longs for using any path.

the indian traditions lay more emphasis on these kinds of ananda than 'brahma ananda' because it is very abstract. meditating on the formless for years to reach pinnacle of joy is not everyone's cup of tea. but one can surely practice music, dance or any art form and try to reach that same state in a different way. traditional texts are very clear that there is no difference between the two anandas thus obtained. in fact some even claim that 'kavya ananda' and similar ones are better than 'brahma ananda'.

it may be true because solitary sages who meditate for years cannot transfer their experience to others. but artists who perform before a crowd will surely reach the hearts of right people. the meditative art works will be able to create the same emotions in the audience that which is experienced by its creator. therefore one can argue that arts are better way for salvation than other methods. in other words the physical acts which are experimented upon can be useful for higher purpose only when an individual can experience them in his level and can transfer that experience to others through his works.

such acts alone are qualified to be labelled as 'yoga'.

science to salvation

indian tradition believes that one can reach salvation by doing any work of his choice. unlike in some traditions where normal people are looked down and austerity of saints are praised, here every person can claim equal right to reach ultimate destination of peace. living life king size is not considered as sin and meaningless simplicity is condemned. the path followed to elevate the mundane human acts to worship is well recorded in the texts here.

the four rightful things a human can pursue in life are - dharma, artha, kaama and moksha. artha is accumulation of wealth, kaama is obtaining things which you want and moksha is the ultimate destination of souls. all three should be tempered with dharma which is codes of rightful living. it is dharma which stops from collecting money in unlawful ways, obtain things with a sole intention of lust and pray for salvation in unholy manner.

so the rightful way of living with enough money and satisfying simple wants is prescribed as the mantra for reaching salvation later. indian tradition is accommodative in its approach where even a rich person and a renouncer both are considered eligible for reaching higher plane. for a commoner it is not necessary here to lead a austere life. he can practice his trade and still reap the benefit which saints reach after immense practise over years.

to do this the mundane humans tasks have to go through a process. the scientification of work is the first step in this journey. the creation of 'shastra' was done here to codify the scientific practices in the trade. so we have 'artha shastra' (the science of wealth), 'kaama shastra' (the science of desire), 'moksha shastra' (the science of salvation) and 'dharma shastra' (the science of rightful living). apart from this every small trade of humans were converted into shastras over years thereby standardising the practices.

after creating shastra out of a task, the next step is to make to into 'yoga'. this process involves improving the way the task is done so to achieve perfection. the quartet of dharma-artha-kaama-moksha which were first converted into shastras should be practised to perfection to be considered as yoga. similarly any human activity which is perfected by someone become yoga. in bhagavadgeeta krishna says "yogah karmasu kaushalam" (perfection in acts is yoga).

yoga, by its very nature, is liberating. it is not the destination but the process which liberates its practitioners. yogi will reach the state of continuous bliss which is defined as 'brahmaananda' which every living soul is ever searching for. and the greatness of indian tradition is that it allows anyone to achieve this in their own way doing the everyday things they are involved in by raising their acts to the level of science first and then to the ultimate level of yoga.

<center>sale, special, waste</center>

we are living in times where anything and everything can be sold and bought. from education to health everything has a price tag here. even peace of mind finds its place in the menu card. in a way all of us are in this endless cycle of buying things. meanwhile the only job everyone is doing today is selling something to others. its strange but true that we are playing the roles of buyers and sellers simultaneously.

when the world is turning into a shopping mall, its natural that the focus is primarily on selling. marketing and sales is becoming more important than production and quality units. so big software companies create hunting teams to find new customers. colleges focus on placement department. because everyone wants to market themselves well media is thriving with ad revenues which is moving only way - up.

amidst this frenzy no one is bothered about what happens after buying anything. many people buy things just because of the hype around that. the moment they come home and open the packet they start wondering why did they buy it. by the time they realise that they did not need that product it would be too late. in this system, things which are sold are considered useless. so once you buy, you are condemned to use it or throw it.

recently an expert from the diamond industry wrote an article condemning the corrupt practices in that business. according to him there is absolutely no resale value for those stones. he also pointed out there is a deliberate attempt by the people in this business to encourage popular description of equating love to diamonds. move aside blood diamond, this brainwashing is more dangerous!

another related myth which has been successfully sold is the notion of increased quality with more money. so if there is a masala dosa there need to be special masala dosa too which is priced higher and therefore passed as 'better quality'. this trend has extended to every field and is becoming a regular fixture in education sector too. how else will you explain 'diploma/advanced diploma' or 'programmer/professional' suffices in the courses?

the piling up of garbage in our cities are direct result of this trend. we do not create waste; most of what we buy simply ends in dustbin within no time. man, they say, is the only animal who creates waste. that is because he creates and most of his creation is just that – waste!

# act of god

in the film 'oh my god'(umesh shukla, 2012) the central question pertains to accountability. in his search for settlement of insurance claim the protagonist holds that either the company or the god himself should pay as the earthquake which destroyed his shop is termed as 'act of god'. in the cinematic twists and turns which follows, our man discovers the truth in his own way. but the question of act of god remains unanswered and receives only superficial treatment.

this term which is ubiquitous in every legal agreement does not make any point. it is not a truism which settles the question of existence of god. no one can argue that insurance companies and lawyers who include this clause believe that god exists. it is just a legal term introduced to safeguard the interests of people who cannot be made legally accountable for things beyond their control.

the notion of a force which is beyond human understanding is acknowledged in many ways. the personification of this force is labelled as god but then adding a face and character is a phenomenon restricted to some religions only. even hard core rationalists seem to agree with some incomprehensible force in action. even though many does not favour labelling that force as intelligent but they are willing to accept such a thing and term it as chance, luck, fate, randomness.

in economics, adam smith termed this as 'invisible hand'. though there is no direct relation between the concept of god and this one, the understanding is same. this invisible hand which keeps the market forces in check and avoids the growth of excesses in free economy has received much scholarly attention. though the state and powerful lobbies can play this role in many ways, it is generally agreed that such a hand is truly 'invisible'.

performing arts and creative fields in general are fond of using the term 'x factor'. this thing which no one can correctly define is easy to identify though. it moves beyond technical correctness and makes an artist create works which click. absence of this x factor cannot be compensated by anything, not even purity in those forms. what is this x factor but another interpretation of the topic under current discussion.

even in cooking though everything can be measured one factor defies all this. though method for cooking can be given in a very mechanical manner, the amount of salt to be added is generally left to the individual. the 'salt to taste' factor too is another manifestation of our subject. even in programming this invisible force which makes program computationally and aesthetically good does exist. similarly there are 'acts of god' in software which make them crash even in most reliable working conditions!

## the tragedy of organised religion

a recent film 'oh my god'(umesh shukla, 2012) has reignited the debate about the validity of religion. it however does not question the larger issue of existence of god. the high handedness of priestly class in every religion is ridiculed for want of humanness. when religion has become billion dollar business there are inevitable traps which they have fallen to. but this trend is not entirely without precedence nor are the arguments very original. this however does not make the issue raised in the film any less important for today.

the earliest recorded opponents to organised religion were labelled as 'charvakas' (the sweet talkers). their original treatise are not available today but we know about their stand by the reaction of the opposite camp. they seem to have received very bad treatment in their days. but the available debates show that they were very rational and had initiated a logical introspection into various religious practices. the 'samkhya', 'kana' and 'tarka' schools of indian philosophy held the flag of rationality flying high.

buddhist and jain traditions also emerged in this land by rejecting established order of the day. they defined their stand by what they opposed and later developed a complete philosophy for themselves. they even borrowed heavily from the upanishadic texts which held questioning and self experience above all. they came into ascent when extreme elements within the hindu fold were in prominence subjugating the moderate, middle-path alternates.

within the hindu tradition itself there have been many great souls who have revived the system when it was going dire straits. the trio of shankara, ramanuja and madhwa tried to infuse a new, modern outlook by reinterpreting the tenats of sacred texts. many other people like allama, basava, vallaba, jnaneshwar, thulasi, vivekananda, aurobindo, narayana guru, ramana have time and again tried to keep the tradition relevant in contemporary times. the many movements started by these great souls have enriched the space of spirituality with new thoughts and insights.

this is a feature which can be found in every religion. christianity had to face this opposition in various places. there are many splinter groups propagating every radical position in that fold too. calvinist movement was one early visible opposition against opulence of priestly class. the centralisation of power in vatican has not gone uncontested. even today the church is facing severe challenges from science to scientology. in countries like india it is facing a challenge of remaining relevant in the face of mass conversions it does on one hand and providing equal status to all believers on other hand. the emergence of terms like 'dalit christians' are a problem which it has to grapple with.

islam too has seen resistance against imposing strict codes. sufis have remained independent of mullas and have their own followers. the dargas of eminent saints draws immense crowds of all faiths. even recent religion like sikhism is not insular to groupism. there are many divisions within every religion including buddhism and jainism. it is very difficult to find a cohesive religious group. it is very important to remember that every sub-group within the religion has come up because there was no consensus on certain issues within that community.

this is the tragedy of organised religion. any religion's ascent can be mapped in the same way. the essential elements for any religion to emerge are - a charismatic leader, well developed philosophy and rituals, codification of these in a book and rules covering do's and dont's regarding everything in life. every religion develops these things over time. many a times there will a confrontation position which a religion has to embrace in order to establish its identity. the central figure in this whole process is the influential leader who can bring together a band of initial recruits.

it is the efficiency of leader which determines the fate of the religion. here the growth of

religion should be studied like that of any social movement. like communism or occupy wall-street or anti-corruption movement, emergence of religion too depends on various socio-economic-political factors. many a times an efficient leader spots the void in social space and emerges to take up the cause and lead the people who are desperately looking for a saviour. the acceptance of leader by the initial converts is very important step in this process. leadership fights usually sees early death of any movement.

now the leader has the responsibility of seeing that the mass does not turn into mob. so he drafts an action plan and codifies the behaviour for his followers. this discipling of people is very important for him to move ahead. over time these practices become rituals. with the passing of first leader most of the movements lose steam and what remains is dead philosophy and useless rituals. initial band of followers who are now in-charge of things try to keep the legacy intact by forcefully enforcing the codes.

with no sympathetic leader at the helm of affairs the religion starts losing the faith of its followers. soon there will be many unanswered questions and the resulting chaos becomes fertile ground for the emergence of next reformer or fraudster. many times the frustrated public rejects even genuine reformer because they have been cheated many times before. semi-logical and pseudo-scientific intellectuals will be ever ready to present attractive arguments decrying the uselessness of religion. on the other hand the unlearned and myopic religious leaders too provide detractors a golden opportunity to charge against them.

the tragedy of organised religion is that however hard it tries to remain relevant, it is let down by its own people. so buddha who rejected idol worship himself gets caged in one, basava who decried caste ends up creating few more of them, resting places of reformers who strived for unity between faiths end up as fighting ground for right to worship among warring religions and faiths who preached impersonal god end up worshipping relics of prophets.

the tragedy of organised religion is that despite it being started by well meaning individuals who wanted to solve problems of their times with an universal principle of love, with time it becomes a tool for sick minds to hate other faiths. the tragedy becomes more pronounced when the established elements within every religion fails to even acknowledge the problem in their system and reject any reasonable attempt made to reform it. their insistence of status quo ruins any chance of reaching out to people who have unanswered questions and thus start rejecting religion.

the tragedy of organised religion is also that rational thinkers quickly draw conclusions without understanding the original context in which the words and practices were first stated. their reluctance to engage with learned and moderate elements in every religion adds to the chaos. they too should make an attempt to verify things and then arrive at their own conclusions instead of relying on popular myths. dialogue between these two parties can lead to a mutual understanding and thus a chance for peaceful and better life for all.

# smart gadgets dumb people

as technology continues its unbridled march we are witnessing some strange things. there was a time when machine was essentially a piece of metal waiting there to be used. smart people were supposed to put those machines to work. those people were looked with awe and respect as they would make giant machines work to their whims and fancies. soon the machines which were limited to factories started entering our homes and kitchens.

the machines of the drawing room - namely the transistors, gramophone and their evolutionary cousins somehow landed under the male control. the kitchen applications became best friends of mothers who developed a special skill in determining how to make them work efficiently. when machines entered the homes they essentially lost their sacred positions. they became things of abuse whose only job was to work when called for. with rapid industrialisation even the giant machines in big factories lost their charm and with that their operators too became b-grade workers.

it looks like machines were waiting for their time and now they have come back at us. this is nothing short of any best selling science fiction. it looks like someone has really planned all these things out there. what then can explain the things that we are witnessing today. we, humans who are supposed to be the masters of these machines are looking completely perplexed before them. how many gadgets have attained the prefix - smart? and how many of us can proudly say the same thing about ourselves?

so we have smart of everything from phones to tv, cars to plane. the only non-smart thing in this planet seems to be we, the poor humans. the smart of gadgets are supposed to be autonomous and therefore require minimal intervention from our side. in other words we are slowly becoming irrelevant. what we are not understanding is that we are not trying to compete with machines which are infinitely more capable than us in doing specific tasks. smarter machines are actually trying to invade into out holy domains of free will and independent actions.

well if these arguments look far-stretched consider this. today it is possible to recreate the complete sequence of events a man has done online with some simple techniques. given the fact that we are spending most of our day online and technologies are mature today to store and analyse them for next so many years, the danger seems very real. there may be a time when all the digital data of a person can be used in strange ways imaginable. crippling one's life by way of blocking online resources has already been witnessed by wikileaks and piratebay cases.

whether gadgets should become smart or not is not the question. the question is whether we will become smarter enough to understand the implications of these developments. if we become smart then technology can be put to good use. otherwise there is every chance that these so called smartifiation of technologies can lead us to point of no return.

so there is a need to apply due caution regarding these things.

# vidya buddhi

one of the common blessings elders give to younger ones in this country is to have abundant vidya and buddhi. in fact lord ganesha who is the favourite deity of students must get innumerable applications daily to grant vidya and buddhi. though used in combination many people do not understand the real meaning of these terms. moreover generic usage of these terms in vernacular languages have made people forget their original interpretations.

in advaitic tradition the definition of vidya is done in an elaborate manner. in the highly sophisticated world of indian philosophy every term is lengthily interpreted to its logical conclusion. so vidya is not merely any worldly knowledge. it is the knowledge that liberates one from worldly ties. that which is received formally from guru and internalised through personal practice only is labelled as vidya. all other knowledge is labelled 'avidya'.

but more generally vidya is associated with abhyasa (practice). any systematic stream of learning can lead to vidya in this case. the focus essentially is on personal action in accumulating knowledge. after sustained learning one develops an understanding of what is right or wrong. he applies that to determine the course of actions in his life. this is what is commonly labelled as logical thinking.

if we are specialists in an area and are given a task in that field, we apply our knowledge gained through study to determine the things. essentially what we are doing is applying logical thinking in solving a problem. this path has its benefits but also has its own share of limitations. our thinking is limited by our study and practice. what we have not studied we will not be able to comprehend. also the decisions usually are taken using a standard if-else kind of structured methodology.

in contrast there are few places where we take decisions in a jiffy. we call it instinct, gut feeling and what not for the sake of better word. whatever it may be we are clear that the decision was taken not by cold logic but by something else. this in indian philosophy is labelled 'buddhi'. but unfortunately in popular usage buddhi is equivalent to logical thinking; while it means exactly opposite. it is the buddhi which overrides the logical conclusion of vidya to give surprise decisions.

while abhyasa is the basis for vidya, sanchita karma (accumulated actions) is the basis for buddhi. one's buddhi is the result of ones actions over many lives. it is inherited and not initiated in this life. therefore the decisions taken by buddhi can be surprising to vidya which essentially concerns to this life. for a well meaning life some actions have to be based on logic and some on gut feelings. therefore one needs both vidya and buddhi and there should be no reason why one should choose any one among these two.

karnataka's film industry is going through a lean phase with no superhit film from a long time. but cinelovers are not missing any drama. they are witnessing that in aplenty in the political arena. the present government should be credited with entertaining people in regular intervals with high suspense action thrillers. comedy, action, sentiment, swearing in the name of god have kept the citizens engaged all these years. and the action shows no signs of stopping.

jokes apart, there is definitely a need to ask some deeper questions. questions which can go far from the answers analysts give in tv studios. introspection regarding the path we have taken for governance is urgently needed. we may also ask ourselves whether the cherished idea of democracy has outlived itself? do we deserve this fate for keeping silent all this long? is this time for real change or is this just a passing phase?

questioning the relevance of democracy is not new. many totalitarian regimes have suppressed democracy. but they fall out of favor after initial jubilation. the people who take the power (forcefully) with the promise of creating paradise soon become addicted to power.  this makes people long for democracy again. in india we have celebrated democracy all along. whether this choice is genuinely out of our love towards democracy or because we know there is no viable alternative is a good point to start the discussion on this issue.

only romantic narrative of history will have a phrase like "golden period". because we are wired to store only powerful memories, our images about past will be completely white or black. the reality is never this perfect. because writing of history is always dictated by holders of power, we find only extreme opinions in them. influenced by our past images and history narratives, we tend to think that present times is worst ever. this also pushes us to believe that past was glorious and we should attempt to resurrect it.

can we really go back to the times where a benevolent monarch would look after his subjects like family? is it feasible to have a single person bestowed with all powers to rule us? it may be quickly recalled that a thinker like plato also favored totalitarianism and disregarded democracy. india has experimented with democracy only for little more than half a century. this is very short period in its recorded history. therefore it is natural to be skeptical about this issue.

but humanity has come far from the point of return. idea of restoring monarchy should simply be limited to fiction. the longing of humanity to have a benevolent dictator is forever. it manifests in our worship of heroes, religious leaders, godheads, people in power and simply those who are above us. when there is war cry among activists to introduce lokpal with ultimate powers, we see the reflection of this idea. its simple animalistic instinct among humans that we want someone to punish evildoers and reward good guys.

these people who are pushing for lokpal have understood the limitations of democracy. they also subconsciously want a tribal headsman who will pronounce judgements instantaneously. but they also know this is too much to ask for in modern times. therefore they are trying to find the solution in the same system which they have problem with. the idea of lokapal is the result of all this tightropewalking these guys are doing.

the support (or is it simply mouse clicks ?) lokpal is receiving is but natural. indians are naturally in favor of heroes who they they believe will change the system. what better than having someone who can control all and even punish them for their wrongs. there is no way anyone would reject this. any sane debate on relevance of lokapal in a democratic system is suppressed in the name of patriotism because of this reason.

so is there no need for lokpal? are all these people who are fasting and struggling fools? not exactly but they are simply asking for moon. when they know that the system is incapable of delivering their demands pressing on the same issue is not correct. in

democracy there is no way of having a supreme authority who can have all powers. any such institution will be the creation of the system and therefore be under its direct influence.

moreover it is simply childish to argue that a law can change the system for better. if that was the case we should have been living in paradise since we have so many laws. sometimes it looks like the problem may just be that we have so many laws. we humans have mastered the art of making things look complex and escape under this perceived complexity. most of the times lawyers and judges are engaged in interpreting the grammar of lawbooks instead of implementing the spirit behind the laws.

is this an indication that we should throw away the state and create a classless society? should we join those who believe in armed struggle to create equality and thus usher prosperity? certainly not. there is no suggestion here that this should be our path. democracy is the result of long experimentation in governance. there is no way we should let go the gains made so far. democracy at least gives us some hope unlike other forms of governance and that alone is sufficient to stand for it.

so we cannot leave democracy but also cannot continue in its current form. how do we correct its shortcomings? electoral reforms, callback of non-performers, higher accountability, powerful laws, fixed terms of governments, two party system, presidential government - have all been suggested. in addition to all these we can also certainly look at past and learn few lessons. after all of what use is history if it can't guide our future?

in good old days of kings, the future ruler was designated during birth. hereditary power transfer had its advantages. today we waste time and money on selecting leaders who we are not sure will govern us well or not. then would-be leaders were schooled for that purpose. in some way they were better prepared and if they did not suit the job, were replaced by next in the line. though it may not have been as simple as this, at least it was predictable than today.

though the earlier observations made regarding our selective memory may be applied to previous paragraph, the point is much larger than this. there is a need to regulate the members who are selected to govern us. this may be done through rigorous laws. but such attempts have proved futile earlier. so what is needed is self regulation by political parties. an entry criteria may be forced on rulers. just like professional education, learning governance issues in a formal institution can be made compulsory.

given our poor record regarding education delivery system there is no much hope regarding this proposal also. again we have no choice but to hope against hope until we come up with better alternative. till then democracy with its limitations is the sole savior whom we have to trust upon. we have no option but to improvise the best practices that we have learnt over years. we need to also remain cautious at any attempts which may tempt us to abandon the road travelled so far.

# politics of identity

multi-party democracy in india presents an interesting contrast between politics and governance. political parties by nature aim for seat of power. to do that they have to appeal to maximum number of people. they are allowed to choose between various issues to catch the attention of public. anyone wanting to start a political career must identify a cause which will resonate with maximum people for a long time.

regional outfits usually try to flare up identity issues to assert themselves. usually the question of hurt sentiments with respect to caste and language attracts the crowd. their sentiments will be manipulated by emotional speeches often spoken in militant tone. any community does not reject the masculine projection of self. the glorification of body politic finally results in the organisation earning substantial gains in elections.

in between affiliated outfits of such organisations will look for opportunities  to establish and strengthen their networks. they will encourage formation of local groups, focused communities like workers union, students wing, women's self help groups etc to reach different strata of society. these shadow organisations will create a powerful voter base which will ensure that the political wing of the organisation will keep the power in their powerful grip for years.

many such experiments are repeated with success in different parts of india. the most successful of them is probably the movement in tamil nadu where national parties have been reduced to fringe actors. they are the only ones to successfully forge a strong relation between entertainment and political worlds cementing the position of self identity in political discussion. though andhra saw such resurgence it could not sustain. how karnataka and kerala missed this step is interesting to study.

punjab, assam, jammu and kashmir all saw such regional outfits coming to power using the same tactics.  but none could sustain it for long. it is interesting to note that bengal which otherwise prides itself about its culture had to wait all these years for a strong local political party. odisha has a strong local party which has its share of power. bihar and uttar pradesh present an interesting picture in this case.

maharashtra, and specially bombay, presented a readymade case for such experiment. the rise of local outfit with a tinge of militant outlook was inevitable given the condition then. but the failure of that experiment also proves why governance cannot sustain on identity politics.  regional political parties in tamil nadu have long shed this line and therefore are still in power. the short life span of such movements which thrive on fear and insecurity is the one which gives us hope regarding the democratic system of our country.

# stu.p.i.d

"sorry calling you all urgently. i just coming from meeting with boss. what he said i telling you now. and i adding my idea to what he said. you tell me your ideas. your ideas and my idea we discuss"

"wah wah...good idea"

"ok...yes.."

"i discuss my ideas now. my teacher used to saying "ideas make world". what great man he was. you know he used to tell me "work hardest and you will reach heightest". and see i am here after working very much hardest. you also work like this and you also reach heightest."

"wah wah..we work hardest"

"ok...yes.."

"i thinking all people should come with ideas compulsorily. we keeping a book here and everyone write one idea every day"

"wah wah..we writing ideas"

"ok...good"

"i remember my daughter's father-in-law's brother's daughter's son has good ideas and is painting well. you see his saving paper painting. it is very best. i will bring xerox that painting to all you people. paste that in your cabins and you all getting ideas like that"

"wah wah..what good painting"

"ok...good.."

"coming to points when talking with boss i thinking about this that we should work hardest and make this place very best. so i keeping hands in heart and telling boss that we all working very very hardest. then i telling my idea and boss very happy and saying "go ahead and we supporting you". what great humans our boss"

"wah wah...boss is great man"

"yes...ok..."

"so my ideas is this very important idea. you know we having many departments but students are not improving. so i thinking of a newest department. it will be called 'student performance improvement department'. in short stu.p.i.d department"

"wah wah..what good idea"

"ok...good.."

"all boys students and ladies students who fail will be coming to stu.p.i.d department and we training them to become successful. we arranging talks by greatest people and making them successful. i am thinking to also have working shops and motivating them to become successors."

"wah wah..best idea"

"ok...good.."

"i also thinking to invite top people from local-business-machines, i-am-outside-processors, eat-me-keep-doctor-away-computers for grand inauguration function"

"wah wah..very grand inauguration"

"ok...good.."

"and now you promise me that you both will work hardest to make this best stu.p.i.d. department in world"

"wah..wah...i will start hardly working from now"

"ok..yes..."

"i expected this from you peoples. thank you very much for sharing your ideas. from today you both take my classes and work hardest on these ideas. because boss has permitting me to go to amrica and study stu.p.i.d implementations in coxfolk and camerafridge universities"

"........... "

"..."

results

"i calling you urgently again because there is problem, huge big problem"
"anything serious"
"very seriousest problem. i discuss only with you"
"tell me"
"today morning i seeing the results of our department"
"is everything ok?"
"no, not ok. i seeing other department results also. and our result is not ok"
"i saw the question papers. they were easy"
"easy paper, toughest paper not question here. problem is our results is bad. baddest in college"
"that's a surprise. i never thought our students are so dumb. so how many have failed?"
"failed...you don't understand we never fail students. no one failed"
"then..?"
"we have two students who have passed in first class"
"i understand....so many are in third class"
"no..no...no...you are foolest person. no third class. everyone in first class with distinction"
"that's great news. i don't see why we should worry. except two all have distinction class. its great"
"you don't understand. this is no great"
"and why?"
"because i seeing other department results. there is no first class, no second class. all distinction"
"all students passing with distinction..i don't believe this one"
"i seeing this with my own eyes. so you believing this ok"
"that's bad"
"i know that is bad..no it is baddest. only we having first class students is baddest. we have to do something"
"yes we can hold extra classes for students"
"no that not working"
"guest lectures, motivating talks?"
"old ideas i only trying this last time"
"shall we start yoga and meditation classes?"
"not working this idea"
"then what shall be done?"
"i have a brilliantest idea"
"please.."
"you listen carefully. this idea is very secretest. you remember our newest idea stu.p.i.d"
"ha that student.performance.improvement.department idea"
"yes yes same idea. i improving that idea now"
"that's interesting!"
"yes very interesting. now stu.p.i.d department is bestest idea. so we use that to improve results"
"how?"
"like this. we sending all teachers who give less results to this department"
"but why teachers?"
"because teachers are responsible for this baddest results. they taking training here from experts to improving students marks"
"you mean innovating teaching methods and all that"
"not any useless things. we seeing directly how other department teachers giving distinction to everyone and we doing same here"
"who will be teaching these things"
"them. those teachers who giving distinction telling us how we doing these things. next time i want all distinctions. no first class"
"ok. so what should i do now"
"i calling you because it is you giving little marks and making our department name baddest. so you attending training from today"  "....!!!...???.."

globalization

"globalization has really harmed us"
"our culture is corrupted. our kids no more speak our language. they may not even know our glorious history"
"all they do is watch trash on tv, eat pizza , drink cola and party till mornings"
"things were very different before. globalization has changed all that"
"correct...this globalization has made my life hell. i took 45 minutes to drive here in my latest car"
"nice car...foreign technology on indian roads..!!"
"had to shell a lot but she is worth it. smooth drive even in these roads. she is amazing"
"i will book one after i return from us trip"
"hey but where will you park? you already have two cars"
"yeh that is a problem. earlier i could park in front of my house. now even my neighbours have cars. so its tough"
"i will tell you this globalization has spoiled entire city"
"we should do something about this"
"i have been thinking about this for sometime. and i have a plan"
"go ahead"
"we will start a movement against this globalization"
"we will arrange public consultations, raise banners and even go on hunger strike"
"we can call some professional protesters also. maybe few actors who are jobless"
"that should work. you launch a website and call donations from all countries"
"i am sure we can rope in some media guys into our team"
"we can also ask some intellectuals to write articles supporting our cause"
"a few papers can be roped in to write editorials on this matter"
"ensuring at least one debate on tv is a must"
"professional slogan writers should be hired to prepare catchy slogans"
"making fancy stickers with slogans is also very important"
"what we need is one innocent face for entire movement"
"try and we will get someone. anyway we just need some face. let talking be our domain"
"we will try and make this one really big. use sms, twitter, facebook and all that"
"yes, we will take this fight to international stage"
"we will fight globalization at global level..."
"we will throw globalization out of this globe..."

# improving the department

"we need to do something to improve the department"

"surely, i too think its time we act"

"good that you are thinking about the department! is your hike pending"

"well, yes. ok where shall we start from? classrooms, labs?"

"what about them? i think they are ok!"

"the classrooms still lack fixed-in projectors. the laptops of students are faster than our lab machines. of course the staff members are always given dumped pcs. these things need to be changed"

"well then we have to ask for money. why not make a list of things that we need immediately?"

"that's a good idea. let us get started. ok, here is a pen and paper. item no 1 please?"

"i think it's not a good idea to send them a letter in handwritten style. after all in these times we have to send a computer generated one. that reminds me that the computer on my desk is becoming slow these days. and the printer too gulps the ink too fast. so item no 1 will be to replace these things"

"but you got a new one just six months ago"

"well you know how fast technology changes these days"

"ok. what is next?"

"just yesterday when i was giving presentation, the audience seemed disinterested. so i think my laptop has to be changed"

"changing brand new laptop because of disinterested audience! why?"

"i saw the speaker after me had made a wonderful presentation. i found he is using this new laptop and immediately decided that for the sake of the department we need that here"

"you mean you need that for yourself"

"whatever. ok next we will add some stationary items"

"the school season of your kids started so soon?"

"don't ask me! these days the teacher asks kids to get so many note books"

"i understand. let me also add a dozen pencils, erasers, pens and all that"

"thank you. if you had not mentioned that i would have missed it"

"anything else you...i mean the department needs"

"let me think. we need some small pocket notebooks and sticky notes too"

"i suppose they are helpful for your wife in writing the shopping list"

"exactly. and she can stick those notes on my laptop so that i can remember to get vegetables on my way back home"

"may i add vegetables too in the list?"

"can we add them?"

"why not? we can say we are giving green salads for staff so that they avoid going for coffee and tea. that way they are spending more time in productive work"

"good idea. then please add horlicks and boost. my kids love them"

"anything else for the improvement of department?"

"i think that is enough. see how much we work for the betterment of department. you see i am not like everyone. i do not ask anything for myself. all i need is that department should grow and all of you should work hard for that"

"yes definitely. i think we have discussed a lot. can we have some coffee...err..horlicks or boost?"

"why not? i shall immediately ask the office to get one kg of both. you see buying in bulk is cheaper and after all while spending we should be careful because it is meant for improving the department !"

"i completely agree!!"

"you not knowing that everyone should go to training compulsorily"

"i have heard about that"

"hearded and not doing anything till now. you are becoming very daring from days to days"

"i am contemplating on what kind of training i need to undergo"

"what tranining? you need all and every type of training. you go to all training every time you are free"

"but i understand training programs are planed depending on institutional needs from time to time"

"you again telling all rules to me. i telling you that you need all training. and you doing it. that's all"

"ok i will attend appropriate training programmes. how much of it is funded by organisation?"

"you are making me laughing by talking like this"

"but pray why?"

"why? why because who getting training?"

"i guess, me"

"yes you. and why you getting trained?"

"because you said so"

"hmm...you smarter fellow. listen here carefully. you getting training because you are not good"

"ok"

"you not good so why should we paying for that?"

"but i will come back and the organization will be benefited from training"

"no more discussion on this issue. tell me you have any specific areas on which you taking training"

"i have some topics in my mind. but i wonder who may give training on these issues"

"why? are they so difficult? cutting edge latest technologies?"

"not exactly. one is how to say no and next is how to avoid wasting time in useless discussion"

"that's all. this is simple. why you going outside for training. i training you on this"

"may be. but i don't think there is an option for negative training"

"negative training? what that one i not hearing?"

"its a training where one learns the opposite side of the idea. let me explain. if a complete loser conducts a programme on how to win we attend that and learn what not to do from what he teaches as must do things. so is that allowed?"

"let me thinking on this"

"so am i free for now. is it assumed that i have give my training needs to you?"

"well..its all confusing...i thinking yes. now i concentrating so you go"

"thank you very much. i think i have already started to learn a thing or two"

training programs

program 1: how to drive in rush hour?
when the time is running out and you are be surrounded by bikes, cars, crowd and cattle this course teaches you how to beat the traffic and reach in-time for sign-in and immediately move out of the campus to attend your other works.
special instructors: fernando alonso and lewis hamilton.

program 2: how to run in 10 seconds?
trains you specifically to reach the punching machine after you have no time left because you were in an important (nee boring) meeting. running up and down multiple floors is also covered in special sessions.
special instructors: usain bolt and ezekiel kemboi.

program 3: how to detect bad guys?
this course provides special training to help you detect and report various high profile crimes like starting the class late, leaving the class early etc.
special instructors: sherlock holmes and james bond.

program 4: how to do everything?
you are expected to file documents, do research, engage in consultancy and do many other things. of course you are expected to do trivial things like teaching also. this course helps you juggle all these things and many more.
special instructors: super man and krrish

program 5: how to do nothing? (executive education programme)
when you are bombarded with works from various quarters this course teaches you how to distribute the work to your juniors and enjoy the day.
special instructors: top political leaders are invited to deliver special lectures.

student loyalty scheme

"i doing so much for improving students but nothing working. why?"
"we are trying hard"
"you are taking active interests in stu.p.i.d functions"
"yes student.performance.improvement.department programs are doing fine"
"then why still no improvement?"
"we are working hard but students are working harder to remain backward"
"i not understanding this"
"some students seem to like college so much that they are not ready to leave it"
"so what they doing?"
"they are failing every time in exams and enrolling to stu.p.i.d programs"
"i see. this love is the problem. students loving college"
"that is exactly why our students are not performing"
"how many times students failing in average?"
"they are trying hard to fail at least two times in every subject"
"so i calculating that if there are eight subjects and they failing two times in each subjects then they are failing 16 times"
"on an average, yes"
"i thinking i will coming up with some plan to stop this"
"surely you can...you are such a genius in planing"
"thanks, now i thinking about visiting mall last time"
"do you go to malls every day?"
"i going last week and that ladies in billing counter asking me to fill one form called customer loyalty scheme"
'yeh i know that...if you visit a place regularly they give you additional discounts"
"exactly you are right. we can doing same things in exams here"
"how?"
"see these students coming to exams again and again so we giving them offers"
"what offers....?"
"if students appearing for more than three subjects two times we giving 10% more marks. for more than four subjects 15% extra marks..like that"
"then every one will fail and appear more times to get bonus marks"
"that is good no. because they paying exam fees and we making money"
"but..."
"you wanted increasing in salary right"
'brilliant program this one. we will call it student loyalty scheme and announce it today itself"
"i knowing you are improving. keep doing these good things and see where i taking you one day"
"thank you..i will work hard to make this success"

# guest lecture

"technology is improving fastest and we are very backwardest"
"that is very much true"
"our students should be bestest in entire world. that is my dreams"
"what a vision from a true visionary !"
"so i thinking of bringing latest, cutting-edges technologies to students"
"how?"
"we arranging guest lectures and doing workshops"
"on what topics ? where will we find people? lots of work needed for this one"
"yes yes lots of works. first we doing some important things"
"like...."
"roughly you tell me how much money we want for one program?"
"that depends on what we want to do"
"ok, see here. i want very grand program. big stages and lot of people"
"that is fine. but people will come only if topic is interesting"
"we getting people somehow. but i want big gifts to all people on stage"
"and i suppose you also will be on stage"
"yes, what you thinking? it is my responsibilities to be on stage"
"agreed. so gifts will be taken care of"
"next i wanting good breakfast before program and tea at eleven and then best lunch after program"
"so you want a renowned caterer for this"
"no i want bestest supplier to give food. you see food quality makes marriage success"
"i think we are talking about technical programs here"
"everything is same. breakfast and lunch should be grand. serving peoples should be wearing white gloves only"
"anything else?"
"yes yes. there should be icecream after lunch and there should be that best beeda also"
"done.."
"i forgetting things so i telling you now only. you tell him first only that only bottle water in stage and lunch"
"well are we done with this"
"no no there is one more thing. tell him white cloth towels only. no paper towels this time"
'i suppose by towel you mean...."
"anyway you take of this all and make this program big success"
"but we still have not decided on topic and speaker"
"that is easiest you know. we have decided important issues. now you do remaining small things like speaker and all"
"but..."
"what is this? you not doing small things also. i will report these things and then you know next what happening?"
"no problem. i will take care of these issues and make this a grand success"
"i knowing always that you working very well. that's why i calling you every time"
"thank you"

work allocation

"what you not coming and seeing me these days from so long time"
"it was vacation time"
"so you going holidays or what?"
"no i was busy with valuation work"
"good you working alltimes as usual. how are students doing this time?"
"as always. nothing special this time around"
"ok..anyways..i calling you because there is much works to do for you"
"i thought i had completed all tasks given to me"
"yes yes you have done your work. but not all everyone doing work like you. so i thinking about you"
"you mean i should be doing others work also"
"anyways you are free no. what wrong in doing some work"
"so this is what i get for completing my works on time"
"no you are misunderstanding. because i trusting you i giving all important works to you"
"sorry for asking you this. but what will you do then?"
"what you mean? are you telling me that i doing no work?"
"not exactly. i am trying to understand your works. maybe it will help me tomorrow"
"ok like that is it. ok ok i telling you but you do promising me that you not telling this to no one"
"you trust me right. that's why you called me now"
"exactly. now listen. everytime i getting a new work i thinking very hard on how to do it"
"so you think. that's great"
"yes i thinking great and then deciding who is the best people to do this work"
"and invariably you call me and give the work"
"no no i give work to everyone and all. but i having a secret formula to giving work to everyone"
"and what is that secret formula?"
"see if i know how to do the work i giving that to people i don't like"
"why so? why not do it yourself"
"i giving to others because that is my work. making others work is my work"
"ok but why to those whom you don't like?"
"because i can catch them and scold them. i knowing that they not working. so i giving them these works"
"ok now i understand. and when they come back you tell them how easy the work was"
"exactly right. i doing this all time"
"fine but what do you with works you don't know what to do ?"
"i simply calling you to do the work"
"..??..!!!..@#$"

## ph.d research

"you knowing that government starting new rules for teachers"

"is it about retirement age?"

"no no not that one. this is newest rules on qualities teachers"

"you mean quality teaching"

"same things. so they saying all people doing teaching should getting ph.d"

"that i think is good move. so are you started?"

"i starting this yesterday only because you know i am very updating these rulings from governments and all"

"great! what is your topic ?"

"i deciding on topic still but working has started. it is very upcoming and latest and very cutting-edges technology"

"how did you start"

"i beginning very systematically. first i calling four teams of students and telling them to work hardest"

"who..students..?"

"yes yes it is very important to have good students to do ph.d"

"but who is doing ph.d? you or students?"

"i doing ph.d and students working hardest because their hardest working is important for writing research papers no"

"so students will write research papers!"

"yes and what you thinking that i writing papers. no one doing ph.d writing papers. they only telling students to write"

"then what will you do ?"

"i telling students everyday to do research. i motivating them to work hardest. i building confidences in them"

"that should be difficult"

"yes yes it is very difficult. not everyone doing this. i am specially training them and motivating to work"

"how exactly do you do this?"

"good question but i not telling everything because this is big trading secret. you are friend so i telling some things"

"please..."

"i sending 10 sms to every students everyday and giving masaladosai to students when they meeting me"

"wow and then..."

"i also giving them good marks to motivating them and they don't worry about exams and working hardest on research"

"so they work and you get your ph.d"

"yes you seeing how difficult to getting ph.d these days. masaladosai has become 20 rupees and sms is also not free"

"i understand your problems"

"you also starting your ph.d because all students are busy. all teachers are booking students in first year only"

"oh....have to rush to first year classes now...bye"

# best teacher award

"congratulations, you have again won best teacher award"

"thank you very much. i am sorry you did not get it this time also"

"never mind. can you please share few tips about your continued success"

"well i can provided you keep it to yourself"

"i promise they will stay in my mind alone. i will not even write them down"

"well then. this is the first lesson. always call students by their pet names"

"but i cannot even remember their real names. how can i know their pet names?"

"that's where you have to be smart. try talking to their friends and get to know their pet names"

"ok i will try. but what if i fail?"

"then simply add macchha, dear, raja, putta to their names and call them so"

"ok this is do-able. what next?"

"collect as much emails and mobile numbers as possible. keep messaging them repeatedly"

"but what should i send them. do i share academic information?"

"don't even think about academics. just keep them interested with gossips and trivia"

"ok fine but what should be my strategy inside classroom?"

"inside the class there is only one dictum. don't teach"

"i think i am hired to do exactly that"

"yes you are technically paid to teach. but don't do that. just pretend to teach"

"how exactly can i pretend to teach?"

"well you can carry big textbooks into classrooms. you can take your laptop and show some presentations"

"ok so you mean i should use innovative teaching methods"

"not exactly. what i meant was keep them interested in class whenever you take class"

"what do you mean whenever?"

"preferably do not take classes at all. cancel it everyday or better still ask someone to take your class"

"ok. this is getting interesting"

"we have not even started here. main thing is attendance and marks. make sure you give them in abundance"

"any specific strategies here"

"keep it simple. give the exam questions to students. better still give marks to whatever they write"

"basically you are telling me to work as little as possible"

"no i am asking you to work in right areas. don't invest time and energy in evaluating students. try networking with them"

"you mean facebook and all"

"exactly. if you don't have at least 90% of your students in your friends list you are finished"

"now i understand. so your popularity is inversely proportional to your hard-work in classroom"

"see again you are talking in latin. keep it simple and you will get there easily"

"ok. so i will ask cr, i mean cr-raja to send me all facebook ids and i will message all that my classes are cancelled"

"great start. keep up the momentum"

committees

"did you call for me"
"yes, i had asked you to do something. did you do that?"
"i usually do everything on time. what are you referring to?"
"i had asked you to arrange for some coffee"
"well i have done that using all standard operating procedures"
"then where is the coffee?"
"well i have no idea. let me ask people who should know about this"
"then what were you doing"
"i made committees to do this task. all the co-ordinators of these committees report to me"
"what...did you form committees for a cup of coffee? how many committees?"
"let me recollect.. 4,5,...9.....i think there are 10 committees assigned to this task"
"i cannot believe this! 10 committees ! please explain what is going on"
"well i first made a committee to oversee everything. then there was committee to give suggestions. next there were eight committees which were given different tasks"
"can i know what these eight committees were up to?"
"let me think. one committee for selecting coffee powder, second for choosing sugar, third for bringing milk, fourth for fetching water, fifth for providing utensils, sixth for getting cooking device, seventh for arranging money for everyone and eight for assisting all other committees"
"that is very exhaustive list. then why is there no coffee?"
"as i said i have to check with committee co-ordinators. give me a minute"
"take your time"
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---
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"i have checked with everyone. everything is fine"
"then what is the problem?"
"i don't know. i have done everything right. the committees have done everything what was asked for"
"so is everything there?"
"everything is in place. but coffee is not ready. i am very confused"
"well you missed one thing. coffee cannot come out on its own just because everything is in place. in the language you understand there was no committee designated to mix everything, switch on the cooking device and make coffee!!"

# industrial trip

"students need practical exposure. so we will go to industries and show them how things are done in real world"

"hey! wonderful idea"

"so where will we take them to? ifnysos, wpior, tsc..."

"our students will go there anywhere once they pass out"

"what about azamon, yohao, gogole..."

"forget it. we will not be allowed anywhere near their main gate"

"so where shall we go?"

"i have an idea. why can't we mix work and fun?"

"good idea. go ahead"

"we will go to such places where latest technologies are used"

"where shall we start?"

"tirupati"

"what? tirupati!!"

"yes. you know they use computerised darshan system and smart handbands. so we will go there"

"what next?"

"amusement parks"

"really...can we go there?"

"why not? many teachers will prefer this for their own reasons!!"

"i know. but what can defend this one"

"don't they use computer generated tickets?"

"oh yes. that's great. where is our next stop?"

"multiplex"

"obviously...even they have wonderful it-systems in place"

"we can visit any shopping mall, up-scale restaurant because all of them use computers"

"great idea. we will say we were studying how they are using info-tech in their business"

"for a select crowd we can even arrange foreign trips"

"you mean to study air-ticketing systems and all that"

"yes. but there is one problem. teachers may not afford such expensive trips"

"are you kidding? even they regularly holiday in foreign lands these days"

"so that is done. but we need a place where we can take everyone"

"you mean like a picnic conducted by schools"

"yes. a day long break from this academic stuff"

"then we have no better option than lalbagh and j p park"

"but lalbagh is for kids, right. and where in the world is j p park?"

"j p park is down the street and we can go there and say we are studying how to use sewage water for better purposes"

"and what about lalbagh? what are we studying there?"

"nothing particularly. but we can say we have used apps in ipad to find shortest distance between college and lalbagh and checked it via our trip"

"wait a minute. i have an idea. in the pretext of trip we will declare holiday"

"don't tell me. i cannot work full day on saturday nor can i come on sunday"

"no..no...its not like that. we will say we are trying tech-enabled learning"

"meaning..."

"we use mobile, fcaebook, sykep and all that to conduct classes"

"and do we really conduct classes"

"come on..we can say network failure and take a break"

"and we will document all this and none can blame us"

"i am sure with all this experiments our students will learn real things"

"i am very sure. thank you for all the suggestions"

# 3 plus 2 is not 5

"our college ranking is going down. we need to do something which others do not do"

"yes yes surely"

"you correcting saying sir"

applause...applause..

"so what shall we do?"

"we have to improve our internal and external quality perspectives"

"sir we giving ads in local tv sir"

claps...claps.....claps....

"i think we need to do more daring, dramatic, drastic, deserving, dynamic things than other colleges. so i have a plan"

"dramatic plan...now this is interesting"

"what an idea sir. best idea sir"

applause...applause....applause

"ok let me now explain my plan. we will give new mathematics to the world. then everyone will look up and recognise us"

"new maths..sounds great"

"good sir..fresh maths is very best sir"

applause...claps....

"because we have to do something new we will break from old beliefs. we will destroy useless, unproved rules. in that place we will build new ideas, fresh thoughts, revolutionary theorems and unbelievably good things. as an example we will start saying new mathematics rules. you all know that there is no proof why 2 plus 3 should be 5. just because you were told like that in the class by your teachers you have believed in it. we will challenge this. we will not accept old thinkings. we will change the world. so as a first step we will start teaching that 2 plus 3 is not 5"

applause...applause...claps....claps...claps...

"but that is something basic. how can we change it?"

"no sir. he is wrong sir. you are perfectly right sir. i also having doubt sir why 2 plus 3 is 5 sir. you cleared it now sir. you are a genius sir. i support you sir. sir we all support you sir. you are very right sir"

claps...claps..claps...

"some of you here do not want to change. i will just say that the world is big enough and why do you want to suffer here? go out and enjoy the world. for others i say thank you. with your help we will write new history. we will make this college best in the world. we will make our competitors bite dust. and i promise you i will do everything for you"

claps........................claps..............claps...........

"but what does ranking and making college best has to do with 3 plus 2?"

"correct sir. you are right sir. i mean he is wrong sir and you are right sir. i going now and telling everyone that 3 plus 2 is not 5 sir"

what teachers say but what they (really) mean

i am busy
 - i am jobless

i am really busy
 - i am jobless and i don't plan to work

this is an interesting question
 - i don't know the answer for this one

we can work together
 - you work and i will take credit

i am easy going
 - do not bother to come to come to my classes

you should be self-motivated
 - read on your own

behave like mature people
 - don't complain to principal

today's students are awful
 - they gave me bad feedback

this is an important topic
 - i have understood this one

this topic is very difficult to understand
 - i don't know anything on this

very few material are available on this topic
- i searched in google but did not find anything

# injustice to jogayya

kannada film industry's market is limited. but that has never deterred talented directors from trying innovations here. film making being primarily an art form, commercial concerns take back seat for committed filmmaker. moreover film's success cannot be measured using simplistic measures like box office collections. in the hugely commercialized environment of today taking this position is a challenge indeed.

filmmaker has an easy option of dishing out trash in the name of audience taste. established actors stick to some specific roles blaming the expectations of fans. what really audience wants and how can anyone know it remains unknown. if a film becomes success clones line up immediately. amidst all these it is really challenging for a director to stay focussed on his vision of cinema.

when success reckons money comes easy. one flop and you are sidelined. spectacular failure shuts all doors for a director. to come back from that stigma is tough. deciding to produce the film when no one comes forward requires supreme confidence in one's talent. when you decide to direct hundredth film of a hero who is demigod with a sequel of a cult film you are just increasing the expectation by a scale of thousand.

prem has been quite loud in his promotions. tolerate his rattlings in media and you will see a director who is true to his art. he has proved that he is no ordinary in 'jogi'. that film gave something new to audience. serious students of cinema failed to recognize how much earthiness prem was able to bring in that movie. he has been able to fuse cultural roots to this state with commercial elements in all his movies afterwards.

agreed that sequels are not popular in kannada. to followup a huge hit requires lots of hardwork. and then there will be expectations to repeat the formula which reaped benefits in earlier avatar. to his credit, prem has successfully withstood all those pressures. he has continued the feel without repeating the tricks. by keeping the narrative non-linear he is to keep audience engaged in film.

if there is one biggest achievement of prem in 'jogayya' it is shunning onscreen violence. it would have been tempting to have fight sequence every half hour painting the screen red. add few catchy tunes with mother sentiment thrown in and success was guaranteed. but to his credit prem has not succumbed to this cheap temptation. he has tread a bold path which showcases his conviction in grand style.

media has unduly targeted the film shouting aloud that film was disaster within a day of its release. audience reaction was also not encouraging initially. bad publicity definitely has affected the movie. this is not a good development. 'jogayya' deserves better reception than it received. it is not a masterpiece but it is not mindless either. it is done with much passion and that is reason enough for it to receive better reception.

it is shivrajkumar who fills the film with his overpowering presence. to watch him live the role of innocent madesha is a revelation. he dances like there is no tomorrow. his eyes truly speak volumes. he deserves a standing ovation for this performance. his restrained acting is a lesson for many of todays heroes. somehow one wonders why this man never made it to national awards.

for creating a decent film under huge expectations, for staying true to the conviction of the maker, for undertaking this gamble, for the really superb acting of shivrajkumar, for its catchy music, for its experimentation with 3d, for deciding to remake a classic, for daring to make fun of politicians in such realistic manner,  for standing tall despite bad publicity from biased media - team 'jogayya' deserves our applause.

# moral vacuum in 'lifeu istene'

everyone loves baby-talk. meaningless utterances of young ones are matter of pride for parents. when kids mispronounce names of dear ones it is celebrated. mumble jumble has its place in our society. but when kids continue same practice when they grow older they are punished. even parents who were earlier so proud about these things will be the first ones to ask their kids to stop this.

yograj bhat & co stole our hearts by introducing irresponsible hero in 'mungaaru male'. as a representative of modern youth he talked a lot, did very little or no work and lost his love every time. people accepted him as one among them. success always breeds imitations. that many other film makers tried same formula was not surprising. what is shocking is bhat never looked at anything else.

it is understandable that bhat had tasted failure in his first two ventures which may have made him play safe. but that can be an excuse for next one film. he keeps on repeating himself in all his follow up acts. in 'pancharangi' probably we saw the depth of this mindless trend. it is very disappointing to see that his assistants are also following same path as displayed in 'lifeu istene'.

cinema has many departments which contribute in various measures to its success. to deliberately neglect storyline and make films through loosely held set of events is not correct. bhat has understood that little bit of prop-up and tongue-in-cheek dialogues will cover up for absence of strong story. cinema is ultimately storytelling and this bhat has to be reminded urgently today.

as a business proposition his films may have become successful. but he has to yet prove his mettle as a storyteller par excellence post 'mungaaru male'. moreover he deliberately takes a stand of being carefree with his films. he should be congratulated for this stand because it insulates him from criticisms. he has developed a studied carelessness in his interaction with media which will be broken once he tastes a failure.

one biggest problem of the increased casualness in his films is that people are extending this idea to film making also. that easy-go attitude which his films are filled with may resonate with youth but he should be asking some tough questions. 'life istene' has shown how low this gang can get in terms of handling morals. their casual attitude regarding everything in life is disgusting and should be shunned by people who love good cinema.

there are many film-makers in kannada whom bhat can study to learn how to make meaningful cinema in the framework he has set for himself. pani ramachandra in his ganesha series dealt with these issues in a very mature manner. kashinath and upendra (in his earlier films) have attempted this. they did not sacrifice good plot, strong storyline and more importantly moral stand while dealing with such themes.

today bhat should be accused of diluting the standards of kannada cinema by encouraging loose morals. by targeting youth who succumb to cheap pleasure they are fooling them. bhat & co are sending a wrong message about how cinema should be made. moreover they are asking cine goers to accept their baby-talk as the definition of today's cinema. that box-office is applauding such cheap efforts is most deplorable part of this whole story. though we thank him for bringing freshness now we should respectfully ask some tough questions for the good of kannada cinema.

new theory in kannada cinema?

these are times of change in kannada cinema. young directors are experimenting on new themes while veterans are returning after long gaps. amidst all these there is a debate whether kannada cinema is silently heralding a revolution by finally deconstructing macho image of heroes onscreen. several interesting theories are put forward in this regard with examples from section of recent films.

yograj bhat and co are recognized as pioneers of this transition. it is argued that female protagonists in films from 'mungaaru male' to 'lifeu istene' have been much stronger than heroes emotionally. they are even ready to take responsibility of hapless hero. this is defined as major change from depicting hero as larger-than-life persona.

it may be a convincing argument to start with but little bit of analysis proves otherwise. yes in 'mungaaru male' heroine makes an offer to runaway which hero rejects, in 'aramane' two sisters were mature than their lovers, in 'pancharangi' heroine offers to set right hero's life and even in 'life istene' one girl is ready to give up everything and stand by hero. but they never cross 'lakshman rekha' prescribed for film heroines.

they all behave within family norms and succumb to parental pressures. their boldness is limited to assurances. when its time to act, they meekly follow orders of parents. sometimes they also ask hero to approach their parents and convince them. moreover it should be observed that none of these films ask any other question except marriage.

films like 'abhiman' and 'alaipayuthey' handled issues that go beyond marriage and therefore they make for interesting watch. when a career oriented girl meets an immature man interesting story emerges. in kannada such attempts have been made in films like 'aruna raga' and 'arasu'. films of yogarj and co does not present any such conflict.

in cinema there is a need for subtle balance among various characters. so if there is a well behaved hero you need a wicked villain. similarly if hero is mature, heroine has to be playful. kannada cinema is witnessing a short term trend where rich, irresponsible heroes are dominating screens. to balance their playfulness heroines have to be bit mature or at least behave so in certain circumstances.

therefore this theory that kannada cinema is witnessing a change is false. it is just a fallout of a fading trend. in yesteryears puttanna kanagal had given us some strong women centric films. today shashank holds much promise in this direction. films which are put up as examples by proponents of this new theory are made without any such serious intentions. therefore we can just watch and forget such films and not analyse them deeply.

# 'paramatma' is flawed

film making is a tricky business. a film maker passionately tries to realize his dream. film making depends on efforts of many people. everyone has to contribute positively and synchronize their vision with that of director. ultimately a director has to be held responsible for a film's fate because it is his viewpoint we see on screen.

first day first show viewers are real testers of cinema. they make for special audience because they possess unadulterated passion for films. if they reject a film there is no way it will succeed. the verdict of this audience should be accepted by film maker as final result of his work. box-office collections, expert opinion, media hype all can be manufactured but not audience reaction after first day first show.

it has been consistently argued here that yograj bhat and co are doing no good for kannada cinema. their continued disregard towards storyline and excess focus on narration through loose plot were being criticized from long time. this attitude has cost yograj dear. 'paramatma' is rejected by first day first show audience.

yograj never boasted about his story telling skills. his films have been glossy affair with same set of characters reappearing in all his movies. viewers accepted his film 'mungaaru male' because it was genuinely fresh at that time. but he repeated same stuff and today he is paying a price for this misadventure. 'paramatma' will severely dent his fortunes and he has to blame himself for this.

what we saw in 'paramatma' was waiting to happen. yograj had shown symptoms of this problem in his earlier films. box-office results of his earlier films may have encouraged him to continue his mistakes. it is really unfortunate that this man who heralded change in kannada cinema failed to change. his must have realized that his formula will not work forever.

he has repeated all his tricks in this film. but everything has backfired. hero is rich, intelligent and irresponsible young man, heroine is level headed lady, they wander in wild and water, fathers and families are lovable, characters act peculiarly, songs are shot with lovely backdrops - but still films fails to connect.

why? because this time bhat becomes bit more ambitious with story. all his previous films ended with marriage but here he extends it. maybe he wanted to answer his critics who blamed him for not including a strong story line. it is this attempt to put a strong story that fails him. it was for first time that he tried to demonstrate real stuff and sadly and he stumbles badly.

in engineering there is a concept of 'scalability'. solutions which work in particular situations will not work if conditions are changed. a hanging bridge may suit small stream but cannot work over roaring ocean. this concept applies for films also. bhat's formula worked in small settings. in large canvas with established hero it has failed miserably.

no creative person can escape from reflecting his personal life in his creations. it is strongly felt that bhat has picked few episodes from his recent life and showcased in this film. but somehow that transformation looks forced. it is difficult to slot this film and it cannot be accepted as an experimental film.

actors look completely jaded and usual safe bets also do not deliver. while watching actors during shooting bhat should have understood that this is not working. at least then he could have tried something. it is really unfortunate to see gifted actors looking confused. it will take sometime for lead actors to recover from this bad episode. bhat is a good director and kannada cine world cannot lose him. it is hoped that this failed experiment will make him think. nothing is lost here because at least he will know his limitations. with his talent he can definitely craft better stuff. cine goers will be expecting something new next time.

cinematic beauty in 'meghe dhaka tara'

every art form is abstract and every artist is a creator. his exploration in wildness of abstraction give rise to a new creation. in a sense his creation can never overgrow him. so it is very important for an artist to grow in order to create everlasting works.

cinema as a art form is very mechanical. tools and technologies are abundantly used in its making. to retain human touch amidst all this is a challenge. to fill screen with extravagance is relatively easy. but amidst lavish sets and breathtaking locations cinema's soul gets lost.

very few people attempt to showcase life in their films. that requires non-compromising adherence to principles of good cinema. to glorify spirit of life amidst poverty requires strong personal conviction. perhaps it was only ritwik ghatak who had this ability. his films are so much filled with life.

in 'meghe dhaka tara' (1960) he demonstrates how a good film should be made. this film which has influenced many look-alike in all indian languages remains an ultimate expression of cinematic beauty. a maker's hold over cinema can be understood in his shot composition, use of sound and sense of timing in editing.

supriya choudhury excels in her central role. her powerful eyes is so well captured and her whole personality seems to ooze spirit of character she plays. in composing shots where her turmoil should be conveyed ritwik demonstrates his class. a big tree, endless mountains, depleting hut all become poetic expressions in his hand.

ritwik trained under ustad allauddin khan and his music sense is amazing. from short aalaaps to rabindra sangeet he puts them all to good service in this film. along with using classical compositions to full use, he also brings in bawl music which enriches movie watching experience. also his usage of everyday sound in shots brings scenes alive.

a film comes to life while editing. its here a director is tested to maximum. appropriate cuts and joins is so crucial to keep narrative in a fluid manner. ritwik strikes a balance between verbal and visual aspects of film in editing. today there is much advancement in film technologies but films without souls are churned out without thought. watching ritwik is one sure way to at least start a dialogue on what needs to be done to create good cinema.

reading 'cinema and i'

'cinema and i' (ritwik memorial trust, 1987) contains all writings of riwik ghatak on cinema in english. it also has two in-depth interviews with him where he articulates his vision of cinema. it also has a good summary of all his films and all his writings. this work has a foreword by satyajit ray.

ritwik had completed only eight films in his lifetime. but his influence over indian cinema went beyond his works. he was into theatre, film teaching, tribal studies and even political activism. he also received music training under under ustad allauddin khan. above all he had an understanding of blending theoretical frameworks and practical issues of cinema making.

in this books there are his views on probably all aspects of films. his understanding of sound in films is astounding. he goes on to cynically dissect various types of sounds that should be used in films. with elaborate examples he explains why indian classical music has a place in films.

many theorists look sound-dance routine in indian films as derogatory. many so called 'experiment films' completely shed songs saying they are interested in making films close to reality. they should take a lesson from ritwik who used classical and folk compositions with great effect. his closeness to tribals may have made him realize that dance and music are basic expressions of human emotions.

for a man who shot all his films in black and white he had a sophisticated understanding of colour in films. he also has good observations regarding editing skills required by film maker. he also opinions that documentary films are most exciting form of film making. his list of promising future film makers proved prophetic as every one he mentioned went on to make good films.

discussing what ails indian films he identifies exhibition halls as central problem. he proposes nationalizing exhibition trade to make things better. emergence of multiplex cinema in a way has answered some questions ritwik had raised. and we are already witnessing film makers are experimenting with themes thanks to their ability to reach niche audience through multiplexes.

one thing that comes out clearly in all his writings is his vision of cinema. in his words "good cinema cannot be divorced from life. it must represent the throbs and the aspirations of the people. it must move in step with the times. it must have its roots in the people.....cinema can be serious only if it conforms to certain social conditions that the audiences are familiar with".

# defining kannada cinema

in literature it is quite common to ask questions like "what is indian literature?". problems associated with identifying categories in literature is considered difficult but not impossible. there is a general consensus on what constitutes indian literature. its idioms, constructs and language is well recognized.

certain regional cinema can also be easily recognized. few bengali films are so deeply soaked in its culture that it is impossible to think that film in any other language. perhaps this holds good for malayalam films also. even tamil films have been able to establish a separate aesthetics for themselves.

kannada cinema has its roots in erstwhile madras. at that time madras was nerve centre for all south indian language films. therefore same movies were made simultaneously in many languages. this affected kannada films for long time because there were very few independent kannada films. when industry shifted to mysore (and later to bangalore) things did not change much.

if one is asked to pick typical kannada film it would be very difficult. even landmark films of dr.raj kumar had mostly universal themes. his earlier hits are either mythological or folk films. they did not reflect 'kannadaness' in them. social drams which came later had a chance to showcase kannada culture but somehow failed to do so.

take 'kasturi nivasa' for instance. its hero, a quintessential good man can be located in any culture. his characterization is not bound to land of kannada. even in 'bangarada manushya' there was a hero who held up values which were universal. even he was not strongly rooted in culture of this land. in a way kannada cinema seems to have failed to develop a typical kannada hero.

attempts in parallel kannada cinema are also not that satisfactory. one problem for this could be that karnataka as it is today came into existence only after state re-organization. therefore integration in real sense has not happened still. defining common cultural framework for this land is still difficult. this problem was faced by hindi cinema too.

hindi cinema solved this problem by placing their films in either hindi heartland of bihar or utter pradesh. attempts by kannada film makers to invoke mandya, mysore or hubli should be seen in this context. they are trying to legitimate their creations as kannada films by placing their stories in these places.

some makers try to force kannada culture through patriotic songs but they are not successful always. some others attempt to bring in various dialects into their films. that too does not make them 'feel' as kannada films. maybe we need to debate more on how to bring in 'kannadaness' into our films.

'engeyum eppothum' is fresh

good cinema come under two categories; one, which you will remember for a long time because it lingers on. second, which brings a smile in your face and make you say its good film whenever you hear its name. 'engeyum eppothum' (2011, m.saravanan) belongs to second category. it is very fresh and makes for good watch.

sometimes people overdo things to make their film different. some intelligent film makers try to avoid all established rules. many times they fail. filmgoers have some understanding of cinema. an intelligent director will play with audience expectation on one hand while adhering to establishing rules on other.

many cinematic tools aid him in this effort. in a way cinema is an experiment with narration and time management. editing establishes time strategy. in this film, director wins because he has handled time in an exemplary manner. flashbacks are intelligently used to enhance narration effects.

one interesting thing here is that all characters are clichéd ones but still they hold forte. two love stories are developed in ways well known to audience. where they gain is in building interesting sequences. small interactions between lead characters add to overall experience.

divergent-convergent story telling technique itself is not new. master storyteller mani rathnam used it in all complexity in 'yuva'. even his 'alaipayuthey' had used this technique to great success. but here this same technique is used in all simplicity and straightforwardness and it scores.

all four protagonists have performed well. complexities and inner fears of characters have been well emoted. supporting characters also are very believable. in a crowded industry like tamil, it is very surprising to see so many new, unknown faces. maybe that's why they look so close to life.

this is no classic. but it proves that within certain framework you can make a cinema which is enjoyable. amidst film makers who are investing a fortune on stars here is a honest attempt by new talent. this film should serve a lesson to some kannada directors who are trying to fool audience by making cinema without any storyline.

truth in cinema

a film's success does not depend on its collections or pubic reception. maybe if one looks cinema as business venture then it may be good measures. but for someone who looks at cinema primarily as an art form, these things are frivolous. art can never be measured with money.

every art form should remain true to itself. it should explore all phases of life and not abandon any facet as untouchable. while majority of artists limit themselves to sweeter aspects of life, master artists explore its difficulties. few attempt to tackle difficult themes but falter because they do not remain truthful.

take 'delhi belly' (abhinay deo, 2011) for example. this film had a theme rarely seen on indian screen. no doubt that characters were fresh and treatment was new. but film fell flat because it did not remain truthful to its theme. when all characters were immoral it made no sense to see someone walking out of a relationship because of a flimsy reason.

film makers are often worry on how to make a film click. this is a wrong question. right question is how to make a film that remains true to itself. a film that is true oozes honesty and therefore will touch audience. relationship between audience and film works at different levels but truth is one important aspect.

here we can see 'naan kadavul'(bala, 2009) as an example. again it was a very difficult subject to handle. for bala it was not an alien territory. this master maker had already explored underbelly of our society. his subjects are picked from those parts of society whose existence is not even acknowledged by mainstream.

in this film director succeeded because he remained truthful to characters. it would have been very tempting to make 'aghori' young man fall in love with blind singer and reform him. also there was another powerful angle of 'mother sentiment'. that director withstood these temptations speaks volumes about his craft.

not only this but all lines in this film retain their truthfulness. helplessness of physically challenged people and their large hearted leader is portrayed with all sincerity. machismo of hero is not overstated and everything happens within predetermined framework retaining truthfulness. truthfulness breeds beauty in every art form - 'satyam shivam sundaram'.

## om - a cult classic

who makes a film into cult classic? it is not director, actors or crew. it is people and people alone who can make it. a film has to be accepted by people like their own. when they never become tired of a film, it becomes a cult classic. if people flock to see a film during its every re-release without any publicity then it is a cult classic.

in kannada film industry if there is a film which meets all the above criterion, it is 'om' (upendra,  ). in its yet another re-release last week theatre was filled to a decent level. the print which has become bad and the occasional technical snags did not deter the audience. everyone was filled with nostalgia and mostly no one was watching it for first time.

what makes 'om' so special? it is very easy now to list the reasons for its success. but its greatness lies somewhere else. its makers should be congratulated for daring to make this film during that time. it was unconventional in every sense and a true trend setter. an entire new genre was kicked off through this film.

in the entire film there is a force which never drops. through speedy actions and fast narrative the director is able to keep up the pace. moreover the flashbacks are so well placed that suspense becomes unbearable. it is truly a writers film and kudos to upendra for smoothly transferring the plot from paper to screen.

technically the film stands different because the cinematography is intelligently done. various lenses create the required mood. background score with its special sounds which are fixed for each character and scene brings intimacy via repetition. shot taking shows the restlessness for achieving something different. totally the making shows total commitment to the vision of maker.

the one big lesson from this film is how to depict violence on-screen. the theme used in this film is later used by many people but they faltered because they failed to understand this important point. bloodshed should not be graphically shown. if a director says it is inevitable then it shows its inability in understanding the medium.

in 'om' there is violence but then it is tempered by emotions. there is a right mix of reason and rashness in the protagonist. and more than anything it ends in a very positive note which is not damp squib but meaningful. cinema at the end of the day should have a purpose and 'om' displays it in all sincerity.

film makers often blame that audience do not come to theatres. those people should see the enthusiasm of true lovers of good cinema who rush to watch 'om' again and again. they want good cinema but there is very little to pick from these days. the demand-supply equation is heavily imbalanced. one can only hope that the situation improves in coming days.

# a hit and a miss

somehow there is a belief that popular cinema and intellectuality does not go together. the mass hit is generally looked down as fluke and people are advised to leave their brains at home before they watch them. but making a film which is accepted by many is a very tricky business. in today's times giving a hit in kannada has become almost impossible due to various business and other reasons.

it is in this context we should congratulate the team of 'saarathi'(dinakar tugudeep, 2011). the film is running to packed houses even as it is rushing towards 100 days. it is a neat film with all textbook formulas used to to-to. but for the makers it has clicked. sceptics may complain that bad publicity actually helped the film but that cannot explain why it continues to run.

film making is a risky proposition. there is very little institutional financing available here. the odds are very much against the maker. in making a kannada film there are additional challenges. 'saarathi' must have given producers a reason to rejoice. but this should not give rise to countless imitators who will ultimately bring the industry down and erase the gains made.

'jarasanda'(shashank, 2011) is an example of this case. the director had given immensely sensible films and audience expected a better intellectual work from him. to be fair to him he tried but unfortunately failed miserably. he fell into the easy trap of making a popular mass film differently. it may be very difficult for him to recover from this.

these two films should be studied together to understand the fragile notion of making mass movies. 'saarathi' clicked because it did not tinker the basic structure of its genre. story divided into two neat halves, good hero, cardboard heroine, evil villains, crying mother, revenge drama and redemption of good were all there. there was no high claims and people loved it.

'jarasanda' was equally rich technically. maybe one can argue that songs were shot more beautifully in this film. here too there was a mother but still something went terribly wrong. the hero can never be evil in mainstream indian film. it is very difficult for people to accept that someone can kill others for pleasure. that notion simply did not make sense.

it is not that the theme itself is irrelevant. this theme of people being born evil does not suit the populist mould in which it was set. making popular cinema is not a joke; you need to know exactly what to do and to what proportion. there is no second chance here and a failure can end many a careers. studying popular cinema should become a necessary task for cine lovers and it should not be discarded as no-brainers.

dandupalya

the primary responsibility of an artist is to create works that brings pleasure. naturally that which should give pleasure should be soothing to the senses. though temporarily there can be arousal of extreme emotions in the end there should be certain amount of calmness which the audience should savour. therefore there is a long list of do's and dont's for an artist. trying to claim ignorance regarding these things are not an excuse as most of them fall under the realm of common sense.

what primarily went wrong in the film 'dandupalya' (srinivasa raju, 2012) was the determined effort by the director to break all rules of aesthetic film making. the transition from script to visuals first happen in the mind of the film maker. he should be careful while figuring out this since it will form the basis for the final product. written words leave much to the imagination of the reader, while visual medium like films don't. therefore the end product reflects the taste and style of its maker. this film shows its maker in poor light precisely because the product he has presented is below the minimum standards required for a film to be labelled as aesthetic.

there can be relative judgements regarding artistic works but there are some standard rules which are applied against them to determine their worthiness. it is extremely difficult to apply those principles to this film. take for example the repeated murder scenes shown with fine details. showing murder on screen is not new. many innovative directors who have understood the art have made these scenes look chilling without showing the gore. even regular film makers often use indirect ways to show such things. in a blatant departure from norm, we see graphic representation of the killings. and in fact even the sensitive of the souls become numb after watching it again and again. this is the biggest defeat of the director.

agreed that the crime that had to depicted demanded unique treatment but the maker had to see how illustrious makers have handled such scenes in past. the blurred imagery of crime scene has become routine affair in television and thanks to this film we have see it in big screen too. tv people have less time to air the visuals so they can be excused for doing this. but a film maker who takes his art seriously should never give to the temptation of straight forward visualisation of a story. the same holds good for the police treatment the gang members undergo. again here the director displays wrong sense of judgement in being too descriptive in spoken words and accompanying visuals.

this team should think again while making the next instalment which they have announced. in fact that was the most scariest part of the entire film! the maker had a hit premise but he lost the opportunity of scoring high by making the film in an obvious way. he should have explored the minds of the criminals or he could have brought the human angle by highlighting the plight of hapless victims. the later was tried as a commercial angle but it nevertheless does not work. the unholy nexus between the criminals and sections of society too should have been explored more.

this film has surely taken the kannada industry back by few steps. one only prays that success of this venture does not create similar products. it will be nightmare if film makers starts looking at police files for most gruesome murders and try to recreate them in finest details on-screen. if film makers truly are interested in depicting reality they should pick up right topic and switch to documentary film making. feature films should be reserved for those who understand the artistic merit of this form and people with good taste and lots of common sense.

addhuri

sometimes it is very difficult to explain why a film works. the screaming fans, beeline in theatres, omnipresent songs in media - can all lead you to believe that the film is a hit. it has become fashionable today to host success party within few days of release. silver jubilee is a passé. enter three figure crores in hindi cinema. meanwhile yardstick to decide success of regional cinema too are changing. amidst the crowd of self-declared hits, there seems to be one genuine hit in kannada industry in recent times.

'addhuri'(arjun, 2012) is fast becoming the toast of the season. the film is a clean entertainer with a simple story taken up as an unlikely launch pad by a confident young man. the film demonstrates what a talented film maker can do for a new actor. the entire film seems to have been fine tuned to highlight the core strengths of the hero while cleverly hiding the minuses. and what a narrative it was! the confidence director had in his narration was evident from the start itself. by simply discarding the beaten formula to introduce the new hero, the man told us that he is someone who believes in making his own path.

keeping the audience hooked with only two principle actors is a challenge. but the director has managed to do it. of course handful of talented artists grace the screen for few minutes and leave their impression. but otherwise the screen is filled with two young people with their own troubles and pleasures. notable absence was the parents on both sides, side-kicks of hero, crazy-acting teachers in college, silly-looking villains which are considered essentials for a cinema of this kind.

the technical finesse of the film is visible in every frame. harikrishna may be guilty of repeating himself but nevertheless he delivers the stuff. radhika pandit, who usually delivers intensive performances sleepwalks through her role. why is this talented lady not getting her right due is something perplexing. actually it must have been daunting for dhruv sarja to face camera when she is around but the young chap shows he has it in him to stay for sometime. he must however remember to chose a director like arjun who can work wonders with the limited actor like him.

everything said and done, there was one very disturbing thing in the film. agreed that the film followed a no-nonsense approach problems faced by youth. but it is too much to see everyone being quite about a lady being pregnant by her boyfriend. the hero accompanying her to hospital and pleading with the doctor for an abortion was not acceptable. and even afterwards the girl in question was in a state of self-blame. this is totally retrogressive. there should have been some positive way of dealing with this issue.

teenage pregnancy has been an issue discussed in our films from a long time. there are films like 'julie', 'kya kehna', 'chitte' which have handled this issue in an admirable way. the maestro puttanna kanagal gave us 'amrutha ghalige' which was a work of very high standards. the immensely talented young director arjun had a golden opportunity to etch out a work of merit in this film. but he traded that for short term gains. nevertheless the man has proven that he is ready for bigger challenges. hopefully in his next venture he will treat us with another good story with enduring legacy.

agneepath

remaking a successful film is a recent trend in indian industry. like its western counterparts which try to revive the old success stories in order to encash on nostalgia and hype, indian film makers too are trying this route. but seldom have such attempts tasted success. the primary reason for failures of such attempts is the inability of modern makers to recreate the magic old masters were able to create on-screen.

to override the initial impression created by a block-buster is a difficult task. to attempt to retell a cult classic could not even be imagined before few years. the new experimental generation are daring to go where previous film-makers would not even think in their wildest dreams. in its new avatar agneepath (karan malhotra, 2012) is a better adaptation than many such attempts we have seen in recent times.

the positives in this film are many to count. the way the writers have recreated the film sans some principal characters from the previous version is commendable. the attempt to re-cast some characters has also worked. the main win of the writing team is disassociating hritik roshan from iconic characterisation of amitabh bachchan. that even someone who has watched the earlier film gets involved in this version is its biggest accomplishment.

in a way this film departs from the accepted way of remaking hit classics. the makers seem to have carried the weight of the previous one lightly. the path they chose is to keep the original just as a reference and redo the entire film in their own way. the only thing that remains constant is the spirit of the characters. the addition of rauf laala brought a new dimension to the story and what a performance rishi kapoor has delivered! kudos to the casting team for this acting coup!

the storyline did not provide any scope for grey shades. it is a simple, straight-forward narrative of the clash between good and evil. in the new avatar the makers have remained loyal this premise and therefore they win. though they have extensively reworked the plot they have retained the simplicity of the core issue. by retaining the hero in his modest locality the story gains the extra edge.

if there is one person who should be regretting signing this film, it should be priyanka chopra. for some one as talented as her it is sad to see how she is sidelined in the film. there should have been more space for her with at least one duet song. overall the film works and it works great. this film traces its own path in its attempt to retell the story which is known to all and it still works. that is its greatest victory and its win should give people who want to try same thing some hope to carry on their ventures with increased zeal.

# film as anthology

every medium lends itself to multiple possibilities by its practitioners. ordinary stuff gets done when an artist feels compelled by the medium. a true artist will understand the limitations of each of them. therefore he can use the best of everything in his work. whether a film should have one story or multiple short stories is a question of using possibilities provided by the medium.

indian films have developed their own style over the years. mixing the traditional story telling techniques with the modern technology the films here mostly tell us the story of a person or a couple. everyone else in the film helps the main protagonists to reach their goals. but experimental film makers are trying to break this formula and are presenting multiple stories in a single film.

once the film maker decides he should have multiple stories in the film, the next question to resolve is whether the stories should be inter-related or not? related or not, the standard rule seems to be having some common thread between the independent stories. such films can rightly be called anthology films. commercial films with multiple stars and therefore many stories (tracks) should not be included in this category.

the films in this group should strictly have independent short stories well woven into a singular theme. recently 'mirch'(vinay shukla, 2010) and 'i am' (onir, 2010) revived this trend in hindi cinema. in kannada puttanna kanagal had tried this in his film 'katha sangama' which incidentally is the only kanagal film which had rajanikanth. 'darna mana hai' (prawaal raman, 2003) can be considered in this discussion but not its sequel. for a film to be considered as true anthology film, all stories should have single director.

'mirch' was an interesting film with some good stunning moments. the simple stories becomes all real for a man listening to them. the climax was good and the mounting tension was handled well by the director. clubbing the stories into the main narrative was a plus point which many in this genre simply miss out. seasoned performers did good job. this film is a nice example of how to package an anthology film.

'i am' a crowd sourced film had its moments but was too broad to sustain any emotion. each theme could have been handled effectively using multiple stories. the ambitious project fails to click because it changes the mood so fast. the sense of loss and despair may be common but a tighter selection would have made it a memorable film. this is not to take away some excellent cinematic moments created in this film. overall this film can be case for why multiple themes should not be dealt in anthology films.

t-20's and odi's are good but nothing can match the laid back testing of skills as in test matches. similarly anthology films may be good but full length feature films alone can test the true film maker. weaving a dream of two hours with songs and dance sequences is not an easy job. sustaining the mood for so long itself is a challenge of different kind. anthology films are good but they can never give the viewing satisfaction which feature films provide.

ankur

some film makers are obsessed with giving solutions through their films. they think far too much about their art and assume they can solve the problems of the world in two hours. largely such films end up professing violence or giving preachy speeches with inevitable change of hearts scenario. small changes and silent revolt are rarely captured in films. in shyam benegal's début attempt 'ankur' (1974) one can see the sensitivity of film maker who would later shape the future of meaningful cinema of india.

the film can be broadly divided into three stages. in the first stage an educated, recently married young man is singularly sent to a remote village to oversee the ancestral property. this theme would repeat in many of benegal's later films where young people would venture into country side and face the troubles therein. the young man is silently making some changes in the rigid social hierarchy but we learn that his idealism is smeared with his interest in the lady of lower caste.

his troubled relationship with that lady forms the second part of the story. the games which the young man plays to drive off her husband and to keep her within his reach silently records the rising male chauvinism in him. with he now establishing himself well in the village his interests and connections increases and slowly he begins to dominates the affairs there. with this comes a certain stubbornness but he is shown to be in peace with this life.

with the entry of his wife, the story moves to next stage. the lady who is now pregnant is ill treated by his wife. the man himself is no more sympathetic to her. with the arrival of her husband the evil in him is reignited. the film ends by recording her resistance against his aggression towards her husband. the seeds of changes are sown but will they bear fruits? the film does not try to answer.

in a way the film was a right move in the times where commercial cinema was too obsessed with solving such problems with violence. by resisting violence in her own way the lady in the film shows that it is individual actions which counts. a simple act becomes powerful symbol of protest and therein lies the highlight of the film. 'ankur', true to its name, bore a big tree in indian cinema whose fruits are there to enjoy by cine lovers even today.

devoid of any song and dance, this film had many firsts. it started the collaboration of benegal with a set of actors and technicians who would repeat the magic again and again in coming years. more than anything this film rewrote some of the established rules of indian cinema. it is difficult to classify this film under known categories. therefore it is fitting to introduce a new label for this one and include many films after this under that banner.

nishant

in his second directorial attempt, shyam benegal continued examining the cruelty of power in rural india. while his earlier film 'ankur' focused on few individuals, nishant (1975) focuses on the two families. in his next film, manthan(1976) the director looks at the travails of poor with the entire village in focus. so in a way this trilogy builds up in its narrative while studying the exploitation of rural poor.

a continuing theme in nishant is the study of why ordinary people cannot rise and revolt against the powerful. they seem to silently agree and even approve the actions against them. if they do not speak for themselves will they stand for someone? in the film they do, after the unfortunate master and the local priest instigate them. whether this dramatic awakening was necessary? yes, otherwise the film would have ended in a very sad note.

there are many complex characters in the film but none can surpass that of school masters wife. played deftly by shabana azmi hers is a character which can be subjected to endless discussion. as a wife of a school master she is shown initially as a woman having her own mind. she is playful and yet very dutiful as a mother and wife. she is abducted by powerful men and kept as a prisoner in their house. it is after this the character grows on her own.

the initial reluctance slowly grows into acceptance of her condition. as her husband tries desperately to bring her out, it looks that she understands the futility of his efforts. so she begins to claim a dignified place for herself in the abducted space. she also asserts her identity using her womanhood. all these happens in a silent manner like it happened in ankur. but here she has to shed her role as a mother and wife to claim a new identity.

sometimes the film looks too timid like when the school master is desperately knocking the doors of police and others in order to put an end to his ordeal. it looks so unrealistic that few people cannot be touched by law. but haven't we seen more bizarre cases where power can make everyone agree that sun rises in west? it looks like the director wanted to show how insensitive and sometimes entirely shameless the entire system can become when it becomes a tool in the hands of powerful people.

the cast and crew from benegals's earlier venture continued here too. this combination continued giving us good films. there was a certain visual grammar in the film which became the signature feature of this team. many who are not familiar with the power politics of rural india may not be able to relate to the film. but one has to remember that this theme is being played even today but only the faces have changed.

manthan

unlike other forms of art, films require huge amount of money. therefore the producers who put in cash to make films become central figures in the industry. their whims and fancies decide what kinds of films are made. this is not to paint the entire bunch with a broad stroke. but reasonably good number of them want to play the game safe and therefore stick to repeated themes which proven success.

it is in these circumstances governments intervene by providing financial support to makers. in india such attempts have given mixed results. self financing is tried but many directors would not want to bother themselves with the question of money. institutionalised funding via banks is something film industry is shying away from. entry of corporate sector is bringing in much needed fiscal discipline into film making.

'manthan' (shyam benegal, 1976) is a film which has a unique distinction of trying the now popular 'crowd sourcing' formula for funding. by giving each of the farmers of co-operative societies a chance to become producers, it altered the meaning of ownership in commercial cinema. the film showed their troubles and triumphs. it was their story projected in all sincerity on screen. could they finance for another feature film with a different story? we don't know today. if that was tried maybe the story of parallel cinema in this country would have taken a different path altogether.

but the fame of this film moves beyond its unique funding pattern. the presentation of the story by the master itself enters into a new height here. fresh from the success of his earlier ventures, a confident benegal tackles the story of an entire village. the clash between powerless and powerful continues here. the idealism and the shattering of dreams are also recorded. again the silent changes through individual actions becomes more important to the man than violent, momentary wins.

empowerment – seems to be the pet word of benegal. all his films try to explore this theme in various contexts. from individual to collective, this sense of empowerment and the difficulty of this process becomes his major obsession. there are clear cut characters here with everyone labelled good or bad in bold. the establishment of a co-operative society becomes a vehicle for overall progress. the petty politics, mistrust comes in open and attempts to pacify them does not work. like in all his films if one looks at the surface he can read the film as a commentary on failure. but hidden behind this is the story of inner strength of poor who challenge the might.

girish karnad delivers a fine performance as a doctor with a mission. his idealism and never-say-die attitude comes out fiercely in his talk and action. he is tailor made for this role. he also displays a rare maturity in the scenes with smitha patil. their story is very special in the film and both actors carry it with a sense of dignity. the other usuals are fit for their roles. nasiruddin shah displays the fire which was later exploited successfully by commercial film makers. this film which has now reached a cult status remains a fine example of good film making. the technical and business lessons from this one should be studied by students of cinema to enrich their knowhow of filmmaking.

bhumika

the team which had by now forged a strong bond by exploring the indian rural poor shifted focus to concentrate on disseminating the life of a female artist. 'bhumika' (shyam benegal, 1977) is probably the best film of the man at least technically and content wise too it was top grade. the entire team put in their best to make a film on the colourful life of a female star. in the process it also records the growth of film industry.

the initial parts shows the young girl in her own world filled with few people and bundles of dreams. the camera captures the unspoilt greenery of goa in its best. the troubles of the erstwhile devadasi and her homemaker daughter who is married to a sick brahmin is really a visual poetry. the fine details of saraswat konkani brahmin household lends authenticity to the scenes. it is nice to see talented b v karanth on-screen who otherwise contributed much to indian cinema working from behind.

whether the girl wanted to be an actor was not the question. her grandmother held secret wish while mother opposed but one man takes this to the logical end. the relationship between the young girl and the man whom ultimately she marries forms the next part of narrative. her steady rise in the industry and the lifestyles of cine stars of those times and their insecurities are covered in interesting manner. one cannot but admire the skill of benegal team which showed the urban life so well after reflecting on impoverished rural lives in previous ventures.

examining the life of depressed is benegal's forte and he returns to this theme in the next stage. a disillusioned actor who thought she would lead life of homemaker after marriage is told by her husband that she has to continue acting. the bitterness in her life increases after she gives birth to a child. the domestic fights brings her close to many men all who fail her in their own ways. only a fellow actor (anant nag giving deft performance again) seem to understand her through all the trauma.

her journey through two failed relationships is captured with a sense of sympathy. one cannot but compare this film with so called tributes to yesterdays female actors which is becoming a trend. they are becoming an excuse to glorify the sins of those people without understanding the reasons behind them. in contrast benegal takes enough time to explore the relationship and records the disillusion of the woman who was born with a sense of free spirit in positive way.

climax forms the heart of the film and what a way to end the film! the compulsions of human relations and resulting complications are handled well by the maestro. in the entire narrative the locations, be it old bombay, rural goa, palatial house or even a normal lodge - all become perform the role of characters. this film is also a fine example in filming biopics in indian context. the emotionally intense and immersive experience this film provides is rarely matched.

the art of cinema is shaped by technical and commercial constraints. the limitations of screening logistics determine the way the story is presented. the varying screening times followed by different countries have had immense effect on the way themes are selected for films. because international standard for a full length feature film rarely goes beyond 2 hours, film makers have adopted various techniques to keep the story going beyond the stipulated time limit.

usually it is very difficult for a film maker to capture the life a person in a single film. films which have attempted to undertake such herculean task have faltered because they have to skip many events. even if all major events in a person's life is covered, it fails to create an impact due to its fast pace. therefore the makers attempt to focus on one particular event in great detail in a film. this allows the maker to explore the complexity of the character in all its hues. this is also helpful for a studied viewer since he can get immersed into the experience the film creates.

che (steven soderbergh, 2008) attempts to recreate the two important events in the life of celebrated hero. the film was released in two parts covering two attempts in che's life to initiate a revolution. the film's strength comes from the fact that the director is not simply interested in telling us a story but is conveying something more through the medium of cinema. this film is an example for how film can be used for artistic communication of highest order. between the young revolutionary to iconic hero who met tragic death, the life of che revolving around revolution is highlighted in a subtle yet clear manner.

weaving a story around a known personality without unduly highlighting his role is a challenging task. that too when you are tacking an international icon who lived in recent past and whose history is well recorded the challenge increases manifold. but this film raises itself well to the occasion and depicts the struggle of che as he moves in the forest with the set of revolutionaries many of whom had no idea of what they are fighting for. instead of giving into the hype around brand che, the film tries to put him in a more human mould.

if awards are meant to encourage artists then it is a disgrace if they neglect extraordinary performance for reasons other than artistic merit. benicio del toro has not only undergone physical changes many times through the film to convince us as che but has delivered a performance worth any award. but unfortunately he had to pay the price for political equations which have come to command the nominations and winning in many prestigious awards. but his enacting of che will remain a reference point for many who will replicate such efforts in future.

there are many technical notes given by the director explaining the choice of photographic details, colouring tones etc. which should be studied to completely appreciate the film. the film is a fine example of art meeting an ideology and influencing each other. the world many have divided opinion on che, the person. but that should not stop anyone from appreciating the film which is way above the normal biopics we are treated to in cinema. for a person of che's stature the film does complete justice and had che been alive he would have been happy the way he was depicted in this film.

chinatown

roman polanski is director whose body of work is studded with classics. among them 'chinatown'(1974) commands high rank due to many reasons. the writing of the film was excellent and it was shot using all the possibilities of that genre. the time period in which the story was set up came alive on screen. along with the main narrative the power struggle between engineers and business also was dealt uniquely in the film.

its laid back attitude helped ease lot of tension in the storyline. the sophistication with which jack nicholson portrays his character makes for an excellent study. along with the elements of action thriller it had elements of psychological drama. the technical aspects are taken care by experts of first class. though there could have been ending of a different kind overall the film is very satisfying watch.

it is the aesthetic appeal which is the highlight of this film. it shows the love the director has towards the medium. the beauty he is able to create by syncing all aspects of film making is just awesome. the most well kept secret in the film comes out as the most shocking truth. the revelation sequence is shot sans any drama and this scene alone is sufficient to show the talent of the man who is a master in film-craft.

not surprisingly this film has inspired a lot of makers to try their own take. 'manorama six feet under' (navdeep singh, 2007) also was an attempt to recreate chinatown in indian context. the film did not do well commercially but remains an interesting work to study. not many people have succeeded to recast hollywood classics to a film appealing to indian sensibilities. this attempt fared well in doing so.

the most crucial aspect which could not have been digestible to indian imagination was changed to something more tolerable and realistic. additional characters were brought in to add extra dimension to principle storyline. largely the film remained true to its inspiration. the twists in the climax though different was equally interesting like its original. this is a better example of how stories can be migrated across cultures without diluting the essence.

chingaari

kannada film industry does not have the money power of telugu, technical brilliance of tamil, earthiness merged with sound professionalism of malayalam or global reach of hindi film industries. but kannada cine goers are keen viewers of all language cinema and hence this industry has some indigenous problems. what works in other languages is not guaranteed to work here. so the makers here are in constant search to find a working formula which can connect to local audiences.

often the serious students of cinema downplay the popular films as formulaic and repetitive. but one should understand that there is a collective intelligence in work which has finalised such formula for mass movies. it is never easy to present the simple plot effectively on-screen and make it click. well made rasam-rice lunch can be a very satisfying. but how many can prepare it in right way is the question.

darshan got a second life through his film 'saarathi' (dinakar tugudeep,2011). he once enjoyed the height of professional glory. maybe it was his 'bhupathi' (govind, 2007) which marked his decline. his choices of films did not do anything good. what should have become a personal and professional tragedy has suddenly been reversed. not everyone gets this second chance in this industry where a friday can make or mar years of hard work. darshan should be grateful to 'saarathi' team for relaunching his drowning career.

in 'chingaari'(harsha, 2012) he has thankfully invested his talents in right product. the film itself makes for comfortable watch despite some oddities at places. what is reassuring is the belief director seem to be gained after two earlier box-office failures. this talented man can now try something on his own rather than depend on external influences. this film also convinces one that darshan is poised to become what he always dreamed for.

if he can manage to keep the momentum going in next two films there is no way anyone can stop darshan from becoming superstar of kannada film industry. the massive fan base coupled with classy offerings is essential in taking first steps towards becoming superstar. darshan has former and needs few more hits to reach there. the place of superstar has been vacant forever in kannada industry. darshan is very much close to it and has to play the game carefully from now onwards.

he has to resurrect his personal image, engage more with general public and has to be visible more often in media. he also needs to polish his individual style quotient. his mannerisms also needs a touch of class. he badly needs an iconic hit which is missing from his resume. his brother alone seems to be competent to do it for him. the family needs to put their heads together and design a career path for darshan to take him to superstardom which looks so very achievable as of today.

## cyber yugadol nava yuva madhura prema kavyam

very rarely you see this kind of conviction among young, first time film makers. after upendra very few have tried to experiment with film titles like this one. usually new comers would like to stick to safe themes. but then in interesting times that we are living, some one thought why not experiment and the result is not too bad. the film is refreshingly different and should be supported by lovers of good cinema.

the entire team has worked as if they had to break the conventional thoughts on cinema. so the story is very off-beat but it is not presented for the sake of shock factor. the trailers released made it appear like dialogue based film but it is more than that. the dilemmas of a couple and their attempt to find answers on their own makes for the film. thankfully it does try to force its point and allows the viewers to have their own take on the subject matter.

gurunandan's singularly biggest disadvantage is that he looks like digant and he knows that. unfortunately the young man does not do anything to create his own identity and is happy being another cute boy on screen. swetha srivastav holds much promise. she is raw but a good director can mould her into a fine actor. the two of them make for an interesting couple on-screen. there should have been more fire into sweta's character so that she could give better performance.

the music by vasu dixit and abhilash lakra will definitely over-live the film. they have tried various genres and new voices and somehow their experiment touches the right chord. the lyrics too are very catchy and intelligent. the cinematography too was good with the green and the seas shown in the full glory. but the indoor scenes was somewhat dull. the locations though were excellent. the streets of mangalore could have been used in a better way. technically the film has tried many things and has come out rather well compared with the films of its times.

but the film was destined not to be successful in box office. the thin population in the theatre too did not seem to like the film. maybe its the too many experiments in the story or the really different and abstract climax, something did not click for the audience. and there is no real positive buzz in the media as well. in fact the trailer fared much better than the film itself. one cannot but feel sorry for the crew who really tried something different and delivered a good product.

the director madhuchandra should be saluted for having stayed loyal to his stand and not compromising due to commercial compulsions. he will surely have another try in the box office but one hopes he does not succumb to normal traps of the trade. but his take on marriage in the context of hindu tradition was flawed. but that can be discussed some other time. now his product needs urgent support and film lovers would do a great service for the cause of good cinema by watching this film in theatres.

in sports specialists are celebrated. have you ever seen people commenting that bradman did not take wickets in test matches? or why pele was never a good goal keeper? it is understood that everyone has a fixed role and they are expected to perform that role over and again. even in music does one ask why bhimsen joshi never sang rap! every performer defines his own style and his performances will only be the expression of the long engagement with the form he is trying to master.

but in cinema we have come to expect that the director show a lot of variety in his work. there is no doubt that each film should deal with different issues but can the characters remain same? there is the concept of 'franchisee cinema' where the same set of characters make an appearance in all series. there is also the concept of sequels and prequels which allows for repeating the characters. otherwise too many directors are prone to repeat some characters for a variety of reasons. leading ladies of yash raj films have not changed over years and no one is complaining!

directors, like every other artists, are immersed in certain world where they find their comfort zone. finding that ground early determines whether one succeeds or not. every creative person launches himself from that ground. every creation of his will have firm footing in that ground and then try to spread their wings in the limitless sky of imagination. rarely does one attempt to break that comfortable shell and explore the other possibilities. fear of failure and the ensuring rejection from audience makes them shy from experimenting.

this phenomenon is widely seen in rajanikanth films. his films have the same set of events being retold in many different ways. not surprisingly such themes are derived heavily from classic indian epics and therefore have a strong appeal. only shankar in 'robo' had the vision to show rajani in a different manner. thankfully the 'fans' of the man who otherwise cannot take anything negative reg their demi-god did not protest and the film scripted history. when dhoni also insists on altering pitches to suit home team, why are we complaining against one man in particular?

in 'drama' (yograj bhat, 2012) the man repeats the characters which by now has his signature written boldly. from ganesh, digant, puneet and now yash - they essentially are playing same character. this is not wrong by itself but the problem is no actor has brought anything new to that character. so everyone looks as if they are imitating ganesh as he performed this for the first time. yash could have taken cue from ninasam satish who stood apart doing essentially the same thing as yash but in his own way. it is here yograj bhat has faltered again. he fails to bring in people who can interpret characters on their own.

radhika pandit is an exception and she proves again why she is incomparable. it is pity that the talented lady still has not got a performance worth her huge talent. suchitendra prasad who otherwise is almost reduced to playing fringe roles gets a deserving break-through. scenes involving him and radhika proves what excellent actors can do in ordinary scenes. the eye for small details and mannerisms makes their roles memorable. utilising the services of experienced actors like umesh, honnavali krishna, achyut kumar, abhinaya is a positive move. hopefully bhat will make his next film with such talents and reviving the lost glory of meaningful kannada cinema.

the film also marks the departure from the story-less narratives. though the depth of the story is disappointing, given the fact that it is a bhat film, the change is welcome. maybe he wants to break from the shackles of the image but is hesitant. this film should give him required confidence that people will accept him if he tries something new. the pain of seeing the immensely talented director like bhat serving ordinary films has somehow come to an end. there is every hope now that he is preparing to give us a bigger bonanza next time. lets hope he does justice to his capability and our expectations.

the title of the film is very intriguing. yes the young fellows in the village play a lot of drama. there is drama even in the college played differently by everyone. then the young guys also play a bit of drama to bring everyone together. but still the title seems misplaced. there could have been a much more apt title. actually this is a film which had very little drama compared to his other films. the film strives to attain a kind a reality which he otherwise does not bother much. or is the man telling us that he is playing a drama to fool us around? we pray that is not true and the positives in the film are indeed honest and not fake stunts or accidental.

## today's amol palekar

every generation needs a mascot who can represent it in all its simplicity and sincerity. cinema tries to glorify such gentlemen every now and then. there are some ground rules for people who want to fit into such roles. they should be young, intelligent, hard-working and romantic in their own unique way. most importantly they should have a dead-pan look which oozes sincerity at every moment.

amol palekar leads this group. his films at those times were representative of a common man. he edged farooq sheik in this race and till today remains a reference point for such acts. anant nag held much promise in this direction but he gave himself up to the charms of commercial cinema. in the post-2k indian cinema such average-joe was missing from the scene. the over-glorified stars and me-too kind of newbies swarmed the screens. thankfully it looks like we have found one gentleman out there who can claim this place.

imran khan's films are getting increasingly interesting. after some wandering around his latest two flicks have more things in common. 'meri brother ki dulhan'(ali abbas zafar, 2011) and 'ek meain aur ek thu' (shakun batra, 2012) provide a glimpse of what this man can do. the post-modern world that young people live was never adequately represented on screen. films shot in foreign destinations either become self-indulgent or cover tourist friendly spots in songs. the inhabitants in such stories are also boringly unidimensional thus depriving us a chance to savour real things on screen.

in both the above mentioned films irfan khan shows that he has the potential to represent modern guy with all his complexities on-screen. making a character relate to audience is tough job especially if you are targeting a certain age-group. their fast changing preferences will be difficult to cater to. but to imran's credit he underplays the emotions and appears at-ease even in handling the irrelevant parts of the roles he performs.

what makes his tasks doubly difficult is the fact that he is casted against seasoned female leads who know a trick or two to grab eyeballs. it should have been a herculean task to just stand with super-charged katrina and kareena in back-to-back releases. the very fact that he manages to make his presence felt in these films should give him confidence to try out newer ventures. he can now think of taking a film on his own relying only on his performance.

there are very few actors today who are not scared of trying something new. the impulsive generation of today needs a calming actor like imran khan to be their mascot. he has it in him what it takes to shoulder this responsibility. his kind of films are representative of today's youth. so there is nothing wrong in branding this deserving gentleman as the amol palekar of present times.

# kahaani

'the dirty picture' (milan luthria, 2011) was an interesting experiment. in the name of an unofficial biopic they got a chance to show it all yet remain detached from the criticisms. it was a pure commercial venture with no intention to tax the brain which hit the target. the only sadness was that a golden opportunity to explore the depth of the character was traded for something else. nevertheless it gave vidya balan the long awaited accolades.

essentially indian film industry has not matured to distinguish between mainstream releases and small, independent films for limited audience. the concept of making films only for television has also not caught on. this forces makers of all kinds of cinema to go for same kind of publicity and release pattern. sometimes for a small film its marketing budget may be on-par or cross its production charges. this makes independent cinema commercially unattractive.

'kahaani'(sujoy ghosh, 2012) is a niche film which demands different treatment. the empty theatres showing the film is no way an indication of its failure. for an audience who are used to regular affairs this film will be perplexing. there is no pulsating action either which will keep the audience intesrested. with no comedy, item songs or deliberate explicit dialogues there is nothing to fill the cinema halls. but the film definitely has a soul which is rare to find in indian films these days.

vidya balan in this film is what we expect from her. she makes us forget that she is playing a character. in a sense purists can say this is her soul cleansing act after her earlier venture. this lady has fixed her place in the history of cinema. but in an industry which discards female artists who excel vidya has many challenges. from jaya bacchhan to tabu, all talented actors were sidelined in some way or other. lets hope vidya will be an exception.

casting is given no important in indian films. the established actors get the roles as if there is no choice beyond a hand full of them. over a period of time the audience get used to them and therefore it all gets boring. in this film apart from two actors all others are mostly new faces. and fortunately all of them seem to have been drawn from bengali cinema. the result is astounding with every character looking as real as the man who gave you tickets in the counter.

kolkota is a city which continues to breathe in true sense. in the film the city comes alive like none before. only after one comes out of cinema hall one realises that the film was in hindi. inside the film sounded and felt like a bengali film with people speaking hindi as if by accident. the film is definitely many notches above the industry standards. it also achieves many things indirectly. if her previous outing was good enough for a national award, what will vidya get for this one?

lawrence of arabia

when the script has action filled sequences filming it becomes easy. there should be something always happening on the screen to keep the audience engaged. an epic story full of drama can be stretched to hours. but to show the silence even for a moment effectively on-screen is a big challenge. to make a film whose running time is 3.30 hours of which most scenes are silent or with very minimal action and yet sustain viewers interest appears to be impossible task.

lawrence of arabia (david lean, 1962) has a rare distinction of achieving this effortlessly. the film is about t.e.lawrence who becomes a military hero in an unexpected way. by bringing together the warring groups he manages to become one among them. the new camaraderie helps the british also in their strategic objective of taking over damascus. the exploits of lawrence forms the crux of the film which remains a classic for many reasons.

the way in which the desert is captured offers a lesson or two in cinematography. after some time the sand filled lands becomes character by itself driving the story forward. the life of people inhibiting these difficult terrains is well documented. the petty fights among the clans even in their miserable conditions makes one wonder about the smallness of human behaviour. but their spirit which they keep alive even in those hash times makes one feel warm at heart.

lawrence's acceptance into the closely-knit community is the crucial turning point in the narrative. in the film this aspect is not brought out convincingly. but the clout he enjoys later is well depicted. the attachment between the stone hearted looters and lawrence and his relationship with young boys have come out well. the scenes showing his utter disregard to the bureaucratic setup in army headquarters are also well taken.

much of the film is reserved for capturing the silent and difficult travel of lawrence across the deserts. as he travels from one point to other the audience starts feeling the heat and exhaustion that he encounters. it is in these parts the film turns lyrical. the kindness of lawrence towards his fellow travellers is captured effectively. this also adds to the later effect where he starts becoming cruel. the transformation in his characterization has come out really well.

critics have observed that there are many deviations from the facts in the film. that should not take away anything from this masterpiece of a film. the films strength is peter o'toole who as lawrence ably portrays the character with all its complexities. the subtle yet very clear change in the personality of lawrence after being held and tortured is brought out very effectively. one wonders why such a performance did not fetch him well deserved oscar.

mayakkam enna

indian films are well known for their over-dramatization. the influence of early theatre on cinema continues even today. over the top expressions, loud dialogue delivery are all considered part of good acting. there is no denial that some actors have excelled in these things. modern sensibilities look for subdued acting and understated narrative which are not common in indian films.

it is in this context 'mayakkam enna' (selvaraghavan, 2011) impresses us. the film which starts on simple note announces its intentions once it shows the hero failing in his tasks. in an industry where heroes are gods in themselves seeing this is a revelation. a failing yet assertive hero and a understanding yet non-compromising leading lady are rarity here. the film though has some clichéd characters clicks because of these two characters.

dhanush is becoming an important actor of this generation. his skill set may not be vast but his resume is becoming more impressive. though he is repeating himself there is still an air of innocence he brings on screen everytime. richa gangopadhyay shows her calibre in the scenes where she is coming to terms with her husband's flawed genius. this lady has brought the touch of reality to her portray of a strong, modern women who is very caring at heart.

the notion that films are primarily meant to entertain is so strong that anything else is blindly rejected by makers. no-brainers thus flood the market fighting with each other for viewers attention. it is in this competitive environment someone should dare to do something different. to selvaraghavan's credit he has not only made a different film but has delivered it very effectively.

a brooding hero has a fixed template here in form of devdas. maker after maker always interprets devdas when he needs a fallen hero. such attempts always see hero succumb to his drinking habits. rarely have our films shown hero fighting his addiction to alcohol. even more rarer is the character of his wife who will silently urge him to come to his own terms. it is arguable whether this film would have had better end-effect had it not gone popular way in the climax.

this seems to be a general problem with films which deal with such themes today. 'rockstar'(imtiaz ali, 2011) can serve as a guiding principle on how to end such films. agreed that audience may be put off by excessive tragedy but such themes deserve only this treatment. these are minor issues which should not bother a serious viewer who has much to savour from this film which is bound to have a long shelf-life.

# paan singh tomar

biopics are of two types; one that celebrate already successful people and other that try to glorify the fallen and forgotten heroes. in india the former is becoming rare because of the amount of controversy such projects generate. the later types are rarely tried because they are supposed to be sure losers in box office. biopics demand huge research and who will want to invest on brining some long forgotten person into screen by spending crores in today's times?

the makers of 'paan singh tomar'(tigmanshu dhulia, 2012) should be congratulated for backing such a project. the film on a medal winning army soldier turning into a dacoit surely holds initial promise. and if you have a man like irrfan khan in the lead role you have won half the battle. but still making a films without song-and-dance-routine is a bold decision. resisting the temptation of having an item-song in a daaku film is nothing short of miracle!

among the clichéd things which the film faithfully follows are - revenge saga, very-good army officers, very-bad police men, really-evil family members, husband-is-god type wife, sweet-as-jaggery children, i-have-to-die-for-you kind of side kicks, you-killed-my-mother sentiments, system-failure complaints, i-am-not-bad posture of hero and his constant i-was-good-but-you-made-me-bad stand.

the film's main problem is its lack of emotional depth. the camera captures the plight of paan singh with a sense of detachment. this makes the film pointless after sometime since you know what's coming next. the reliable set of actors should have been used to explore the mind of character. the one good test for this is how many close-up shots are used in the film. because only a confident maker and an able actor can give good shot if camera is looking directly at the face of an actor. in this film irrfan rarely gets a chance to get under the skin of the man he is playing.

partially the reason could be that there was much stress on the athletic part of the character. because the man was a runner there is a need to showcase him in different light. but then the shots could have been taken much differently without compromising on the facial expressions. the man's relation with his wife though initially evokes interest becomes one-dimensional after some time. even the director seemed to have forgotten her after sometime. if there was no place for her in the entire length there was no reason to give her so much space in the beginning.

whatever are its limitations the film is a welcome relief because it showcases that such experiments are possible today. the notional value such films brings are more important than its direct impact. the makers can definitely improve next time and this attempt should raise the chances of more films like this with better presentation. this film has brought an ordinary man's struggle on-screen and that reason alone qualifies it as worthy.

## parzania

india has a poor record of making films based on real events. even when someone attempts they end up creating mythology like narratives where good and evil are clearly drawn out. the grey areas are left unexplored. therefore such films are liked by some and hated by many. rightly branded as 'propaganda films' their lives are short and then they fade away from public memory. later analysts simply recreate the prejudiced opinions thus depriving the film of serious study.

'parzania'(rahul dholakia, 2007) is an example of such case. it received much attention when it was shown in film festivals before its release. it also won national awards. after its subsequent commercial release there were predictable responses from public. the bans and court order kept the film busy in public memory for some time. now after nearly five years of its release and ten years after the incident it depicted, the film rarely comes to people's mind.

there are ample examples in the film to prove that it was a film with a hidden agenda. the makers clearly wanted to showcase certain parts of the entire proceedings. other important episodes get simply sidelined. the characters too are very single dimensional thus depriving the viewer the taste of complex human relationships. the predetermined notions of the makers are cemented with skewed narrative that they developed for the film.

the plot which was inspired by a true incident had enough strength to derive a strong screenplay. but by forcibly inserting some characters like that of a foreigner who is studying gandhi, the main plot was weekend. communal colours was inevitable but the urge of makers to whitewash one community while demonising other is not acceptable. the gandhian's role could have been given more screen space for effectively handling the climax.

sarika's acting in the ending moments won her the national award. it was a good work. but the contents of her talk did not fit into the character she was portraying. it was as if the makers used her character to say all things which they wanted to say. the entire testimony episode itself was a deviation from main narrative. it is here the film makers intention comes to question. here it becomes more of documentary than a feature film.

had the makers limited themselves to the primary question of exploring the trauma of parents who had lost a child in a riot, the film would have done justice to its premise. instead the film becomes an excuse for makers to reimpose preconceived notions regarding the communities. the riots themselves become an excuse for taking the narrative forward. a very average film like this gets undue attention just because vested interests like the hidden agenda in the film rather than the artistic merit of film itself. such propaganda films should not be encouraged.

# rajanigandha

in the fast paced life filled with tensions that we are living, films like 'rajanigandha' (basu chatterjee, 1974) looks like a fairy tale. it is complete with characters all whom are good and small complications which are fixed in a matter of minutes. no unnecessary drama or villains to keep the story going. ordinary people and simple storyline would do the job. if cinema should make you feel happy than nothing like these films which would make you smile and warm your heart.

the times which these films represent look so refreshingly real and laid-back. the lovers have no qualms moving in buses and trains, they have no opposition at homes and yes the girls are not simply meant to add colour to the frames. those were the days when smoking cigarette was considered as normal as breathing and censor board was clearly busy with other things. every character has its own ideology and frames itself within those norms so there are no grey shades. its all simple and straight forward.

even in cinematic treatment very minimal techniques are used. there are a few flash backs and nothing more. linear story telling adds its own charm to the film. the occasional songs in sync with the narrative with great music and good singing remains in the lips even after the film is over. one wonders why all the film makers of today insist on having five songs and one item song when people like chaterjee and mukerjee showed how few good songs can keep the film afloat.

such films have also captured the beauty of ordinary lives of those days which film makers of today do not care to document. instead of living in an imaginary world, the characters in such films were like those we see everyday. to show that even they can be cheerful with all their troubles is something we need today. the complete rejection of violence in any form is also something we need to adopt urgently.

to think of it, there is only one-line story in this film. but that line was made into a lively film with interesting characters shows the abundant talent of its maker. suddenly making a film does not look laborious. but then making a film which is simple but lively is a very tough job. even in those days people who tried making such films often came up with boring stuff. you need actors who understand the soul of characters which they are playing to bring such honesty on-screen.

films such are these should be revisited because we suddenly are expecting too much from our films. every time you go out you cannot be served a multi-course lunch. to be content with simple things and being humble in the face of human limitations is the mantra for peaceful existence. 'rajanigandha' and films in that era demonstrated this in a fine manner. to make such films in our times is the best tribute we can pay to those great souls.

# right to criticize films

what is the ultimate purpose of arts? this question has bugged humans from the day when first work of art was created. the two major schools in this debate are - art for the sake of art and art for others. an artist should feel content with his works and not bother about others opinion proposes the former. the later school believes in opening the works to public and values the feedback of the learned audience.

every creative person has to go into meditative mode in order to create new things. the process of creation is very private and demands uninterrupted attention. but the creator does not work in vacuum; his thoughts are shaped by various influences he has experienced over years. his creations are mere responses to events to which he feels an urgent need to respond. so those responses will be useless if they are not put forward to people.

any art form will not be complete unless it is savoured by audience. the process of creation reaches its logical end when audience experience the same thing which the creator has intended while creating his works. it is when the audience boo, applause, whistle, condemn, comment, hit the like button - the creator feels the burden off his mind. artists will swear by the high they receive when they get instant reaction to their works.

it is in this context we should understand why films needs to be analysed. moving beyond the five star rating system followed by the mass media and critical commentary provided by academic critics, there is a need to document experience of self after watching a film. backed by their own tastes and insights every individual is well capable of giving his own take on films he watches. unfortunately today even this process has been outsourced to select few high priests.

can someone having no first hand experience of film making pass unfair comments? well, in the realm of arts it is the end product which matters not the process of creation. a dedicated maker may have consumed days to take a shot of few minutes which he may feel is not appreciated by audience. but then it is entirely his mistake that the struggle is not transformed to something memorable. individual taste groomed by vast study of the medium alone is the right benchmark for assessing films.

artists in general and films makers in particular have ample time to think about best way to present their work. they are not doing anything on the move and that is the reason why they cannot be excused for their faults. compared to sports persons who are faced with unseen competition in real time, film makers take informed decisions. therefore a person who has qualified himself by his refined taste has the right to comment on films. any individual can become a connoisseur of films after deep study of subject matter and watching films of every grade for a considerable period of time.

cinematic beauty in 'meghe dhaka tara'

every art form is abstract and every artist is a creator. his exploration in wildness of abstraction give rise to a new creation. in a sense his creation can never overgrow him. so it is very important for an artist to grow in order to create everlasting works.

cinema as a art form is very mechanical. tools and technologies are abundantly used in its making. to retain human touch amidst all this is a challenge. to fill screen with extravagance is relatively easy. but amidst lavish sets and breathtaking locations cinema's soul gets lost.

very few people attempt to showcase life in their films. that requires non-compromising adherence to principles of good cinema. to glorify spirit of life amidst poverty requires strong personal conviction. perhaps it was only ritwik ghatak who had this ability. his films are so much filled with life.

in 'meghe dhaka tara' (1960) he demonstrates how a good film should be made. this film which has influenced many look alikes in all indian languages remains an ultimate expression of cinematic beauty. a maker's hold over cinema can be understood in his shot composition, use of sound and sense of timing in editing.

supriya choudhury excels in her central role. her powerful eyes is so well captured and her whole personality seems to ooze spirit of character she plays. in composing shots where her turmoil should be conveyed ritwik demonstrates his class. a big tree, endless mountains, depleting hut all become poetic expressions in his hand.

ritwik trained under ustad alauddin khan and his music sense is amazing. from short aalaaps to rabindra sangeet he puts them all to good service in this film. along with using classical compositions to full use, he also brings in bawl music which enriches movie watching experience. also his usage of everyday sound in shots brings scenes alive.

a film comes to life while editing. its here a director is tested to maximum. appropriate cuts and joins is so crucial to keep narrative in a fluid manner. ritwik strikes a balance between verbal and visual aspects of film in editing. today there is much advancement in film technologies but films without souls are churned out without thought. watching ritwik is one sure way to at least start a dialogue on what needs to be done to create good cinema.

# reading 'cinema and i'

'cinema and i' (ritwik memorial trust, 1987) contains all writings of riwik ghatak on cinema in english. it also has two in-depth interviews with him where he articulates his vision of cinema. it also has a good summary of all his films and all his writings. this work has a foreword by satyajit ray.

ritwik had completed only eight films in his lifetime. but his influence over indian cinema went beyond his works. he was into theatre, film teaching, tribal studies and even political activism. he also received music training under under ustad allauddin khan. above all he had an understanding of blending theoretical frameworks and practical issues of cinema making.

in this books there are his views on probably all aspects of films. his understanding of sound in films is astounding. he goes on to cynically dissect various types of sounds that should be used in films. with elaborate examples he explains why indian classical music has a place in films.

many theorists look sound-dance routine in indian films as derogatory. many so called 'experiment films' completely shed songs saying they are interested in making films close to reality. they should take a lesson from ritwik who used classical and folk compositions with great effect. his closeness to tribals may have made him realize that dance and music are basic expressions of human emotions.

for a man who shot all his films in black and white he had a sophisticated understanding of colour in films. he also has good observations regarding editing skills required by film maker. he also opinions that documentary films are most exciting form of film making. his list of promising future film makers proved prophetic as every one he mentioned went on to make good films.

discussing what ails indian films he identifies exhibition halls as central problem. he proposes nationalizing exhibition trade to make things better. emergence of multiplex cinema in a way has answered some questions ritwik had raised. and we are already witnessing film makers are experimenting with themes thanks to their ability to reach niche audience through multiplexes.

one thing that comes out clearly in all his writings is his vision of cinema. in his words "good cinema cannot be divorced from life. it must represent the throbs and the aspirations of the people. it must move in step with the times. it must have its roots in the people.....cinema can be serious only if it conforms to certain social conditions that the audiences are familiar with".

santosh sivan

the uniqueness of every art form comes with the new possibility it presents to its real devotees. people who identify the uniqueness of the medium and tune their expressions to the demands of that medium excel in that domain. they are the ones who bring artistic touch and raise the mundane to the level of celebrated work. we have one santosh sivan who has given us definitive visual images which can stand as work of highest order in contemporary cinema.

at one level cinema is purely a technical field; in fact all art forms are so. it is very easy to get lost in the technical details. one can get obsessive about the gadgets or on the other hand can simply neglect them. the true artist will use the best of the technology to maximize the impact of output. technology should become invisible and experience it generates should alone matter. cinematography being a highly technical field, it is matter of great appreciation that this man has given us rich visual treat obviously by using right tools but never giving them undue hype.

if in a film we only see what we normally see in our everyday lives then cinema will lose its appeal. films provide an opportunity to showcase those things which we normally do not encounter. santosh sivan has given us new eyes through which we have seen nature like never before. in film after film his camera lens has captured the natural beauty of india, especially in the western ghats of kerala like none before. the green of the land and the pristine water in the falls look so beautiful when he presents them to us. he surely has given a new visual language for indian cinema.

two of his recent attempts as a director also tell his relationship with nature. in 'before the rains'(2007) there was the dominant theme of class struggle. there was also a thread exploring the beliefs in a local community. but beyond these themes there was a subtext of man-nature relationship. santosh sivan's camera was telling us another story covering all those untouched green somewhere deep in the kerala. that he himself was the director did not deter the cinematographer in him to tell a parallel narrative through his camera is his accomplishment.

we had seen this happening in 'asoka'(2001) and we saw that happening in 'urumi'(2011). his signature visual style is well established with urumi. later cinematographers will come to identify this and probably there will be a new school of india visual art named after him. santosh sivan's influences are well known but how he has been able to internalise the influences and develop his own individual style is interesting to study. in him we have a messiah who can turn all these new technologies to create pleasing visuals for our films based firmly on indian aesthetic sensibilities.

sherlock holmes

the hallmark of a great story is that it continues to inspire scores of creative minds to reinterpret it across various times. very few story tellers in modern time have this achievement in their resume. sir arthur conan doyle is one illustrious member in this elite group. sherlock and watson have seen so may reincarnations in different parts of world and still continue to charm us. nearly all detectives created after that carry some trait of these two gentlemen who have outlived their original vision.

film and tv adaptations of their adventures have been following time honoured formula. from settings, characterisation, costumes to language there seems to be a fixed notion on how things should be done. every attempt was judged on how faithful it was in recreating the ambience of the original. bringing sherlock out of this established notion was thought impossible until the recent series in bbc one was attempted.

this series has surpassed all previous attempts. the first part which was telecast in 2010 provided the much needed contemporary sherlock. the follow-up in 2012 is even more interesting. the last episode has made the faithful wait for next series which is already announced. this attempt is noteworthy from many aspects and moreover can serve as textbook for those who are attempting to recreate an established work in contemporary times.

it was almost magical to watch how blog, sms, gps and all that have merged so seamlessly into the storyline. the familiar stories have taken new twists. some characters have got new lease of life. most importantly the writers have not shyed from asking uncomfortable questions. while retaining the central spirit of sherlock they have freely interpreted the stories thus giving viewers a new experience.

yes he looks different and yes he no more smokes. but then you realise this much later when you are deliberately reminded how this is taken care of. yes he talks more but then he retains his razor sharp deductive logic powers. yes there is a hint of romance but his dignity is not compromised. yes he jumps for death and watson makes a moving speech but it is shown in next few seconds that he is still alive.

benedict cumberbatch as sherlock and martin freeman as watson are a revelation to watch. they create magic together and una stubbs as mrs. hudson becomes a loving character once again. sherlock's nemesis jim moriarty  also gets a makeover with andrew scott playing it to almost there level but somehow lets down with all his excessive smartness. the biggest winners are the writers who have not compromised on the basic theme yet made such a wonderful work. we can be very sure that world will not end this year because sherlock has promised to come back in 2013.

sidlingu

indian film audience may not know all those theories filled in art appreciation textbooks. but they have a keen sense which is unbiased and uninfluenced by all those hyped media promotions. for they have been seasoned by generations of good films which have refined their taste. it is not a surprise that today 'sidlingu'(vijay prasad, 2012) mostly runs in empty halls.

one has to be fair towards first time director who has tried sincerely to put his dreams on-screen. coming from television background he definitely knows a trick or two about the trade. unfortunately he carried the same grammar to cinema and therefore failed. words which made him popular in tv made the film verbose and monotonous.

locations were authentic, support characters were indeed supportive, colour tones in cinematography was very new to kannada cinema yet there were far too many loopholes. except for one slow song, other songs were not in place. and largely the story was too simple to be made into full length feature film.

the film provided perfect chance for a light hearted rom-com. but director simply wasted this chance and though the spark between lead pair was visible in that slow song the momentum was not maintained. independently the school and college sequences were good. but they added too little to the main story and therefore in the end were not memorable.

there are few things which should not be shown on-screen. toilet scenes are one important member of this category. the director should attempt such things only if there is a need in the storyline. in this film such scenes were repeatedly used causing disturbances to viewing experience. same applies for unnecessary dialogues with expletives.

if a character has to die in the climax there has to a build up for it. otherwise such attempts will be futile. siddlingu failed mainly because of its climax. what should have been a simple story was needlessly complicated at the end. by killing a principle character the director killed his chances of making a mark in this industry. one only hopes this talented man gets another chance to give us more meaningful film.

did super deserve state award?

judging upendra as a director is a tough job. his films are either loved or hated; nothing in between. there is no doubt that he has made films in his own way caring little to what his critics say. he is a phenomenon and his collections in box-office commands respect. his creativity as a writer is unquestionable and technically he has carved his own style of film-making. he definitely has given new grammar to kannada cinema which many people are still following and have reaped repetitive success.

he reached certain stage with his cult classic 'om' (1995). with 'a' (1998) and 'upendra' (1999) he was able to convince everyone that his brand of cinema is here to stay. somehow these films have remained outside serious study. they deserve much more deeper analysis from cinematic perspective so that upendra can be compared with path breaking film makers of all times. with his 'h2o' (2002) he seem to have lost the plot. his sabbatical from direction was longer than expected.

his comeback film 'super' (2010) had all ingredients of upendra movie. though the shot taking was contemporary his fans could compare its multiple plots to many of his previous films. the non-linear narrative which he has mastered was there more brilliantly. essentially super in retrospect did not offer anything new for anyone who was following upendra from his glorious times.

this is not to undermine his efforts. many directors who took the break never made it when they tried to comeback behind camera. that too upendra was all along active as an actor. it should have taken tremendous mental strength to take up direction under such weighty expectations. to his credit he managed to keep his fans happy while not raking up any controversy. the negative stories in yellow magazines regarding how youth are corrupted by his films were missing this time.

the real shocker even for his most devoted fan came when it was announced that super had won the state award for best film. state awards are meant to identify and nurture good cinema irrespective of their fate in boxoffice. if the jury members were interested in selecting a mainstream film for the post, they had better choices. why they failed to consider some excellent works and gave preference to super is very confusing.

'krishnan love story' (shashak, 2010) was way ahead in cinematic content and presentation. 'sanju weds geeta' (nagashekar, 2011) was even better. there should have been a tough tussle between radhika pandit and ramya for the top acting honours. for nagshekar this should be heart breaking. super simply did not deserve the award by any yardstick. the members of the film fraternity and general public have a reason to register their protest against this one. good cinema should not traded for anything even if it is a talented man like upendra in question.

# the artist

when film makers world over are experimenting with new technology like 3d, here is a film which depends on old techniques. in times where films are becoming more verbal, this film has gone silent. it recreates that old world charm and does not let the momentum drop for a moment. this black and white film of today is surely a masterpiece and rightly deserves all the awards and accolades it is receiving this award season.

the artist (michel hazanavicius, 2011) is labelled as a french film. but being silent it crosses all language borders. the english titles while appear intermittently are not intrusive. it takes one through the life of a silent film star and the emergence of the sound in films. it captures personal and institutional history of cinema in a wonderful manner. and yes likely true cinema it entertains all the way.

in an unique experimentation the 'film in a film' theme is taken to glorious heights here. the story is about an arrogant silent era superstar. ok but why should a film about him be silent? its here the director has to be applauded. 'silence' becomes the way of life for george valentin (played brilliantly by jean dujardin) so much so that everyday sound also becomes alien to him. the way in which the silence fills his life is shown brilliantly.

the arrival of sound in his life is shown in a tender way. his transition from one era to other is lovingly enabled by peppy miller (wonderfully performed by bérénice bejo) who incidentally was his discovery. their subtle chemistry and old-world romance is a revelation to watch. most importantly both actors are so convincing in playing the characters of that era. there is no hint whatsoever that they are struggling to get either act together and that is a great plus.

there is no dearth of films using animals to enhance emotional appeal. this film also has a dog (uggie) which raises the bar of animal performances in films. it is stitched well into the storyline and dominates the screen like a major actor. the important support characters also stand out in convincing us that they are delivering good performance.

there are many films made on films themselves. but a careful study of technology change is rarely studied. this film captures the crucial stage in the history of films. but it does not get lost in these myriad details. the films draws its strength from making us understand the wounded pride of a star. that is the reason it stands out from similar attempts done in hindi cinema in recent times which focused on doomed superstars.

the iron lady

the first thing one appreciates after watching 'the iron lady' (phyllida lloyd ,2012) is how easily personal and public history of a living person is blended in the film. it is gratifying to see that the makers have not gone to glorify the lady. the way her disease gulps her slowly and her - now determined fight, now losing it, makes it worthy watch. in fact her public life which in itself was a glorious episode simply moves into background and we see only her struggle which earns her our sympathy.

meryl streep is amply helped by makeup and hair artists. but that does not make her job easy. looking like the character is just a small part. we have seen wonderful makeup going waste thanks to substandard acting. but here meryl streep grows into the character and delivers a touching performance. one cannot but feel the pain of her feet when she remove those heels and it is in these small moments she touches the soul of the character she is playing. splendid performance indeed!

it is remarkable how the makers have managed to retain the humaneness of one of the greatest living political figures of last century. one cannot but wonder whether such attempts can ever be dreamt in our country. all hell would break loose if a neta is shown struggling with any disease. leave alone living leaders no one would dare to talk about netas long dead and gone. our undue reverence towards our leaders probably has robbed from us the chance of enjoying a realistic portray of them on-screen.

that is the reason maybe a film like 'gandhi'(richard attenborough, 1982) had to be made by a foreigner with another guy far removed from this reverence playing the role of gandhi. in more recent times though there were attempts like 'gandhi my father'(feroz abbas khan, 2007) it never received any attention. while surprisingly a contemporary gandhi in 'lage raho munna bhai'(rajkumar hirani, 2006) became a bit popular it was again well within the traditional context of portraying him. in fact they went a step ahead and made him god! we may have to wait for ages to see gandhi again as a simple man with high values for any deviation from fixed line is bound to create unnecessary controversies.

another recent example on how indian film makers fail to realistically portray history is 'khelein hum jee jaan sey'(ashutosh gowariker, 2010). there was an irresistible story of rebellion and romance. though the film was painfully made it really did not touch the hearts. every star looked like themselves and not like the characters they were playing. the golden opportunity to portray an important part of history was thus wasted. maybe indian film makers and audience both need to mature to make and see films like 'the iron lady' in our context.

tinker tanker soldier spy

there are only two predominant models of detective films. one is the high action genre perfected by james bond on one end and shabby b-grade thrillers on other end. second is the hyper-thinking spy copyrighted by sherlock homes. in every part of the world film makers of every kind have tried their own versions of detective films based on these two templates. but a third alternative has remained unexplored.

between bond and holmes an intelligent man would want a detective who can solve cases not by guns or deductive logic but by careful analysis of facts themselves. instead of stylish bond and outwordly holmes it would be nice to have a detective behaving like us. a common man's thinker is rarely tried by film makers mainly because there are not many novels employing such a character.

tinker tanker soldier spy (tomas alfredson, 2011) for one gives us the much needed break from high action detective films. based on highly complex novel it already had successful television adaptation. the bbc production for tv (john irvin, 1979) had alec guinness living the role of george smiley. the laid back and detailed series had remained very faithful to the original work. the seven part series was considered too long to be made into a feature film.

but the makers of this film have taken the challenge and delivered a quality product with very few compromises. the first credit should be given to writers because they have compressed a five hour story into 1.5 hour film. yes, someone who does not have an introduction to the story may find the film a bit complex. some pieces may seem missing to understand the entire breadth of smiley's approach. but the film clicks thanks to some wonderful acting and excellent making.

gary oldman had the tough task to re-interpret alec's portrayal of smiley. he being an actor that he is easily brings his own charm into the character. while alec's smiley was more human, oldman's smiley is a tad reserved but he brings a new dimension to this character. he will surely cast his spell on first timers but does not disappoint hardcore fans also. somehow one cannot but feel that casting is hugely influenced by the television series.

the film is going places with multiple nominations in major award circuits. the film had a niche audience to begin with but has done a lot good to popularize this genre. maybe at least now local film makers will think out of box and give us intelligent detectives. gore and gravity defying action are enough; let us have some realistic detectives who can solve cases using facts and not superhuman tactics.

today's film

every story should be bound by place and time. they contextualize the narrative. cinema being primarily a visual storytelling medium demands that these boundaries be set strongly. most film makers fail in their endeavour because they fail to control their stories within this set-up. if story demands a period setting it is actually easy. but defining story which take place now and here is very difficult.

part of the problem lies in identifying what reflects contemporary times. excessive references to current events makes the film looked timed. such films lose value after some time. too much generalization removes the film from present context and therefore will be irrelevant for present audience. seeing the present from a detached point of view when one is part of it is not easy.

film makers apply many techniques to contextualize time. the major trend is to refer to the significant events of an era either by weaving that directly into storyline or keeping it in the background. either way the event chosen will help take the story forward. but this technique fails to work if historical events are not shot properly. in other cases the events themselves hog the limelight thus pushing main story to background.

indian films which use independence struggle as the backdrop always suffers from this problem. sometimes they lavishly create the period settings but they fail to create a cohesive feel. in regional languages where budget is an issue authenticity is compromised by using shabby props which makes viewing an unpleasant experience. the problem gets magnified when story has to shift from those times to present and here we have very few winners.

the second technique is by making characters use contemporary technologies. so when you see they play with phone, email or mobile you know the time they are in. used in right way they can take story to another level. but here again instances of gadgets being used for the sake of it is more common than their thoughtful introduction. we have to yet see an indian film which uses internet and mobile in right context.

beyond all this the right measure of modernness is the mind of characters in today's films. though they may wear latest designer clothes, live in post-modern styled houses, get around the globe like their backyard they remain a century old in their thoughts and behaviour. modern outlook while tackling issues in the context of increased intellectual awareness and enhanced emotional inclusiveness is totally missing. its time our makers bring their films out of time-wrap and make their characters smell fresh air of today.

# lucky

there is always this bunch of film makers and cine goers who value absurd. so there was this govinda-david dhawan at some point of time delivering hit after hits. now we have houseful, golmal series which keep few actors and directors alive. in kannada industry too there have been occasional hits in this category. though a rarity sometimes no-brainers are lapped by audience and 'lucky'(dr.suri, 2012) has claimed its membership to this club in a big way.

the film does not have any tall claims to make. from the start it makes its intentions clear. nothing in the clichéd textbook of this genre is left out. from the colourful terrace 'adda' of hero to his sidekicks everything has been seen before. the jokes and narration also are repetitive. but still the audience are enjoying the show. there is not even a mention of any serious issue nor there is any story in this film. yet no one seem to mind and ticket collection even on weekdays is very high.

if the biggest discussion on a film is about the stylish beard of the hero you should understand a thing or two about the film. there is nothing else to talk about. it seems like someone was watching this telecom service provider's ad and suddenly hit upon the idea of making a film out of 30 second storyline. bring in a lovely lady and a man with killer looks, add (over) colourful songs and yes a fight so that you showcase hero's action side and you have a film which is making roaring business.

this is not to completely ridicule such efforts. it must be noted that when there are three to four films released every week making a mark is not easy. formula films may look simple but not many succeed to do it in decent manner. in this film there are more holes than the fishing net but the packaging does not let you think about it. when the tempo seemed to be going slow, there comes a song with all its colours. the ability of the director to keep the audience engaged is praiseworthy.

one cannot but feel sorry for this guy yash. he has everything what it takes to be a star yet his film graph is not that exciting. maybe this film will finally open the gates of fortune for him. he should however resist the temptation to accept similar roles to repeat the success of this film. if the crowd in the cinema halls is any indication he has reached the stage which ganesh enjoyed few years ago. unlike ganesh lets hope kannada industry will not lose another hero.

ramya's film choices are becoming interesting by day. by acting with new heroes she is staying relevant while giving tough competition to newer girls. she has also find few films to show her acting calibre. her decision to start giving her own voice has added new dimension to her roles. her standing in the industry also allows the makers get good openings for their films. but how much relevant she was for this film will remain an interesting question to ponder over.

# life of pi

there are films we watch and there are those we live with. the latter kind of films comes very rarely and now we have a chance to relish one such extraordinary work of art. this film has finally shown how a technology like 3d can be effectively used in story telling. while most make film for technology, here technology works for the film. the result is a visual treat like none before and for those who are sounding the death of cinema in the times of increasing tv sizes, here comes an answer. cinema still remains a powerful medium and in the hands of such master craftsman who use all new things for better cinema experience.

the story which is strongly grounded in indian ethos retains its authenticity on-screen. the efforts taken to record even the minutest details in its true colours is laudable. a set of seasoned actors lend their experience to make the roles come alive. the festivals and the vibrant life of india are well captured. retaining the local language in parts adds well to the flow. it is only after some time that you realise that this is an international film with a foreign director. this film is a better representation of our country than the oscar winning attempts which glorified the sufferings of india.

every single aspect in the film making - be it acting, costumes, music, dance, action, camera, sound or even 3d should not stand apart. everything should dissolve their individual identities and create a wholesome effect for the viewer. once you wear the 3d glasses and start watching the film, the initial enthusiasm will go away and you will get involved with the story. unlike many films where deliberate attempts are made to highlight the 3d effect, here 3d becomes invisible. you will be aware of it only in the end and there lies the triumph of this film. every time a new technology is introduced enthusiastic people ruin the possibility of using it meaningfully. thankfully 3d is saved by this master class effort.

details of the shooting was dutifully shared by the crew. so we knew that it is not the ocean but an abandoned ground which was filled with water. but what can explain the magic of the night scenes? those sparks of light spread in infinity surely is the best visual ever to be seen on movie screen. the dolphins and the storms may not be real but our minds and hearts accept them. even the tiger may or may not be real but who cares! we fear and later sympathise with it. the director succeeds in making us his pawns in this emotional journey and we have no complains!

the film in the end throws an important question which may not get highlighted because the audience are so deeply soaked in the visuals. the narrator explains how he had to tell the story using human characters since the insurance agents did not believe that he survived with animals. later when asked which of the two versions is true, he says "its your story now. you decide what you want". this is a telling statement because only when we make the story our own, we start believing in it. there is ample proof that people across the globe have made this film their own and that is a tribute to indian story telling technique.

earlier there was a practice of taking school children en masse to watch a significant film free of cost. government should take steps to see that maximum children watch this film. otherwise the visual vocabulary of kids who cannot afford the high ticket prices will remain poor. this film can also be used to enhance the soft power of india. this film is the right vehicle to introduce the culture and tradition of this land. the rights of the film should be acquired by the government so that it can be used as national treasure. there is no guarantee that such an attempt will be made again. till then lets savour the magnificent treat in store for us.

# kutty srank

malayalam cinema industry is blessed. it has maverick directors, first grade technicians and gifted actors. the initial attempts by the state government to impart film literacy among the people of the state is reaping rich benefits to them now. topics which other industries would not even consider are picked by eminent directors here. the two superstars who otherwise maintain a larger than life image come back under the tutelage of these masters and deliver breathtaking performances.

kutty srank brings together talented shaji n karun and mammootty. the film is a story of a man whose name is not told. he is simply referred by his profession - the ferry driver. in his story we see three different ladies in three different parts of kerala. the individual stories are riveting and independent. the last scenario weaves everything together in one narrative. it also leaves us with lot of open questions.

the treatment of the film is done in an intelligent way. the character of kutty srank is common in all three parts. but the interesting question is whether he is same in all stories. the physical changes are minimum but what psychological traits define three dimensions of the same character? his relationship with three ladies forms the central theme of the story. whether he loved each of them in his own way is not directly answered.

did he cheat on them? did he maintain the relationships simultaneously? if so, was that a mistake? no direct answers can be given to these questions. but director has left enough clues for an intelligent viewer to explore various options. the three female characters are depicted as three different seasons. like the seasons follow one after other the ladies come in his life and he has no option but to go through them. the distinct background provided to each character showcases the talents of the maker.

there are many other threads in the film which can be equally explored at great length. kerala is the land of various religious experiments. this film covers the religious motifs wonderfully. the differences among the various parts of kerala are captured well. the three ladies have lent able support to the man in the helm. cinematography shows the influence of santosh sivan and that is something understandable. the awards which the film fetched is something which it rightfully earned for itself.

another interesting take away from the film is the documentation of rural theatre in kerala. how people in a remote village could play western dramas with indian elements like songs and dance is interesting to watch. mammootty literally brings kutty srank to life before our eyes. only if the film maker had focussed firmly on kutty, the character would have had more depth and the man would have surely won a national award.

# vanaprastham

rarely do we find an actor willing to undergo tough training of an art form which requires years of practice to achieve perfection. that too when there is a demanding perfectionist director like shaji n karun the task becomes even more difficult. when you have to perform like a seasoned kathakali artist of highest standard before an knowledgeable audience your difficulties multiply. but for an actor like mohan lal this is a part of everyday job. he delivers a knock-out performance in this film and deservingly won national award.

as a struggling kathakali artist who also has to grapple with identity crisis as his father refuses to accept him he starts occupying our minds. his problems with alcohol and non-working marriage but wonderful relationship with daughter sets the pace. by the time he grows into playing heroic character in his performances he firmly etches his place in our consciousness. his performance as arjuna displays his mastery over the form and gives the vital turn to the story too.

an artist has to draw the line between real and unreal. the same holds good for audience also. suhasini as subhadhra, the daughter of a royal household fails to understand this fine line. the troubled relationship between the actor and a devotee grows into an intimate relationship. but it is doomed to fail. he learns that the lady wants the character he plays and not the man behind the makeup. though his stature grows with each progressing year his complexity eats into his performances. he vents his frustration and anger by playing villainous roles.

in a climax which may be the contender for best ever he tries to make the lady understand that he is just a performer by playing arjuna one last time with his daughter playing the role of subhadhra. the self-realisation which dawns upon the lady meets with unexpected turn of events. the film documents one of the best performance from mohan lal who lives every scene with all sincerity that you actually can feel his deep pain and helplessness. the film also records the problems of the artists of an art form which has retained its purity in modern times.

the film has an ensemble of greats in technical departments and it shows why it pays to go with masters. it also demonstrates how technology should never override the performance of artists. the effectiveness of sets, costumes, sound, music, editing and photography is gauged on how well you forget their presence. they should immerse into story and not stand out as individual entities. in the end you should remember only the characters in the film and here that is exactly what happens. it is said that vikram lost to mohan lal in the final round of national awards. one can sympathise with vikram but no one can deny that lal earned his place by showing us once again why he is an actor who is hailed as one of greats in indian cinema.

# pranayam

the performances in films have become louder by the day. it is extremely difficult to find some genuinely heart warming stories with subdued acting. in an industry which is obsessed with youth it is difficult to find underplay. thankfully we have some mature actors who can demonstrate a thing or two about acting to the younger lot out there.

malayalam film industry is often accused of playing around two superstars. often there are complaints that they are not allowing the younger ones to come to centre stage. whatever the complaints may be the undeniable fact is that these two guys are capable of carrying toughest of roles with relative ease. decades of their experience have been put to good use by some good directors to this day.

'pranayam' (blessy, 2011) is like a stream of nector in dark desert. the story itself presents interesting possibilities. but many directors who have attempted such themes have faltered. the story demands strong performances and immersive camera movement for lyrical narrative. blessy has scored aces in both these departments and therefore has emerged as a true winner. the film raises the hope that films can be ultimate form of entertainment even today with all alternates emerging at fast pace.

mohan lal has been a champion and his profilic output is the testimony of his giant talent. the man who has given us some great performances earlier wins our hearts again here. the man effortlessly slips under the skin of the retired philosophy professor. his scenes with jayaprada speaks volumes about how they both are conveying their earlier life. this performance won him many awards but beyond that students of acting should learn how not to overdo physical disability while performing such roles.

the star in jayaprada takes a back seat here while the lady ably conveys the turbulence in the heart of a mature woman. as gracy she has been every inch how blessy would have imagined that character. her age defying beauty does justice to the way how two men yearn for her even at that age. her interaction with her son could have been explored to some more depth but there are no complaints on the way she has carried the role with dignity.

anupam kher is often reduced to playing caricatures in hindi films. his ventures in regional cinema should give him an opportunity to satisfy his immense talent. here he gets a chance to showcase his range as a father, former lover and shy individual. his performance may have been dimmed with the giant presence of lal, but true enthusiasts will acknowledge how much effort he must have put to bring that character alive. somehow the voice of the person who dubbed for him did not sync correctly with his persona.

the problems in the human relationships in modern society are rarely explored by new film makers. this film is a welcome change from youthful romance flooding the screens every week. in times where acting is reduced to showcasing six-packs, three mature performers show us what it means to capture the essence of a character which they depict on-screen. this film shows that cinematic excellence demands years of struggle which cannot be traded for big money bags or exotic locales.

# thanmathra

sick people make good stories on-screen. there are umpteen films depicting the difficulties of person suffering from various kinds of diseases. cancer has been done to death by indian cinema. somehow indian cinematic treatment of mental diseases had limited to madness in extreme form. electrical shocks and funny depiction of asylum was staple diet for viewers. but thankfully there has been some attempts to see these problems in a more humane manner.

actors will surely rejoice playing these characters since it gives them a chance to be loud and still be accepted. in kannada cine history kalpana's role in 'sharapanjara' has become a reference point for any such performance. in malayalam we saw mohan lal superbly performing the role as a person suffering from alzheimer's disease in 'thanmathra' (blessy, 2005). the master performer and classy director came together to give us a film to remember forever.

this film is a study in how to pace the story. mostly when directors try to project an important issue in their film, they will look to introduce the theme from the start or will jump for it with a dramatic twist. on contrary this film shows how the character played by mohan lal slowl gets into the web of the disease. the build-up is slow but extremely powerful. the scenes which tell us that there is something wrong with the man are shot with minimum fuss allowing the viewer to understand the nature of disease.

there is a scene in the film where doctor explains the distraught family that in such cases it is the family which requires treatment rather than the patient. point well taken because in most films the story surrounds around the patient and others become merely props. in this film the family members form such an inseparable part of story telling that you can recognise many parallel threads in the narrative.

the story of a father being caretaker to son and son turning sole-mate of his father has been shown with care with no histrionics being played around. the reaction of extended family realatives  and friends are probably cardboardish. but the performance of meera vasudevan as a caring wife's needs mention. veteran nedumudi venu and arjun lal have also delivered admirable acts.

this film shows the amount of mastery blessy has achieved in this format of storytelling. this sensitive film maker with his few films has showcassed that he is a man to watch out for. in all his films he has been able to derive top performances from his actors. his sense of music is also top grade. this man can surely take indian and particularly malayalam cinema top by few notches.

# barfi

krishna's words  from geeta can be applied to films too. when there is excess of anything there comes a film which reaffirms our belief in the medium. today when there is so much noise in the screen a film has made us realise that after all it's the story which is important for a good movie. and surprise, surprise, the same man who gave us gripping performance as a rock star comes back to tell us that silence can be musical too!

'barfi!' (anurag basu, 2012) is the right film to hit the screen during the turbulent times we are living in. when we are losing touch with the joys of simple things in life this film tells us the story of three people whose problems are complicated but in their own little ways, have made their lives simple and happy. innocence has finally received the attention it deserved and is ably portrayed by eminent actors who can no more be questioned about their place in the history of indian cinema.

the opening song itself sets the tone which is carried well throught the film. the time and place where story is set is picture perfect for the style the director had in his mind. restrained acting by supporting cast places the focus firmly on primary characters. each of the three characters gets ample time to establish themselves and contribute to the story. the songs are well woven to the storyline. camera captures all the brightness that's out there and the effort is clearly seen on the screen.

what was the natural territory for bansali has been taken up by basu and boy, how has he managed the show! the mild lighting with rich color tone used for shooting reflects the storyline also. at times it looks like basu was taking revenge for his 'kites' not being received well. there is certainly many similarities between the two below the different cinematic treatment given to these films. whatever the case be, basu is the clear winner here. it is his movie all the way. his biggest achievement is bringing together an incredible set of talented actors and making them deliver some of the finest performances we have seen in recent times.

it may be very difficult to pick the best performance among priyanka and ranbir. his role required perfect timing with lots of physical comedies involved. she had to bring that fine balance in her role because there was every chance of overemoting or underacting. after her earlier stellar performances failed to impress many, this one will surely cement her place as an eminent actor of our times. after his last venture, it has become a new normal to expect extrodinory from ranbir. and he too delivers a master performance in the film.

but overall the film has one major flaw. it fails to plough the heart and put the seed it intends to. the lack of emotional depth which it creates is basically because the structuring of the film is wrong. the non-linear technique works well for a thriller. making sense of puzzle is the job of the mind. the 'wow' moment created when we solve the riddle is a good technique for suspense films. for a warm film like this, it is the heart which should be touched, not the brains. this is not to say that films should be no-brainer. but there should be such a flow where mind is calm because it all goes smoothly and that is the time when heart opens up.

had the makers made this film in a linear manner the effect would have been much better. come on, it was a fairy tale and they should have 'once upon a time – everyone was happy ever after' structure. there was way too many deviations with story moving from one time to other so fast that mind stayed active all the time. when mind is active it starts asking questions. that is too bad because then you will not enjoy the film. this was a film which had to be experienced and that could not happen because of this factor. nevertheless this film can be showcased as one of the better films of our times

# krantriveera sangolli rayanna

there is this class of films which cannot be rejected for trivial reasons. by the time they are announced itself they are guaranteed to have a place in history. then the usual histrionics of the makers starts. timely updates in the media keeps the interest among the viewers steady. add a dash during release and you have a blockbuster opening. reviewers in the media are also in the fix because they cannot write anything wrong against such films. but real test would have just begun as audience start filling the theatres in the following days.

film making is a risky business, agreed. but over a century of experience should teach the fraternity a thing or two about the art. passion for cinema, ideological inclination, loads of cash, months of struggle by crew, dedication of stars, unnecessary hype -none can make up for lack of depth in the final product. the hardwork of the team should be seen on the screen. audience cannot be expected to reward them for their effort; the result should be good too. taking protection under the name of operational complexity or anything else cannot be excused. it is not easy to write such a bad note on one of the most talked film in kannada industry. but unfortunately it is very difficult to find something positive in this film which is filled with too many bad cinematic techniques.

'krantriveera sangolli rayanna' (naganna, 2012) oozes sincerity in its intentions. but unfortunately those well meaning things has not been transformed into pleasant things onscreen. it is very heartbreaking to watch things go from bad to worse. what a golden opportunity wasted! the film may or not make moolah but will not be remembered as its makers wanted it to be. it also is not the vehicle which darshan was expecting him to launch to superstardom. he will have to wait for some more time to reach there and in a way that's good because there may be few more good films in the pipeline.

there were things that stood apart and those needs to be praised. considering the limitations of the kannada cine industry the film is grand visual treat. darshan has tried his best to deliver a knock-out performance. director's struggle in trying to put so many things in a package is laudable. the crew must have had tough times shooting in extreme conditions. the sheer number of people filling the screen space was astonishing. effort required to co-ordinate so many people is just unimaginable. all these things will make good stuff for a book on the making of this film. since such attempts are rare, someone should document all this.

now the sad parts of the film which unfortunately covered the entire stretch. the sudden disappearance of the leading lady will remain a mystery. recent controversies may have played a role in this one. a touching love story  would have added much needed harmony in this otherwise violent film. talking of violence, it is a bigger mystery as to how the censors passed this film with a u/a. the kind of blood and gore shown in this film surpassed all such previous attempts. the excess violence in this film will deter many from repeating their visit and this will ultimately deny superhit tag for the film. it's shelf value too will come down because of this.

the different ways to kill a person using a humble sword should be seen to be believed. the biggest criticism against this film is this fact that it did not try any new ways to show violence onscreen. the straight camera to capture all the action in slow motion looks ok for a while. but filling the entire film with such scenes with loud bgm is unpardonable. every time someone was slashed, the camera would faithfully focus on the point of injury. no blurring, no capture of emotions, it is all raw. is this one needs in the name of entertainment and cinema? being unapologetic about the sheer scale of violence makes the entire enterprise so inhuman.

sensitivity of viewers should be respected by makers. there should be slow start for anything and the scenes with maximum impact should be reserved for climax. here we see two mega battles in first half itself. for the first time even the wartime acts of elephants also looks so non-elegant and violent. the graphical scene where the giant animal is shown

crushing the heads of people was the lowest point of the film. it laid bare the intentions of the maker and reiterates the point here that though the intentions were good, end product was not.

if sustained high-voltage, distasteful and gross violence was something one could not stand in the film, the dialogues with limited vocabulary was another let down. historical films like this one gives an opportunity to showcase the richness of a language but again nothing innovative was tried. the slangs against british were repetitive and even darshan confused powerful dialogue delivery to loud voice. thankfully jayaprada was given voice by seasoned dubbing artist and it was impactful. but how can one sit through the torture of englishmen speaking broken kannada in irritating accent!

so many unnecessary scenes made the film needlessly long which will deter many theatre owners. it's not easy for audience too. though many of them want to applaud the hero there are not many such scenes. though in every scene someone makes a strong point through tough action and loud voice, nothing gets registered in the mind. there are no songs to remember too. so the film will not make any mark in the cine history of the state. it may also deter the makers who want to try such venture in future.

more than a forgetful affair, this film will cause heartburn everytime it is remembered in future. little more carefulness, balance in handling the subject matter, harmony in story, tempering of violent behaviour by everyone, soulful songs and most importantly change in the focus by the director would have given the cine audience an affair to remember. but alas! it was not to be so and this is not only a tragedy for makers but also a great loss for viewers.

# two films on saddam

'the devil's double' (lee tamahori, 2011) which is based on the life of uday hussein and his alleged body double latif yahia was not the first film to be based around saddam's life. an earlier tv mini series 'the house of saddam' (alex holmes, 2008) had tried to capture the man's fast ascent and subsequent turmoil of his last days. the tv medium once again gave the makers the luxury of time which they used to maximum in sketching the presidential years of a controversial leader.

unlike the tv series, the film tries to look only at the evil side of the regime through the eccentric character of uday hussein. his fears and the attempts he does to hide from public by using a look alike forms the story. but neither the tensions of the original nor the trauma of the duplicate gets adequate treatment. the film is filled with unwanted scenes which makers seem to have inserted solely to malign the character of uday.

in the film even saddam has a double. this way probably uday is defended as doing something done by his father. but there has been no attempts to analyse what lead him to commit such heinous crimes if they were indeed done. the one sided depiction of events does not make for good cinema. also the depiction of his double who is completely whitewashed required much deeper treatment. overall the film is very average which can be viewed for an exaggerated depiction of excesses by an individual.

'the house of saddam' in contrast was a satisfying journey through the rough and riches of saddam. the man who rose to power on promise of good things became an object of international contempt. his regime, some people say, was marked by relative peace marred with two unwanted wars. why did he take on his neighbours and invited his own end? perhaps his over ambition and false sense of power may have driven him into this misadventure.

his life makes for good cinema. his relationship with a married women is captured well in the film. his attempts to create a personality clout based on aura of invincibility also comes out well. the father behind the leader is also depicted well. as a ruler his paternal feeling towards his subjects and his ruthless suppression of slightest opposition are also shown well. the complexity of the man is captured in all possible ways.

it is in the filming of his exile and last days leading to his eventual capture where the film shines. the loyalty of his close associates, the normal human pleasures and weakness, his drift towards being a penniless leader who is literally corned to a hole are all shown effectively on the screen. his trial and execution does not get much screen space but then its ok. overall the honour of the man who lead a dignified life is not compromised and that is the best accomplishment of the film.

silver anniversary of tamas

historical events etched in the minds of creative people gets recreated in many ways and they remain as good records of interesting times. individual recollections like these ones are better than official ones as they capture human stories. partition of india is one such event which has spawned variety of art works which have captured sufferings of those times. though number of good literary works have emerged from both sides of border, film adaptations of these excellent works are very small.

mainstream films however have only focussed on blame game and biased depictions to serve their own interests. amidst the senseless handling of the subject 'tamas' (govind nihalani, 1987) stands as an excellent example of how such themes should be filmed. based on the award winning story by bhisham sahni, it also shows what good television can do by supporting such ventures. somehow todays's film makers and television channels are not taking that medium seriously. it has lot of interesting possibilities as shown by this and other similar series of late 1980's and 90's.

tamas captures the effect of partition in a small village comprising of all three communities - hindu, sikh and muslim who were effected in this problem. the three main political fronts - congress, hindu mahasabha and muslim league are also well represented. even british administration gets its share in the screen. the main thing is that the narrative does not shy away from depicting the people as they were and does not adhere to politically correct position. and that makes the film so realistic and appealing. each character, however small, it is gets full attention from the makers and therefore one can feel the pain of pregnant woman, helplessness of old couple, anger of youth, determination of peace lovers and faith of believers.

this film should be a textbook for anyone wanting to show violence on screen. the opening scene where om puri is trying to kill a swine remains a master class performance. much later a young boy is shown stabbing an unsuspecting old man and there too the finesse of the scene is retained. in fact though there is too much violence in the story you just feel sad and not aghast. the human element behind the violence is captured beautifully in the film.

religion was devised as a means to unite people but unfortunately in times of partition it became a tool of violence. how helpless people found solace in their religions during distressing times is well captured in the film. each religion has a soft side and large hearted believers who keep the flag of faith high during testing times. such people who mainly remain in sidelines are brought to forefront in this film. how religious music can be effectively used to bring the emotions on-screen should be seen to be experienced.

the wide canvas of the story demanded a leisurely treatment and the makers thankfully did not get into the lure of commercial cinema. so we have a feature running nearly five hours but never a dull moment. today's makers shy away even from making a two and half hours film and also look down songs in films as dumb. they should go back and watch this one to understand how indian practitioners have mastered the art of integrating old narrative techniques in new medium of cinema. this film is legendary in the way it has dealt so many different shades of the partition problem - politics, bureaucracy, social, religious and importantly human.

the casting for the film is spot-on and the performances of all actors is top class. om puri shows the range of emotions whenever he is on screen. his eyes literally talk and his mannerisms are perfect even when he is standing there in the corner. a k hanagal who died recently delivers one of the honest performance as committed gandhian. it will be unfair to term other actors are supporting cast as each person just looks perfect in their roles. the first class cinematography attributed to vk murthy and govind nihalini shows how camera should hold the film together.

twenty five years have elapsed since the series made its début and its time to revive it again. students and lovers of good cinema should go for this one as it represents one of the finest piece of art. as a society it also gives us an opportunity to introspect whether we have learnt any lessons from history. more importantly in times where religion is being used for political purposes the film should show us how easily we are being fooled into these meaningless things. also when depiction of violence on screen is becoming more pronounced it will teach us that there are more possibilities in films than showing blood and gore.

oh my god

1970's were interesting times for indian cinema. people who had learnt the craft in film schools combined their lessons with the ideological spirit with was prevalent in the air. the result was the string of films which experimented on many themes, introduced fresh faces and redefined discourse on popular cinema. but with times this movement lost steam and was labelled as parallel cinema and its scope and reach remained low during rest of the century.

the era of multiplexes came with a promise that such trend would be revived. but unfortunately multiplexes became a by-word for fluctuating ticket prices aimed at profit maximization banking on initial enthusiasm of viewers and limited seats in the small halls. they added a new and main revenue stream for big releases and independent cinema almost disappeared. thankfully from last two years we are seeing a new life line which can keep this one going for some time.

superstars who earn ridiculous amounts are now supporting small film makers. commercial reasons may be the reason for them to be part of such attempts more than artistic concerns. in kannada industry too jobless female actors have produced art house cinema starring themselves and cornered national awards. but anyway in hindi industry the line between art and commercial cinema is fast fading. and that is a good sign for lovers of good cinema.

'oh my god'(umesh shukla, 2012) is a result of all these developments happening in hindi film industry. its inspirations apart, it is a good piece of cinema. the larger trend which it aims to set is laudable than the film itself. no major stars (forgive akshay, he was doing obligatory role), no item song, no love story and not even a hint of omnipresent gujrathi ascent - this reads like dream list of 70's cinema. yet this film is doing well and audience (predominantly young) are loving it is a welcome sign. the makers should first be congratulated for achieving this impossibility in the first place.

the theme of the film demanded that there be clear white and black characters, so no complaints there. the reading of scriptures and their interpretations were spot-on. the winning scene of the film was when khanji bhai throws the ring of bhagwan instead of keeping it as memorabilia. here the maker proved that he knows what he was doing. kudos for them for converting a play and making a good film. the cinematic moments were captured magically like bhagwan covering the moon with clouds or leeladhar's funny hand gestures.

paresh rawal showed again why we should bank on actors instead of pampering self indulgent stars. his performance is nothing spectacular but then the character he was playing itself was so ordinary. to bring that simplicity and honesty on-screen is tough and paresh rawal has done that in an incredible way. he will probably have his cupboard full with all awards. akshay kumar too should be applauded for standing by such a film and he too for one shows that he is a potent performer. let hundreds of such films bloom!

# heroine

what has happened to our leading ladies? they all have changed so much. they are today not only strong headed but fiercely independent, passionately career oriented, not afraid to be labelled crazy and are often more dominating than those macho heroes. the new leading ladies of hindi cinema are no where near to the shy, god-fearing girls who would meekly say yes to the choice of their parents.

it is not that there are no precedences. they say that 'fearless nadia' was more popular than her male counterparts in action films of early days. then it was a standard that super-heroine of every period would don the role of aggressive lady punishing the wrong-doers who usually would be her family members. the most successful formula in this genre was double-role of heroines where one would be classically mild and other modern and bold.

even in the end of last millennium leading ladies still performed their age-old roles even if there was a little twist in them. so we saw kajol agreeing to her parents words and coming to india in 'dilwale dulhania le jayenge'(aditya chopra, 1995) and transforming herself into traditionalist role after initial playboyishness in 'kuch kuch hota hai'(karan johar, 1998). in films where girls were tomboyish they had to be tamed by hero. in fact in south indian languages every major hero has performed such role.

whenever people wanted a bold leading lady on screen they had a ready made formula. she had to be a rich spoilt kid or someone educated in foreign country or someone from big city. the pattern was becoming too boring and there was a need for an image overhaul. thankfully today we are seeing a trend reversal. what was yesterday a deviation has today become a norm. film after film is showcasing the care-free lady living in her own world. and thankfully she does not compromise nor is she apologetic. and most of the times she leads the man while doing something together.

just a list of films of recent times should make this point clear. 'london paris newyork'(anu menon, 2012), 'ek mein aur ekk thu'(shakun batra, 2012), 'mere brother ki dulhan'(ali abbas zafar, 2011), 'tanu weds manu' (aanand rai, 2011), 'ladies vs. ricky bahl'(maneesh sharma, 2011)  are examples of new women power. the leading ladies in all these films were not someone which the audience were familiar with. their presence has marked the arrival of much needed freshness in indian cinema. by keeping strong women at the centre of the story telling they are making the progress from star-centric system to story-centric system.

while chandni bar (madhur bhandarkar, 2001), fashion (madhur bhandarkar, 2008), 7 khoon maaf (vishal bhardwaj, 2011), the dirty picture (milan luthria, 2011), kahaani (sujoy ghosh, 2012) were also women centric, they are in a different league. because they cater to niche audience, such films are not representative of changing times we live in. it is the changes in the mainstream films listed above which are interesting because they have commercial compulsions and have to be accepted by audience. such repeated experiments demonstrate that indian public are not averse to seeing a strong lady on-screen. that many young, upcoming heroes also do not have problem in appearing in these films is surely a positive development in the star-obsessed indian cinema industry.

imagined reality in the film 404

filmmaker has a responsibility to make audience believe in the artificial world created by him. strangely cine goers view the movie consciously knowing that what they see on screen is not real. how the film pulls the audience into its own world, make them laugh and cry determines its success. to recreate the intended impact in every viewer is a tough task. cinema has its own grammar which when used well will help create onscreen magic.

though the alphabets and words are used by all, a talented poet will weave them in various ways to communicate his emotions. likewise every film maker has some standard tools at his disposal. but very few understand how to use them creatively. cinema becomes more than a business proposition and technical pursuit in the hands of a maverick filmmaker. when he is able to extract work from everyone in the team in right proportion and synchronize every aspect involved in film making it becomes an art of high order.

practitioners of this art have to handle the pressures due to overt commercialization of cinema. to strike the balance between market demands and creative satisfaction is tough. very few film makers have been able to retain the essence of the craft in commercially demanding scenario. in this background the film '404 - error not found' (hindi, 2011) deserves the applause it is rightly receiving from all quarters. it shows that good cinema has a place in our society even today.

do we see only through eyes? actually how do we see anything? this question is answered in many ways by physiologists, psychologists and philosophers. stated in simplistic terms the eyes transmits the images it captures to mind for processing. by relating the registered image with the stored memory its meaning is interpreted by mind. this interpretation is again processed for taking further action. for example the image of burning house is interpreted by mind as panic situation and appropriate action is initiated.

it is a common experience to all that we visualize things even without seeing them. sounds in form of music or speech can create visual images in our mind. other stimuli can bring same results. creative people like poets and painters are able to visualize long sequences in their mind. they are also good in communicating their imagination to the world through words, music or painting. in fact they are encouraged to imagine more so that literary lovers can get good stories.

should we believe in whatever we see or what our mind interprets? normally interpretation is not the default activity of mind. every time the mind has to be activated to interpret the inputs transmitted to it. sometimes the mind may not be called to do this function. then the image or sound received is not registered. how many times have you come across the situation where you failed to recognize your good friend in the market even though he passed before you and even waved to you?

so it is clear that sometimes mind may not be involved in its task of interpreting because it is either preoccupied or is inactive due to various reasons. failure to interpret means self will not believe in the event. we believe in any event only if it is registered, interpreted and acted upon by an active mind. but sometimes mind may be involved in interpreting things which are just imagined as discussed earlier. now the question is should the self believe in such things?

this films tries to provide an answer to this question. it is not the aim of this article to analyze the validity of that answer. but the core proposition of the film that everything happens in mind is well taken. unless mind is not involved every human action becomes fruitless. without an active mind man reduces himself to a machine. thinking and reasoning is at the core of human existence.

humans in healthy state have an ability to distinguish between reality as interpreted by mind and reality created in the mind. problems occur when one loses the ability to

distinguish between the two. prolonged obsession with an issue, thing or person creates this situation. then the preoccupied mind begins to replace reality with imagination. it also begins to assert the validity of its imagination by discarding the real world. serious repercussions of this state include psychological disorders that require medical help.

there is a theory in philosophy which emphasize the validity of imagination. you can imagine about hills and rivers only if you have seen them. there is no way one can imagine things which he has not witnessed. recall the story of blind men and elephant. they could not interpret elephant even after physically touching it. that was because they had no prior knowledge of that animal. similarly it is argued that an imagination cannot be believed as true if one has not experienced before.

this is not to say every new experience is rejected. we learn new things everyday. when we study that mt.everest is the highest peak in the world there is no way we directly experience it. but still we believe in it because it is told to us by reliable people. we accept some other things because we can interpret them through the knowledge we already have. for example in mathematics we use already proven theorems to interpret new statements. to build upon acquired knowledge is simple because it lessens the burden of proving everything from start.

our culture plays a dominant role in our understanding of the world. in a way culture provides an easy way to interpret the world around us. it has ready answers to the questions one naturally develops over time. instead of reinventing the wheel following cultural practices provides ready solution. since culture is the result of collective knowledge of group of people over long periods of time its validity cannot be rejected easily. living cultures also have an ability to adjust to the changing needs of time and place.

culture manifests through many thousand ways in our lives. language, food, dress, beliefs, do and don'ts are all its various dimensions. cultural uses literature, painting and similar tools to express itself. it is by consuming these cultural artifacts we develop our world view. in some african culture females are considered beautiful only if they are too overweight. ruth benedict records in her book that people in that culture disallow young females from undertaking any work. they just feed them sweets to make them gain weight and look beautiful.

take food habits for example. people raised in the strict vegetarian culture complain of nausea at the very sight of meat which is relished by other cultures. labels of desirability attached to food, music, people and things is definitely influenced by ones culture. for someone whose culture accepts many gods will never have problem to accept one more new god. but for someone whose culture insists on supremacy of their god, everyone else looks as evil worshippers. what should one believe in and what he should reject is nothing but the product of cultural conditioning over years.

general public do not read principles imbibed in their cultural texts to understand this. they simply follow the path shown by their cultural heroes. in most cultures such powerful people dictate the principles of the group. cultural messiahs are a necessity because you cannot expect every single soul to analyze, criticize and decide answers at every step in life. how much of the practices in every culture is the result of critical analysis done by these messiahs and how many of them are results of their individual whims and fancies is an interesting question to ask.

so now it should be clear that culture influences our understanding. or it can be said that mind looks at events through the lens of culture. when people of india looks at a woman with 'sindoora' in her forehead they immediately understand that she is married. for someone whose culture does not have such a practice such an interpretation is impossible. now we can complete this theory which has been dealt in parts in this article.

sensory organs transmit images, sound and other stimuli to mind. it interprets these

through stored memories influenced by culture. appropriate action is ordered only if mind can make right judgements about the whole issue. in addition to this mind can also interpret those thoughts initiated in the absence of external stimuli. it creates imagined reality through this process which a heathy mind should be able to recognize as artificial.

in the film the protagonist fails to distinguish between imagination and reality. he is able to imagine certain things which do not exist because his culture has accepted their existence. an unfortunate incident brings his suppressed beliefs to forefront by reinforcing them. his mind conditioned by culture becomes ready to accept such things. slowly but surely his mind loses its ability to interpret external stimuli and makes him believe in imagined reality.

though many mainstream indian filmmakers in past have tried this theme, 404 handles the issue in a matured way. good paperwork is executed well by excellent technical crew. restrained performance makes viewing pleasurable experience. the makers have been able to sell their imagination as reality to audience and there lies their greatest victory.

# the little bird

the little bird had just returned home after a hectic day. after sliding in its little easy chair it put on the head phones and switched on its favourite song. while it had started grooving to the song, it saw the mother animatedly gesturing something to it. it must be one of those everyday sessions, it thought and continued swaying heavily to the beats now blasting into its ears. mother who was seeing this everyday could not tolerate any more. she came and snatched the device from little bird's hand. not knowing how to put it off, she just forcibly removed the head phones from little bird.

"what amma, why don't you allow me to listen some music?"
"listen you kid. we birds have certain rules to follow after returning home. you have to wash yourself first. those wings of yours which are all colourful will loose their shine if you don't take due care of them. then you have to tell us where you went the whole day. after that you should eat with us and then go to bed early. because we birds have to get up early so that we can go to work"
"amma its all so boring routine. do you know the world outside has changed so much. i know how to take care of my wings. there are many creams available today which can keep them good for a long time. and i am old enough to go anywhere on my own. and most importantly i cannot go to bed early. there is so much happening outside and i am not the one to miss it. my friends will label me as old fashioned if i don't join them"

the mother bird went back dejected. this was becoming a routine activity these days. she did not know how to teach the little bird to be a responsible one. the little bird was getting addicted to all sorts of gadgets and she was a concerned that these little ones are forgetting the traditional skills required for survival. one day little bird came home with a shining new toy hanging from its neck. he was in a hurry to show it to everyone at home.

"amma, amma, see what i have got today"
"is it something for me?"
"yes amma, you too can use it. its very simple to use. it will tell us where we can find food. just press this button and you will see the map of the entire city. you see those red spots. that's where we need to directly go and get our food. no more wandering entire day searching for some food"

the mother bird felt lost. she could not understand how to react to this one. birds were supposed to get up early and wake up all other animals and people by their sweet voice. and then they had to flock together and search for food. now with this device there would thaose acts will be history, she worried. birds would just press the button whenever they are hungry, go there and collect food. she found the idea very anti-birdish. there would no more be that chitter-chatter with friends while flying together. everyone would live their own lives and then the famed bird spirit of unity would fail. fearing the consequences she decided to teach the little bird a lesson in good behaviour.

she suddenly remembered the wise old bird staying away in the remote village. whenever birds had any problem they would consult the old bird and he would give them a solution without fail. so the mother bird with other concerned parents started the early morning flight to meet the old bird. the old bird received them with love and listened patiently to their grouses. he assured them that he will do something to teach the little birds the etiquette so necessary for birds. he asked the parents to send their children to him for a day. they all returned happily. the mother bird told the little bird that he has to meet the old bird with all his friends. the little bird was too happy to hear this. the old bird told them stories and gave good food to eat. they decided to fly the very next day.

"welcome young kids. how was the flight? did you face any problems. take some food"
"we are very tired. give us that food. it tastes heavenly. it feels so good here. all this green and cool trees. it is so silent here too"
"what is that hanging from your neck"
"this is an amazing device. we can identify the exact spots where we can find food"

"can you show that to me?"
"well, its all yours"

the old bird did not know how to handle it. the little bird bird enthusiastically started showing the device to him. the map of the city splashed on the screen and some red spots suddenly started blinking.

"see those red spots. its where we can currently find food"
"well i see that little ones. but i am looking at some thing else. the map of the city. it has changed so much. that is your house there isn't it?"
"yes it is our house. see there are many red spots around our house. food is so easy there"
"well, let me see. what's this around your house? where were all those trees? and where is that big lake which was just opposite your house?"
"trees? there are no trees around our house now. and that lake has become one big building where many people stay"
"so where do you get food from? don't you eat fresh fruits from trees? don't you swim in lake after coming back in the evening?"
"no we don't. we just press this button when we are hungry and fly there, eat and come back home"

the old one focussed on the map with his sharp bird's eyes. then he took a long breath and started speaking in a serious tone.

"young fellows, do you know what you are up to? i know about this machine much more than you do. this was developed by humans to keep track of waste disposal in cities. what you see in the map as red spots are actually overflowing waste-bins. they use this machine to find out garbage and you think that it is food. how bad! we birds should be proud of eating fresh fruits from trees, not pick waste from trash-bins and eat it as food. and in the long run you fellows will forget the art of flying also. how can you survive without that. see yourselves. you all have put on so much weight and you have no stamina to fly long. and your wings are already losing that seen and shine using all those creams. if you continue like this you will soon end up sick and that will be the end of our glorious tradition."

the little bird was amazed. it had no idea about all these. for someone who was happy in his own world of music, friends and gadget it was an eye-opening moment. all his friends were also silent. finally he took the lead and opened his mouth

"so what shall we do now. we stay in a city where there are no trees like here. where do we get fresh fruits, flowers and leaves? and these people do not allow us to come near their homes too? what shall we eat? should we all stay back here? we simply cannot do that. we love the city even if it has all those problems."

"no little bird, i am not asking you come out of city. but do not fail to follow the practices of a bird. they are cultivated from a long time and a true bird will always stay loyal to them. get up early and fly high and long and see the world. pick up only few leaves and flowers from each tree. when the tree is full of fruits eat only few that you need to fill your small stomach. do not bite every fruit and spoil it. thankfully there are people even in cities who have grown small flowering plants in their terraces. drink the fresh juices from them. and there are people who keep water in a open pots outside their homes. many even have small artificial ponds in their verandas. swim in them in the evening and keep yourself fit. remember birds need to get home before dark and sleep well. a bird which does not wake up early is no bird at all. next time you come here i want all of you to be good birds and follow these rules."

all the young birds understood the wise words of the old bird. they decided to be good birds and threw those devices into the lake. later they swam happily in the same waters, ate some fresh fruits from tree and started their flight back home. from then the birds never same home late and were up before their parents in the dawn. the little bird and his friends today fly and live a happy life together.

# the bird and the fish

what a fine day to fly! the bird thought to itself. there is nothing compared to the early morning sight. the sun after taking over the job from his better-half was warming up for another hectic day. it was the habit of the bird to have a little chat with sun before flying high and wide in the open sky.

"good morning there"
"hello son, great morning. so you are already up and ready? what are the plans for the day?"
"nothing special. will try to keep it interesting"
"good luck son"

the bird spread its colourful wings and leapt from the tree which was its home. his slow and rhythmic sorties were looking like a hanging painting from the sky. the bird came to the shores of the mighty sea and took a deep breath. he always wondered how big the sea would be. to look at the other side of the shore was always his dream. he had thought of flying over it quite a few times. but somehow he was reluctant. today suddenly he felt the urge to conquer the sea. he slowly went to the border of the shore feeling the waves. they were powerful as if warning the bird of any idea of touching them. the bird tried to taste the water. it was sweet, sweeter than the water in the lake beside his home. the bird took few sips and felt energised. without a second thought he rose and started his journey over the giant water block.

no sooner did he start his flight he saw his friends flying.

"hey what are you doing there?"
"am trying to fly across the sea"
"are you mad? we birds cannot do that. the sea is vast and we are weak. come back and join us"
"no i am sure i want to do this. i will meet you in the evening"
"are you sure"
"very much so. bye"

the bird looked up and the sun was smiling with a grin. "good luck son" he winked through the corner of his right eye. the bird took a deep breadth and his chest grew with confidence. the sea was as beautiful it could best possibly be. from what the bird could see the sea was calm inside despite all those waves making noises at the top. the bird could see the plants and the shrubs under the water in the beginning but as it flew more and more it could see only water. it was like a never ending stretch of water poured out there. the initial ecstasy was waning away. soon he started feeling tired. his mouth was drying fast and his wings were not willing to flutter. the strong waves blowing across was not helping either. the bird started looking around for a place to relax and luckily found a rock in the middle out there with its head popping out. the bird landed on the rock and closed his eyes with total exhaustion. after gaining his breath back, he bent over the sea and started drinking the sweet water from it. it tasted heaven. he then relaxed there watching the magic in the deep sea once and the colours of the open sky in the other moment.

the blue of the sky looked polished and shiny over the waves. the water was clear like a cloudless sky and was radiating with the rays of the sun. when he was lost in the divine beauty of the sea something flashed in the sea below. he looked at the sea and saw nothing. after a moment there was that thing again. it was shining and slowly moving towards the rock he was sitting. he stood silent and watched the fish come closer. it was beautiful like heaven and the bird could not keep his eyes away from it. he had never seen something as beautiful and good as this one. it was swaying slowing and had kept its little round mouth outside the waters. the bird had seen many fishes but this one was very different. it is from the other world he decided. not able to control the urge to talk to the fish he said "hi!"

the fish which was slowly trying to get a clear view of the bird was shocked to hear its voice. she was not used to hearing birds speak to her. she had always seen the birds flying high there. she too wanted to fly away from these waters. but her mother had warned her not to get close to the top. it is dangerous for us fishes to appear in open she had said. birds will come down and take you away in their strong beaks her mother had told her. so now when she heard the bird talk to her she felt scared and promptly went under waters. she could hear the bird call her. but she swam deeper and deeper and hid herself among the plants underneath.

the bird was sad. he did not intend to harm her. he was just interested in knowing the fish. she was good and he wanted to tell her that. but seeing the fish diving deep into the water he felt disappointed. though he could swim he could not get swim deep inside the waters. otherwise he would have followed her into the deep sea. he waited for the fish in the rock calling out for her every now and then. but she did not come back. after a long wait he decided to fly back and come next day. he was feeling happy and did not know why. while flying back he looked at the sun who still had that mysterious smile in his face. he greeted the sun and joined the friends for the evening talk. he could not wait for going back and seeing the fish again. it was the first time he dreamt in colours and those colours were familiar for him. yes, they were from the beautiful scales of the fish.

inside the waters the fish was also dreaming with her eyes open. with the first ray of the sunlight touching the waters she reached the rock where she saw the bird. what a voice he had, how beautiful his wings were, what affection he had in his eyes the fish was asking itself. somehow she could not stop thinking about the bird. with the sound of every wing fluttering up there she would raise her head to see whether it was him. and then when she was about to cry he came there curling up his beautiful wings. for all the wait she was doing for the bird she felt shy and hid behind the little grass down the rock.

"i know you are there. come out!"
"will you eat me?"
"you know i won't right"
"but birds always come to eat us. how are you different?"
"i eat fruits and flowers. now please come out"

the fish came out and the bird could not believe his eyes. she was there with all the beauty of the world and he was speechless. he just stood there looking at her. and the fish's state was also no better. she was shivering with the deep sensation of anxiety but was still looking at him with her big eyes without blinking for a moment. time stopped and it was much later both regained their senses. the bird started speaking with the sweetest part of his voice.

"can we be friends?"
"have you ever heard a fish and bird being friends. everyone will laugh"
"i am not bothered about everyone. will you be my friend, please"
"look we are so different. you are a bird and i am a fish"
"so what? you are looking at differences. but as i see we both are same"
"same...how?"
"firstly we both are living beings. the same god made both of us. and then we both have wings. i fly in air and you fly in water. moreover isn't it destiny that we met and liked each other?"
"you are trying to fool me. i am not giving into all these intelligent words"
"ok. your wish. if you do not like me i will fly away"
"tell me why you guys are always interested in naming a relationship before we understand each other"
"....."
"look here. the moment i saw you i was curious about you. but we need to spend more time with each other, understand one other and decide what to do with our lives"
"so what am i supposed to do?"
"nothing. come here whenever you are free. we will chat and share our stories. after

sometime we will be clear on what we should do. remember it is going to be tough"
"hey, are you trying to scare me off! i was the one who dared to cross this sea. i can do anything for you"
"well i have seen how much sea you have crossed. bye for now. catch you some time later"

the fish went back into the sea and the bird was left there waiting. he called for her but she did not come. so he went back home and decided to visit her frequently. they were meeting in the rock, he in the top, she in the waters, laughing and having nice time. the sun was happy to see them and was silently watching them over.

after sometime one fine day the bird decided to propose to the fish. by then they had known almost everything about each other. and he knew that she would say yes. there would be problems but he was confident of braving it. the world around looked so great and he quickly flew to the rock. he called her and waited with all anticipation. time seemed to be moving slow and he called her again. there was no reply. he thought she would be behind the rock so he went round around the rock calling her. no there was no reply. he thought she is playing a game. let me wait he though and remained silent. he was expecting her sweet voice to come anytime. but it was no to. he waited and waited for her voice but heard nothing but the sound of the wind. even the sun who usually was greeting the bird was silent and looking from above. the bird felt something is wrong but was helpless. he could not get into the sea and had to just wait up there. slowly the tears rolled out from his eyes. his voice chocked as he began to call the fish. but there was still no response from the sea.

he waited there for very long time for the fish. he cried, screamed and thumped his chest in vain. looking up in the sky he asked the sun for help. sun said he was in the duty and would return in the evening. later during the close of the day he joined the bird in the rock. the bird was inconsolable by now. all his friends were also weeping looking at his plight. then sun promised that he would go deep into the sea to search for the fish. he said he will comeback the next morning. the bird had to be taken forcibly back home by his friends. the sun went down the sea. in the morning the bird got up early and rushed to the sun to ask him about the fish. the sun was red with shame. he could not find the fish. but he promised he would go back to the sea everyday till he finds the fish. the bird went to the rock and started crying calling the fish.

they say the sea water became salty because of the tears of the bird. the sun till today goes down the sea everyday after work retuning back in the morning. the bird till today gets up early and in the crying voice goes to the sun asking for the fish. the sun and the bird are confident that they will find the fish someday.

# pigeonanada swami

pigeonananda swami was a new phenomenon. he was there everywhere. one could see him live everyday on tv giving discourses on any thing under the sun. his workshop on transcendental meditation was attracting crowds from all over the world. he had established ashrams almost all countries. even in war-torn afghanistan pigeonananda swami had gone with an olive leaf. he was the darling of masses with rich and famous thronging for his darshan.

there was very little information available about swami's early life. but everyone knew that he was born to normal pigeon couple staying in a famous temple. swami used to say that this influenced him a lot as he would listen to chants and prayers when he he stayed in his temple nest as a small boy. then when his wings were strong enough he flew to himalayas. there he met his guru who taught him the secrets of life. he was initiated into sanyasa and given the name pigeonananda swami.

pigeons staying in the wealthy parts of the city donated handsomely to swami. a sprawling ashram was built in the outskirts of city which was now the new power centre of pigeons. politicians not only from pigeon community but their arch rivals the crow community also visited the ashram. no new minister would take oath without seeking swami's blessings. swami had established many professional educational institutes and his clout was increasing by day.

pigeonananda swami had a battery of advisor's among whom were retired senior government officials and career diplomats. though sections of media blamed that swami's ashram was becoming safe heaven for illegal activities, nothing could be proved. whenever there were allegations swami used to laugh and dismiss them. his appeal among film stars was also a reason for envy and there were gossips about his links with some female film actors. swami used to say in his discourses that this is the price he has to pay for being famous.

one day the leader of the pigeon community came and met swami. in the recent budget the ashram was not given enough funds. also the land sought by swami for establishing the new colleges were not granted. so the agitated swami had summoned the leader. the leader was unapologetic and said in firm words that it is because of the pigeon community that swami enjoys the support and not vice-versa.

one of the advisor of swami who had experience in running news channels suggested that he use media to exert pressure on community leaders. in a closed room discussion swami had with close associates it was decided that they hatch a plan to create new identity for swami. pigeons were a deeply divided community. the minority white doves were in powerful positions and this was not accepted by majority of non-white pigeons. swami being a non-white pigeon decided to take advantage of this issue and divide the pigeon community.

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followers of pigeonanda swami were amazed to see their guru's new avatar on tv. swami who previously was appearing in modest dress had turned flashy. he was looking more like a decorated idol ready for pooja. he announced that he is the re-incarnation of the god in present times and had come there to help pigeons and crows retain their rightful place. he then accused the doves of exploiting the pigeons and crows from centuries.

he also announced a special training program aimed at crows and pigeons. being delivered in closet by swami's trusted disciples the course was proposed to be taught in stages. the entry fees itself was huge and every next stage was at least three times costlier than the previous one. the highlight of the course was that once anyone completes the course they would become like doves - completely white without any dark spot.

swami's argument was that doves have captured the power positions because of their whitish colour. pigeons and crows who were feeling low from a long time bought this argument and enrolled to the courses in large numbers. for those who were ready to pay the premium swami himself was taking personal classes. actors who no more got any major roles got a new lease of life by becoming celebrity instructors and were in great demand.

the shrewd calculation of swami was not understood by many. but the senior members of dove community sensed something fishy in this new development. pigeonanada was trying to achieve two things through this initiative. first he wanted to divide the pigeon community along colour lines. then he wanted the non-white pigeons to collaborate with crows who were in large numbers. he was sure crows would agree to this because they were kept out of power from long time.

by forming a coalition of crows and pigeons he would any way be its uncrowned king. that would help him drive away doves from power and take control of everything which he was presently denied. so he was slowly beginning to talk about political issues in his sermons. he tried to evoke the memories of suppressed past of crows. the heroes of crow community were highlighted in the banners in the backdrop of his lectures.

soon swami was openly defying the government and dared those in power to prove his allegations were wrong. he was touring entire country addressing rallies in every major city. his global devotees were funding in huge numbers. media was projecting him as future leader of the country. while there were many debating whether swami should be involved in these issues there were majority out there supporting swami and saying he was any day better than corrupted dove politicians.

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the leaders of dove community were increasingly being worried about the swami's increasing appeal among masses. if things were not checked it was sure that swami would come to power in recent future. then the leaders selected an intelligent and shrewd young dove to hatch a plan to bring the swami down from his cult status. the young dove who was known for planning outlandish things came up with a plan and presented to his bosses.

in the meeting where the young dove presented his plan, many elders refused to go ahead with it. they argued that just because they wanted to bring swami down does not mean they can do anything. but many members who had just started enjoying the power tried to convince them that in politics such things are required. they said that once pigeonanada came to power the first thing he would do is to send all the doves who were in power now to prison.

the elders reluctantly agreed and the young dove started putting things in place. within a few days the world was shocked by an allegation by a young lady crow that pigeonanada had physically abused her for a long time. she was on tv sobing uncontrollably and soon all channels were beaming only her testimony. angry young mobs of crows started pelting stones at swami's ashram. the situation was getting worse by day.

by night there were demands for arrest of swami. after some days of absconding the swami surrendered before the police but soon got the bail. meanwhile the crows had decided to break away from the coalition with pigeons. the leaders of crow community told that they were not in favour of a swami who had abused a girl from their community. in the very next day the dove government announced a slew of welfare measures to crow community.

the young dove who had planned this daring operation was promoted in the party. he was given further direction to see that pigeonananda swami landed in jail at any cost. so the

young dove met secretly with the former crow devotees of swami. then in next days there were allegations that swami had forcibly acquired land from people around. even some pigeons came forward and said that they were forced to pay huge donations to swami. film stars complained that they were threatened to act according to whims and fancies of swami.

courts ordered the arrest of swami based on many complaints against swami. government appointed a high level committee to look at human rights violations in ashram. the swami was put behind bars and could not get any relief even in higher courts. in the next elections dove community was supported by crow community overwhelmingly. break away group of pigeons also provided outside support. now pigeons are actively thinking of starting a new ashram and appointing a new young swami as their new spiritual leader.

# death of a compulsive opponent

there was no apparent reason for him to stand up in the class that day. it was as if someone forcefully lifted him from his seat. so there he was standing in the class for the first time. everyone from his classmates to the teacher were surprised to see him standing there. but once the buzz died down after teachers intervention, he started speaking. after he finished the class fell silent. the dumbstruck teacher gained composure and asked everyone to clap. and so began his journey – a journey which ended in his tragic death today.

today began well for him. how could he foresee that it would be his last day? he went straight to the party office and checked the days newspapers. over the years he had gained reputation in the political circles. more than fighting in the elections he was content being the intellectual person behind the scene. the speeches he drafted were spoken by leaders in big rallies. he had a way with words. in an imaginative way he could phrase difficult political positions. he was a man of uncompromising principles. so the party office had become his first home. it was when he a saw a photo in the newspaper he lost his temper. people who saw him running wildly in the streets were to witness his dead body a few hours later.

he had taken up this issue of opposing the newly proposed integrated development plan in his town. he could see that this was a ploy from the ruling party to appease its workers in the region by giving them huge contracts. the mini hydro electric plant, jungle resort, ayurvedic spa were to attract rich foreigners. he knew this would ultimately enable outside control over the place. the local people would end up losing their land. even though they would receive compensation it would be merge. and since most of them were illiterate they would be absorbed only in menial jobs. thus they would lose their dignity as well as right to the places which they once owned. his party supported him fully in this issue and so he had began a fight against the powerful lobby.

in school it was getting frustrating over the years. he knew he could do well but somehow the numbers in the exams did not reflect that. it was as if teachers were deliberately giving him less marks. and then there came a boy from big town. and in no time the new boy became darling of everyone. yes the boy's language was better then everyone but then he was from city. he could not digest the fact that the new boy was not only topping the class but representing the school in every possible competition outside. then he decided seriously that now its time to act. he got his chance in the class one day.

police were taking the notes and photographs of his dead body. the place was being sealed. onlookers were being pushed away from coming close to his body. the party members were discussing what to do next. they had informed their leaders and were expecting them to come to the spot. after a while they arrived in cars fitted with sirens. they came out of their cars to face the flashes of many cameras. some of them came straight to the scene and some others went to the mikes expressing their anger and sorrow. soon others too joined the mikes. in the background the party workers started raising his name. the leaders unitedly announced that his death would not go wasted. "we will seek justice" they shouted into the mikes before going to their cars with sirens.

he knew that it would be impossible to oppose the plan without local support. but it was not easy to make them understand the reality being the colourful slogans of development. people were already fed up with agriculture as their children had fled to cities. and there was lure of money which was hard to resist. he took the route of street plays to educate the masses. slowly but surely they came into his fold. the initial resistance was overcome and the contractors were unable to start the work. government surveyors were not allowed to measure the land. the ruling party was in a fix. its most ambitious plan was a non-starter and the party workers were seeking early bailout from this mess.

it is not that he had anything against tv. he liked watching spiderman and was hooked to chitrahar and sunday films. he hated when he was forced to listen to news. but his parents

were insisting to listen because it would improve his speaking skills. he somehow found it difficult to follow the newsreaders pronunciation but nevertheless would sit there to avoid the tantrums. the cricket matches and the ramayana were not be missed. but he had to listen how too much of tv would make him couch potato. although he did not understand what it meant it sounded good and so he remembered it.

the party leaders were having tough time. he was a dedicated party man and his death had sparked many questions in the media. the man who shied away from limelight till today was everywhere now. somehow they found a photograph of him holding the party flag. that along with the image of his dead body soaked in blood was used as backdrop in most channels. party leaders were being asked to come to studios and they had to quickly devise a plan to save the face of the party. because in no time everyone would come to know that he was killed because he went there to kill someone. and the person whom he intended to kill was from the opposite party. moreover both were schooled together.

it was not a coincidence that he was put against a direct fight with the boy whom he was opposing from school days in this matter of political importance. he had deliberately chosen to enter into this matter as he knew he had his chance to beat his opponent down for one last time. the initial odds were against him but with his crafted sophistication and acumen he had gained the edge. the entire place with its local chieftain including were behind him. it was becoming clearer that the government had no option but to scrap the project. he was eagerly awaiting for this announcement since this would mean the end of his rival's political future. moreover he also had more personal scores to settle which had build up from his school days.

teacher had just announced that there was a debate competition to be held during the independence day celebration involving all schools from the district. as usual the city boy would represent the school she announced. the topic was usefulness of tv and she asked the city boy to show how spoke in the competition. just when the city boy finished his arguements on why tv was good he stood up and spoke. using the key phrase 'couch potato' he drew a nice counter argument putting together what he heard from his parents daily. and suddenly he remembered her face and spoke more eloquently. for he always wanted to be hero in her eyes.

finally the leaders had a plan in place. they called the opposition party leaders. over the telephone they talked how difficult it would be for both of them if the situation was not tackled now. they all agreed to meet in the tv studio. the guys in the channel were overwhelmed by this news that leaders from both parties will be there in their studio. the anchor was briefed to ignite a spark so that the leaders start fighting with each other. the aggressive anchor became ready to have the time of his life. but the leaders on both sides were determined not to get swayed away. so despite what the anchor tried they maintained their composure. so when the question of his death was discussed they blamed him for the mishap. they advised young people not to get carried away by political theories. "we may be ideologically opponents but we are not enemies" they declared by shaking hands in front of cameras.

it was while reading today's newspaper he saw that photo. the local paper had carried a box item announcing the high profile wedding of the son of the political leader with his childhood heartthrob. while his eyes struck on the photo a sense of deep anger raged in him. he suddenly felt he had lost everything. his pending victory in the integrated development plan suddenly seemed useless. though he may win a politically he was losing a person battle. the entire purpose of his long standing rivalry was being clinically dissected by his opponent. the despair gave rise to bout of strong anger. he was feeling blood gushing through his veins. for him there was no purpose to live anymore. but he would not go down without giving a fitting reply. with a dagger in the inner pocket of his jacket he left hurriedly for his last fight.

he had often seen her listening to the city boy with all attention. before the boy came she used to see him at least once in a day, he felt. but now everything she did surrounded the

new boy. he somehow wanted to beat the boy and catch her attention. his speech in class against the tv was the stepping stone in this direction. from then he made a habit to oppose the boy in whatever he did. so when the boy chose maths, he picked literature. since the boy's father was a political man the boy naturally joined his father's party when he finished his studies. since he had to oppose the boy he dropped from his studies and chose to be in the opposition party. over the years he was obsessed with giving learned and principled opposition views which greatly benefited his party. but in reality he was actually nursing his own ego.

the leaders of both parties were giving interviews to channels continuously. they had a common story to tell. the reason for his death was over enthusiastic political activism they said. carried away by his imminent victory regarding the development plan he was trying to take the issue to its extreme end. so he wanted to kill the contractors and local leaders whom he saw as proponents of this plan. they said he had often talked about how he would finish the problem from its roots. his reclusive lifestyle was cited as proof of his fanatic nature. leaders were advising young people not to take political struggles so seriously as to land oneself in trouble. elder politicians were recalling the days when they would go out with opposition party members for a drink after a hard day at assembly. the security guards of the local leader was arrested for his killing but the lawyers were confident that no case can be made as they had shot him defending their leader.

painting

he had decided almost not to visit the painting exhibition. it was another daunting day at office. the new recruits who often showed much promise initially failed to deliver when it mattered. it would take many months to get the new ones understand the system. and then suddenly they would fly away or shifted to another team. he had been unsuccessfully trying to convince his bosses about the need to sustain the team for longer periods. but they were not ready to see beyond numbers. they would always ask him the type of resources and skill sets required for his team. he was thoroughly against branding people as mere resources. usually his arguments always fell on deaf ears.

that day too he had got a new bunch of people for his team. being responsible for a major multinational he had tough time balancing demands of clients and satisfying his own principles on coding. he had developed a practice that programs written by him or his team should meet the highest standards of aesthetic beauty. for him coding was not merely a mechanical job. it was an art of high order. and like every art form he wanted coders also to worry about the pleasing presentation of the programs. but in an increasingly volatile business environment where there were pressures on early market time and less resource utilizations he had to mostly give up his lofty ideals.

after having failed to convince his team mates regarding the importance of writing code in a systematic manner he had just went to his cubicle frustrated to the core. its time to quit this profession he had thought many times on such occasions. but the unknown world outside and the comforts the present job offered used to make him postpone his decision. today too the idea of doing something adventurous like throwing the resignation and walking out flew in his mind. but in the next moment he knew he did not have guts to do that. so he just switched off from his office world and started thinking about his other big interest in life - paintings. suddenly he remembered that he had received an invitation for an exhibition today.

the curator cum manager of the gallery had sent an invitation for an exhibition by a new artist tonight. usually he would not visit shows by newcomers. because the young ones would either imitate well known names or would paint something which was flat without any deep meaning. moreover the place would be crowded by the noisy crowd of friends and relatives who would not know a thing about art scene. the curator knowing his disregard for such things would usually not send invitations for such events. but now since he received one such invitation he thought there should be something different this time. also when he logged in to his account the curator came on in his pm and requested him not to miss the event. anyway since the day did not go well he thought he would visit the gallery on his way home.

either the person who has painted this should be extremely smart or should be plainly foolish he thought. the paintings were nothing like he expected them to be. they were very moving and had deep layered meaning. each one was carefully put on canvas. the subjects chosen were very removed from usual suspects. there were none showing that the painter was unduly influenced by big names or known schools. the painter had internalised the influences and had used it for individual expression. the one painting titled 'thoughts' made him stand and completely immerse in its vibrant canvas. there were many cues in the painting which showed that the painter had studied human psychology and mystic philosophy deeply. he could not resist the temptation of meeting the painter. his eyes were trying to locate the curator who he knew would help him. in the distance he saw the curator coming to him with a young lady. the curator introduced the lady to him as the painter of the day. still under the mesmerism of the painting he managed to say "hello".

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"hello"

when she heard the voice for the first time she had no idea how far they would go

together. she had lived an adventurous life full of non-conventional career choices. having remained topper throughout her student life she had the option of living a comfortable life. but she had chosen to live her life in her own terms. she had tried photography for some time. then she turned into documentary film making. during a while she was also teaching the tribal children in a remote ashram school set up by a ngo. she had also given classical concerts in prestigious sabhas. if she ever bothered to write her biodata it would look like a set a career options for any youngster. all the while she had retained her best for painting. her deep thoughts and rich experience would finally find its shape and expression in the canvas.

painting for her was purely a private act. though she was very extrovert in everything else her paintings always remained in the closet. not even her family and close friends had seen her complete painting collection. she had always maintained that her paintings were too personal to share it with others. when she had initially showed her paintings to some of her friends they could not understand them. that too was the reason for her to keep her paintings out of everyone's sight. unlike singing she had not received any formal training in painting. she was neither well aware about any major painters or styles. she was just trying to express herself through her paintings. therefore they would be highly abstract and multi-layered.

during her stay in one of the relief camp as a volunteer she was sketching something in her free time. the organiser of the camp was a man who had a penchant for art. he happened to see her drawings and enquired her about that. initially she tried to shrug off but he insisted that she show him her paintings. so she reluctantly allowed him to see them. he did not understand much of them but was convinced that they were special. he was the one who called the curator of the gallery to see whether something can be done about them. the curator after a careful study decided to put them on public display. but she was clear that she wanted only invited audience. curator agreed and so the show had come up today.

the curator had told her that there is this man whose feedback should tell the last word about her paintings. if he likes your paintings you can really consider yourself worthy he had told her. so she was exited and nervous to hear from him. she had seen him come to the gallery and walk through her paintings. she saw that he had stood still in deep meditative mood before the painting titled 'thoughts'. by then the curator had come beside her as if he knew what is going to happen next. so when he turned around, curator pulled her hand and they were both in front of him. she just remembered that there was this perplexed look in his face when he saw her. and as if in different world out there he just mumbled "hello".

she was completely surprised by what happened later. he began to explain the meaning of the work exactly the same way she had visualised it while painting it. there was no little detail he had missed out. she could see the confidence in his eyes while he was talking about the painting. it was as if he had imagined it all before her. for her this was a first experience. no one till now had explored her mind to this depth. she was just listening while he was talking. painting after painting came alive in his words. she felt she had been painting for him alone. the intimacy and satisfaction she felt in his presence was something new to her. she slowly began to talk. and both went on talking till the curator came and reminded them that he had to close the gallery for the day.

in the next days they would often meet everyday. the discussions which were initially limited to paintings spread to other things also. he was surprised to listen to her stories on working in so many different places. she would take him to the places where she would go. though he was curious he was unwilling to join her in her many acts. but painting remained their prime focus. she would often joke that now she is getting unduly influenced by him. no more am i paining what i want she would say. he would just laugh as he knew that this was not true. he knew that she was true strong willed to be influenced by someone. their moving around became well known to all their friends and before they knew they were married. she was complaining that she never wanted her marriage to be

so straightforward. for a girl who liked adventurous lifestyle her marriage was a tad timid she thought.

the initial months flew off within no time. it was only after she started her activities later she began to feel that he was not completely comfortable with things she does. though he was not expressing anything directly she began to see that their lifestyles were exactly opposite. she was someone living on instincts and he was very methodical. she would go wherever she felt like without any second thoughts. he would never go to office even one minute late. he was obsessed with creativity but he wanted a method in that. she was someone who felt creativity cannot be restricted. they both had a common interest in painting but she began to feel that their paths were different. she was a spontaneous creator and he was a logical critic. if she had a mood to paint she would completely forget everything and do only that. he could understand that artists rely on inspired moments but could not understand why it cannot be streamlined into proper process.

there would be no open fights but she could sense that he was not being comfortable with her erratic lifestyle. he would take elaborate measures to see that everything is in right place once he is back home. he would clean everything she had thrown in the kitchen without mincing a word. she would feel somewhat irritated with his behaviour but had kept quite. for her it was ok to keep something here or something there. it would not matter to her if kitchen was ultra clean or not. she wanted to get the things done when she liked and that's it. his obsession with the precise way of living was strange for her and she was even more irritated by the fact that he would do everything on his own without saying anything to her.

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he began to feel initially after marriage that she was very much disorganized. but he would not complain and continue to do everything on his own. but even after many months she would not change and he felt there must be something wrong with him. he began to slowly feel that maybe his way of organised living itself must be wrong. he started to slowly change himself. he started experimenting in the office. he was beginning to excuse the young team mates for their mistakes. he would not insist them to write the code the way he wanted. he began to accept their programs which were totally gross but which would do the job. he had completely stopped lecturing them about the aesthetics of programming. new tools and languages which he had kept aside as not up to his mark started entering his team. though initially his team members were perplexed with his behaviour there was a joke going around that this is the after affect of his marriage to a painter.

she too began to see the changes in him. now a days he was somewhat relaxed with her choices. earlier too she was just informing him in the last moment that she is leaving to such a place. sometimes she would even call him after she reached her destination. then too he was not commenting anything directly but she could make out that he was not comfortable. now she could sense that he had given up all those discomfort. he was ok with things lying around in the house. the unwashed utensils in the kitchen would not grab his attention. he was very much at home with the unfinished painting scattered everywhere. he seem to be changing completely from a man once he was.

her initial reaction to these changes was sarcasm. she would purposefully throw a thing here and there just to see how he reacts. she was surprised that he was neglecting those things she had put in wrong places. she was increasingly becoming restless with his new behaviour. somehow she could not digest the fact that he was trying to change. though she knew that he was doing that for her, she was not happy. she did not know what was wrong. earlier she was not comfortable with this organised lifestyle and now that he is changing she was not happy even with that. she was terribly confused as to what she wanted from him.

then she decided that she would go on a holiday alone to the hills. he was ok with the idea as always. both of them knew that there was no major differences between two. the only

problem was how with two different lifestyles they could live together retaining their own individual choices. he had gone too far in trying to accommodate the differences was her grouse. she thought about this in great detail in solace. having dealt about this issue in great detail in her mind she came back with increased confidence. when he came back from the office that evening she talked to him. the clarity in her thoughts flowed in her words.

"look here, i am seeing that you are trying hard to become like me in your attempt to make this relationship work. and i know that this should be very difficult for you. i want to tell you that all this is not required. as long as we love each other there is no need for anyone to sacrifice anything in a relationship. look at the paintings that both of us like. each of the colours in a painting stands apart. they are independent yet dependent on one another. what if blue became red or red became green. no that would not work. each colour has its own identity and brings its own flavour to the painting. likewise our tempers are different and let it be so. different way of thinking need not be a reason for differences between us. let us live life with love and our differences intact".

the head

he was no different from anyone you see around. yes, he was smart for his age - his teachers and neighbours agreed. others could not notice anything special in him. silence was his virtue but whenever he spoke it would make people think for days. he uttered words in great measure thinking on relevance of each one them as is he were picking pearls from the endless ocean of his inner knowledge. the characteristic nature of the boy was the ever present book in his hand. it was impossible to find him without a book. he was reading all the time. even while walking the distance from his house to school his eyes were firmly fixed on the book in his hand. people wondered whether there will be enough books left for him if he continues to read at this rate. there seemed no fixed pattern for his reading choice, he would read anything he could find.

friends, he had none and fun he did not know. very few including his teachers ever talked to him. his response to some of their simplest queries would be confusing for them. though they could not understand him completely they nodded in silence as if paying respect to his words. with time he developed an aura around him. people would respect him as a knowledgeable boy but none knew for sure what he knew exactly. there was no celebration of his brilliance because he had never displayed them. he did not top the class but the toppers and achievers conceded that the day he decided to do something they would find no place. when he watched the players practice in the ground, they were more careful for they thought he knew all about the game though none had seen him play any sport.

his classmates heard him murmur something in the class one day. he was mumbling something and everyone gathered around him. his voice was becoming louder and soon everyone in the school rushed towards the classroom. the boy was now making some strange noises. some said it sounded like a wolf's cry, some said it was owl's. everyone started naming an animal or a bird they knew. but there was no consensus on what he sounded like. after this incident he stopped speaking altogether. whenever he tried to utter something people beside him would be shocked to hear the strange sounds coming from his mouth. this made him to go more into his own shell and there was absolute silence in him now. he now would talk to people only if it is absolutely essential that too with signs and indications. he also leant to use his eyebrows and smile to talk effectively with people.

meanwhile he began to notice that there was something happening to his body. at first he dismissed it as his imagination but soon it was clear to him that it was really happening. he then decided to test it by walking more in public places and smiling at everyone he met. but none of them appeared to notice any change. when he came back and looked into the mirror he could see it clearly. he failed to understand why his classmates also did not notice such a big change happening in him. soon he understood that the change was directly related to the number of books he read. the more he read, more powerful was the change. soon he started reading more and it began to change rapidly. one day he brought a big box full of books and read continuously till next day morning. then when it was time to go to school, he saw himself in the mirror and got a shock of his lifetime.

his head! it had grown bigger than his body!! he was noticing that his head was growing every time he read a book but he never thought it would overgrow to this size. strangely it was not feeling heavy but the growth was visible. he could see his head so big like a pumpkin out there over his slender neck. he looked like a ugly caricature drawn by an immature cartoonist. his eyes were popping out like big melons. the ears and mouth, however, looked very small compared to his face. how in the earth no one noticed such a strange thing growing out there he thought. his head looked like a huge balloon which was being pumped by his voracious reading. he was now completely numb and did not know what to do next. somehow he pulled enough strength and went to school. that day for the first time he decided not to read any book during his walk from home to school.

people whom he met along the way looked at him strangely because he had no book in his hand. he first thought they were looking at him because finally they were seeing his strange overgrown head. but then he learnt it was because of the book that was missing

as someone signalled to him. he sheepishly smiled back saying his eyes are paining. they gave him a warm smile which made him happy. he started looking around for the first time. he had never seen the beautiful gardens and the flowers which lay in his way. his ears were listening to the sweet songs of the little birds who were flying all around. suddenly he felt that his ears are reacting to the sounds. he became alert and focussed on the different sounds in the way and his ears were slowly beginning to bloom.

in the school he listened to the prayer songs in the assembly attentively and he felt good. he then sat in the company of students who were practising for the singing competition. the sounds of tanpura and tabla was mesmerising. he began to involve himself more into the music sessions in the school and his ears were responding well. he also began to listen to the speeches delivered in the school and slowly stated following the debating clubs activities. his ears were now growing in size. he had not stopped reading but that was not the only thing he was doing now. he was there in concert halls, public lectures and even dance shows. his ears, eyes and head were now in the same size. the only thing which he noticed in the mirror was his small mouth and he now knew what to do regarding that.

"hi" - the guy sitting next was shocked to hear him speak. soon the initial reluctance gave way to warmness and both began to chat. in no time he was seen regularly talking with people all around. he was airing opinions freely on everything and everyone. he was sought after by all students to understand a tough topic and elicit views on their performance in sports or music. he began to speak to all in his sweet voice and soon his mouth fitted well in its place. now he was having a nice balance between reading books, listening to others and airing his views. the head, even though looking over grown, did not look out of place. he now made peace with this giant head and tried to lead a normal life as time passed in quick manner. his boyish days ended soon and now he was a young man.

during some time in this period, he again became conscious of his overgrown head. now he had begun to read more from various devices. the hand held devices and e-book readers kept him engaged for hours. and soon his head began to grow all over again but now even faster. so he decided to cover it in may ways. he initially tried wearing hats. long and broad, round and bowl - he tried them all and was not satisfied. though wearing hats gave him an entry into elite circles of the city he was still searching for a solution. he tried petas and pagadies but they too did not work. he tried skull cap and other scarf but his heart was not content. soon he found that gandhi topi was a right solution. the moment he wore the topi his head felt content and he gained new respect in the society. his head with the topi was attracting more people to him and he was asked to give his views on everything under the sun. if he said "yes" many would get annoyed. if he said "no" many others would feel bad. slowly he learnt that he had to tell such things which could be interpreted as both yes and no. while he was mastering this technique he had another problem.

when he woke up one day, he felt strange sensation in his left hand. he tried to massage the left hand and lo! it came out!! he was holding his left hand separated from his body in his right hand. he screamed but no voice emerged. and strangely it did not pain. he then slowly put the hand back and it started working normally. in a moment his left hand was now trying to remove his right hand and even it came out easily. he began to look bewildered but soon it was all fun. when he was wearing the topi it became easy for him to remove both hands and exchange them too!! his two hands now became so flexible that if he was tired writing with his right hand, he would remove it and put the left hand in its place and continue writing. with this he could write more than anyone and people would simply fall over each other to read his books.

changing the hands were also having an effect in his talks. after delivering a thunderous talk supporting a cause, he would quickly go to the next venue during which he would exchange his hands. then he would talk there opposing the same cause again gaining huge support of his audience. he was being now viewed as a man par excellence but none were aware of his overgrown head with huge eyes, big ears, wide mouth and

exchangeable hands. he grew in stature and was consulted for anything and everything. his advice was sought by home makers to select the best quality rice from bazaar, youth who wanted to learn about love, elders who sought path for heaven, netas for votes, sports persons on dwindling form and religious men on obscure texts. his enduring smile and pleasant talk was winning even the sceptics and he was clearly enjoying his position as solver of all problems.

"are you happy?" - he was shocked to hear this question. a mere yes or no would not suffice. he went silent as the old man who asked this question went away silently with a smile. he asked himself the same question again but did not know the answer. what was happiness? his head reeled with all the information about it. if someone had asked him about happiness he would answer them by quoting the references to happiness in all kinds of books. he could lecture endlessly on how to gain happiness. he could make fun of spiritual centres which sold happiness for a price. he could define and distinguish different kinds of happiness. he knew all about the topic but was he happy? he did not know. introspection was not going to help because it was causing him pain and anguish. suddenly all the things that he had and acts he had done appeared redundant. the more he thought about them the more it was disturbing and distracting him. he felt disgusting that he could not answer this simple question. for he who was answering the flurry of questions, this one appeared puzzling.

he shut himself from the world. weeks and months passed in deep thought but there was no solution in avail. one day as he was moving his hand over his ears they appeared loose. he tried pulling them off and it came out easily. this is getting insane he thought. but then he hit upon another idea and moved his hand over eyes. yes, he could remove them and put them back. after some time he could pull the head apart and keep it aside. when he did that he experienced a strange feeling for the first time. he felt calm inside and everything surrounding him looked peaceful in tranquillity. he made it a practice to remove his head from his body for some time everyday and he felt those moments were the best part of his day. then one day he decided to do it finally and removed the ears, eyes, nose and mouth and kept it aside. finally he moved the head away from his body. then he removed his hands. much time passed and he did not feel the need to put the head and hands back. he did not feel the need to answer to any question or talk to anyone and convince them. he did not feel the urge to write or to exchange his hands.

one day he put his head back after fixing his hands. he put the eyes, nose, ears and mouth back. but now they were back to normal size. he moved his hands over them and they could not be removed from their places. he was now spending time all by himself. people would come to visit him but he cared not for them. one day a young man came in and asked him furiously "does god exist?". he looked at the young man whose head was like a big balloon and he just smiled.

# the last act

the congratulatory messages did not stop coming. why not? after all he had published a story on one the forgotten episodes of pre-independent india. he was being ferried from one tv studio to another and every channel wanted an exclusive. he had already received calls from publishers who were ready to offer him ridiculous amounts as advance to bring a book on this topic. it was getting very unreal for him. for a normal journalist who was on the verge of layoff this was a turning point in his life. what began as a routine beat to the hospital to cover crime report turned to be the most important journey which landed him the glory he was enjoying today.

it was the friendly inspector who had a tipped him of the gang war which had broken in the city that night. when he reached the spot of the crime, he was told that the dreaded criminal was shifted to hospital. the rivals had pumped many bullets into his body. in order to get a photo of the dying crime lord he had rushed to the hospital. the doctors would not allow him to get near the body of the already dead don. while he was about to return from the hospital cursing his luck he saw an elderly couple sitting in the verandah of the hospital. the old man who was equally week and sick was trying hard to carry his wife who was looking nothing more than a pack of bones. unable to see the plight of the old man he moved to help him. they both moved the lady to the bed in the general ward.

he was seeing this couple from some time. whenever he was in the hospital his eyes would search for this old pair. they were both sick but the old lady would not respond to anything to what the old man was saying. she was silently staring at nowhere all the time. today since he had time he started talking to the old man.

"what chacha? why are you taking so much trouble? don't you have anyone who come and help you? children, relatives?"
"we are dead for this world. we have no one to cry for us if we die. that's what worries me the most. if i die what about my wife? "
"don't worry chacha. there is one above who will care for everyone"
"good to listen to that beta. you are a lovely boy. what work do you do?"
"i am a journalist working on crime beat. came here to cover the death of a don"
"you work for a paper?"

the old man went silent as if in a thinking mood. after some time he told the journalist to come and meet him next day.
"why? do you have something to say? you can say it now"
"no...there is a photo that i want to show you. you look like a good man. i am sure you will like it"
"what photo? look here, i have no time to waste. if you want money tell me now only. do not play such tricks"
"young boy, i promise you that i will not ask you for any money. what will i do with the money now. here is my wife who cannot move without any help. and me too am getting closer to death. i just want you to see the photo and that's all"
"ok. but is the photo all about?"
"it's a photo of my wife when she was young"
"why are you showing it to me?"
"beta come tomorrow and you will know"

he had missed going to the hospital next day. he was tired after searching for the story behind the murder. on his way back home he remembered the old man but had no energy left to beat the traffic and drive to hospital. next day morning he decided to visit the hospital on his way to office. reluctantly he moved towards the ward where the old couple were always found. there he did not find the old man. the old lady was lying on the bed with an absent look in her face as always. the duty nurse told him that the old man had left a packet to him. she told him that the old man was there till a few hours ago and had left hurriedly with instructions to her to hand over the packet to him. he received the packet and smiled at the old lady who did not respond. he then went to office and almost

forgot about the packet. the packet was there on his table for a few days until he went to hospital again. the staff there told him that the old man had not returned and the lady was virtually living her last moments until she is shifted to private hospital which has better facilities. then he remembered the packet and rushed back to home and opened it.

the packet contained some old newspaper clippings and a photograph in black and white. one newspaper report spoke of a young singer going to moscow to showcase indian folk singing. the teenage girl was liked by the russians who did it understand the words she sang but were moved by her voice and emotions she carried in her songs, it said. she came from a muslim family and was the singing the songs which womenfolk of her community would sing to celebrate childbirth, marriage and mourn the dead. she had inherited the rich repository of songs from her mother, aunts and grandmothers.

another report carried the grim story of the girl who went missing from russia. the singing sensation was about to return back to india when riots had broken out due to news of partition. she was in russia a few months before india was to win her independence. the report said she had expressed fears about the safety of her family. she feared that if she goes back to india she may be killed. but she was also not sure whether the new nation of pakistan will accept her. the report mentioned that she had told her friends that she would stay back in russia because she felt safe and accepted there. the sudden vanishing act by the lady had created many questions, the report concluded.

he then saw the photo which showed a young teen with traditional muslim dress staring reluctantly at the camera along with few elderly foreign women. the aristocratic ladies were photographed in front of a statue on a cold day. the young lady surely seemed not very comfortable with the guests around her. but the ladies were showing great happiness on their faces. they were tightly surrounding her and it looked like they bumped upon her on their way and got themselves photographed. he looked at the girl in the photo keenly and was able to draw comparisons between the shy teen and the absent sighted old lady in the hospital bed. but then so much time had elapsed and it was definitely difficult to get clarifications from the old lady.

there were many missing pieces in this puzzle. but he had no one to turn to. the old lady in the hospital was not in a position to move, let alone speak. now he had two options. one he could bury the story and stay quiet. or second he could approach his editor and convince him to publish the story based on the evidence of newspaper and photograph. after some thought he decided to write a feature on this and immediately drafted it. soon he was in the cabin of the subeditor convincing him of the need to publish the story in next days magazine section. thankfully for him the next day was republic day and the editorial section thought this would make a good story on troubles people faced during the birth of new nation.

the report in the magazine section was accompanied by the news reports in the main section with the photograph of the old lady in the deathbed. the feisty lady who was known for her aggressive writing style wrote a coverage story calling the government to come to the rescue of the old woman who was about to die. the resulting media frenzy ensured that old woman was shifted to super speciality hospital and promise of best health care possible. the journalist who broke this story was always beside her hoping for her to recover so that he can get more details on her trip to russia. the wide reportage too did not bring in any new issues about the lady. there was nothing else available about this episode. soon everyone moved to other stories. the old lady died soon after and that became a small box news in next days papers. the journalist moved to a new job and plans to take a break and go to russia to learn more on this issue.

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the old man was sitting in his studio which also doubled as his house. the photos on the walls were testimony to the glorious days of his work. he was an acclaimed photographer who was known for his artistic portrait photos. wealthy merchants and leaders of far away

towns would seek his service. he was a regular fixture in government functions. many newspapers commissioned him to cover special events. he was leading a satisfied life combining his hobby and work. his wife was a god fearing lady and both of them were content with their lives. the fact that they did not have children initially troubled them a lot but soon they made peace with the reality.

their lives received many setbacks with the advancing time. photography which was once considered a high art was becoming commoners hobby. portable cameras with auto flash was available cheaply in the market. with film rolls stocked with every kirana shops there was no more the need to ask for specialised services from him. he started the film development service but was not very successful since people did not like the comments he would give to them regarding the photos they had taken. his well intended suggestions were mistaken for arrogance and soon many studios mushroomed in his town. he began to feel the pinch but since they were only two he would manage by the small earnings he would manage to get.

soon he found a new way to stay afloat in the business. while the younger lot was happy with clicking new photos and developing the rolls brought by customers, he turned to old photos. his experience with the traditional techniques and his eye for details made him popular for restoring old photos. people would bring old photo which had their parents standing in a corner and ask him to blow up the picture of their loved ones. he would carefully extract the required face from the group photo and then insert it into the body and then add required attire to the photo. people who had lost their old parents would throng to him and he was giving them invaluable service in the form of a photo so that they could keep it in their homes with flowers adorned on it everyday.

even this did not last long as digital photography took over. the digital cameras made the film rolls redundant and the many studios in the town were now surviving clicking the marriage and passport photos. even restoration of old photos was now done digitally and the end result was much better than his old techniques. plus there was advantage of time in the new method. he would take days together to put together a decent photo whereas the digital studios would do it within few minutes. there were more choices of background and attire in the new studios. in his advancing age and failing health, he had to face new challenges. but unlike last time he did not have the courage nor any intent to face the fight. so he mostly kept to himself attending the sick wife and worrying about their future.

he had the habit of collecting interesting news clippings from newspapers from old days. so there were cuttings from gandhi's call to total satyagraha to hoisting of flag in delhi. all important events and some interesting reports found its place in his collection. one day when he was going through his file he got a rare visitor to his shop. he had with him a photo taken in russia. he said that it was the photo of his family trip to ussr during pre independence days. during the same time he was flipping through the report which said that a teenage singer who was well received had gone missing in russia. he jokingly asked the visitor whether he knew anything about this episode. the visitor denied any knowledge about this and wanted his wife's face to be extracted from the photo and enlarged. he said he was alone and will come after three days but did not return. the enlarged photo and the original remained in his shop and he soon forgot the issue as his wife's health deteriorated and she had to be hospitalised.

in the hospital he was told that his wife would not live long and required more attention which only private hospitals could provide. with his own failing health and poor savings he found himself unable to do so. one night when he took the wife outside he saw the young man who would come there every day. that night the young man helped him to carry his wife back to the bed. on talking to him he found out that he worked for a paper. and suddenly he remembered something. he asked the young man to come next day. he went back to his studio and searched for that photo. once he got it he began to hurriedly look into his paper clippings file and removed the reports about the missing singing star. for a moment he thought whether he was doing anything wrong. but then he convinced himself that a lifetime spent in collecting interesting things and restoring old photos is finally

paying its due. that which was ridiculed by many as useless was now the only way to allow his wife to get required attention.

he took the photo and studied it with all attention. then he removed an old photo of his marriage days. he had then photographed his wife in traditional dresses. how beautiful she looked! he wondered. now was the time to act. he slowly took the group photo and carefully cut out the lady from the photo. then he took his wife's photo and placed it in its place. he made new copies of the photo which now had his wife standing with russian ladies. he then added the finishing touches and allowed it to dry. his artistry and experience was so forthcoming in his work that it was impossible to say which was original and which was his creation.

he quickly put the photo and newspaper clippings in a cover and rushed to the hospital. the young journalist had promised to come in the morning. he handed over the packet to the duty nurse with instructions to hand it over to the paper guy. he then went to his studio with a sense of detachment and carefully cleaned the place removing all the files and photos. he dumped the things in the backyard and lighted fire. now he felt content that he had performed his last act perfectly and walked away with a sense of satisfaction and determination to end it all.

she who loved two men

i was about to return after shopping for the festival next day when i saw her. at first she was looking like anyone in the street, old and frail, wrinkles all over the body, feeble voice and dirty clothes. but her eyes were still the same, i remembered them from my boyhood days. suddenly i stopped and started looking at her. she noticed me and asked "babu do you want oranges?". i did not know what to say and just nodded. she packed a few oranges and said something. i was no more hearing what she was saying. my mind had already gone to those days when she was the topic of our small town. i paid her and came back home. i had no doubt that she was the same woman whom everyone in my place could never forget.

this happened long ago when i was a small boy. our town was a small place with a single street filled with few shops. there was one shop for everything; so everyone knew everyone in the town. i would go to the only school in the town where i would see this woman who would come to drop her daughter. her husband owned the big grocery shop which was frequented by all. i remember those rows of people sitting outside the shop and doing the billing as mother read the items in her list. i was always given something to eat by the owner and that's why i had a nice opinion about him. he was a jolly man calling his workers by some peculiar names and they seemed to like it. the man and his wife looked happy whenever i saw them in temple. one day there were gossips that the wife of the man had ran away with someone.

thought i was young and could not understand the meaning of all these things it occurred to me that something wrong had been done by the woman. my mother and others were throwing tantrums at her for not only leaving the husband but their daughter as well. how can a mother leave her child for someone? they would talk for days. the little girl was now being accompanied by some maid. and after a while she completely stopped coming to school. the jolly man had suddenly grown silent. when i used to go to his shop he would not be seen there. his visits to temple however increased. people around me were sympathetic to the man and i too started feeling that the woman was a wicked lady though i could not exactly tell why.

things were becoming normal and one day the woman returned back. though there was curiosity among all to see her, she rarely came out of house. their daughter was now tutored at home. so there wasn't any chance of me seeing her. my mother used to now scold the man for keeping the wife back at home. how can he accept his wife after she had gone with someone? everyone were discussing. the man himself did not seem to be bothered with all this and used to sit in his shop. however his loud voice had mellowed down and he was no more calling the workers by peculiar names. but he used to make sure i was given something to eat whenever i went there. he even used to enquiry about my studies. somehow i was growing to appreciate him.

one day after the festivities of local deity was completed, there was again a sensational news about the man. the lady had again gone leaving her husband back. the people now started blaming the man for keeping her back when she came earlier. in my house too this issue came up almost everyday. though there was sympathy for the man everyone was branding him foolish. they were also joking that he would welcome her again if she is back. the man himself seemed to have broken down. he sent his daughter to relatives house in a far off place and spent most of his time in the shop. he seemed to have got a new purpose in life. he improved the shop further and when the town started growing he brought in all modern things to his shop. as i grew older i saw the shop growing into a supermarket. the man still was talking to me in good terms but i was feeling that he was not happy. maybe it was just my thinking !

at times the woman made an entry into our conversations. whenever we went to the shop to buy things her story played in our minds. every guest visiting our house was dutifully told this story by my mother. it was like we never wanted to forget her. she was the epitome of wickedness and her story was told every time when the topic of love was

discussed. she stood for everything that can go wrong in love. the man himself now old was not seen in the shop anymore. there were point-of-sale machines which replaced the men to write the bills. young ladies would collect the cash or card. but the man would dutifully visit the temple for which he was the president now. he had gained social status as a big donor to social and religious activities in the town.

it was this lady whom i thought had met in the market. though it was long time since i had seen her i had no doubt that it was she, the one who had left her husband and daughter for the sake of lover. i thought i should go next day also. and the next day too i saw her in the same place. i no more had doubt that it was her but did not know how to approach. i simply came back buying oranges from her. i went again the next day and repeated my trips for few more days. by now she would smile at me and exchange few words. i too thought not to hurry and approach the matter slowly. finally one day i thought of asking her what i always wanted. so i approached her today with determination. she welcomed me as usual and started packing the fruits. then i asked slowly -

"where do you get the oranges from?" she said the name of some place and i said that's why they are not so tasty. i then said the oranges from my town were best in the world and she asked where i was from. after some moments of silence i said the name of our town and her face suddenly became pale. she abruptly started to collect her things and prepared to leave. i called her by name and she was feeling uncomfortable. when i began to talk further she  simply kept her head down and was busy with her work. i stood silently and watched her pack the fruits in a bag. then when she was about to leave i told her i will drop her home. she shook her head in denial. then i asked whether i can come to her home. she was silent. i walked along with her and offered to hold the luggage. she was unwilling but did not ask me to stop following her. after walking for sometime we came to an area filled with filth and dirt. it had huts touching one another. making way among the piles of garbage and loads of people, we arrived at a place which she called her home.

i entered the shabby hut bending myself after her. in the little light inside the place i saw a bed in the corner of a place. in the bed was a figure so old and frail that it was difficult to see him. the old woman called the old man by his name and said in a loud voice why he has not eaten the food kept in the plate. she then made him sit and i saw that he was no more than the skeleton with a life. she went to the other corner which served as kitchen and started making some black tea. all the while she was taking to the man and saying how i had followed her till here. she then came with a cup in her hand and handed to me. i was still in a state of shock. she put some tea in a plate and made the man drink it drop by drop. then she cleaned his face with her saree. holding a cup and sipping the tea slowly she told him "do you know where this boy has come from? our town".

the old man looked at me with a sense of fear and excitement. he wanted to speak something but could not. she consoled him and i could see tears flowing down his eyes. the old woman made him sleep and covered him with blanket which was torn in all places. there was silence in the room. then she asked me "how is everyone in the town?". i knew whom she was referring to but did not know where to start. after sometime i told her about my family and how i came here after getting a job. they were listening but i knew that wanted to know something else. so i told that her daughter was married last year and how the shop of her husband was now a superstore. she listened quietly and the old man did not stop crying. i told her how i used to see her when she would come to school to drop her daughter. she asked to me take a iron trunk kept in the space above my head. i gave it to her. she opened it and there were some old photos in it. there she was as i knew her with her husband and daughter in their house and there were also photographs of her with the man now lying in the bed almost dead.

"i have not seen these photos from years. but today you have brought all those memories back. do you want to see it?" she asked him. he nodded. she walked to him and held the photos close to his face. he became inconsolable and she hugged him while caressing his head. they seemed to talking to each other silently and i did not want to disturb them. after sometime she made him sleep again and asked me "what have you heard about

me?". i was taken aback by this question but told her all things which i grew up listening to. after i finished she turned to him and said "should we tell him our story?" he remained silent. but she started speaking

"i was married to a man who loved me very much. he gave me all the happiness a married women would expect from her husband. we had a loving daughter and everything was going good. and then this man came to my life". she looked at the old man in the bed with affection in her eyes. the old man too was smiling. she continued "he was coming to our street everyday selling vegetables. i would buy things from him and that was it. we would sometimes talk to each other but nothing happened for long time. but things started changing slowly. the small talks became coversations and before i knew i would be expecting him the first thing after leaving my daughter to school. he too started his day by coming to our street first. in the beginning it was all normal but it did not take much time for both of us to realise that we were in love. i was a married woman and he was a vegetable seller. i knew it was wrong but could not stop it. things were getting out of control".

she stopped for breath and i asked whether no one knew about their relationship. she laughed and said "we were not like today's lovers. we did not go to parks holding our hands. we would meet only for a few minutes in a day and thats it. but the love was so strong that those few moments were enough to tell us that we are for each other. my family was close to me. i loved my daughter and my husband was a nice man. but the force of love was so much that one day i openly asked him to take me away. he was terrified and did not come back for many days. finally when i saw him we knew we could no longer continue like this. so we fled the town and went to his place".

"but you came back after sometime. why?" now i was getting curious. with a long sigh she continued "it was he who suggested that i go back. i knew there would be problems; i would have to live with this bad name ; but he insisted i return. we have made a mistake he said and asked me to return. i pleaded with him that i would not go back but rather die. somehow he managed to convince me to go back. so i came to join my husband and daughter. if there were to reject me i will die, i had decided. surprisingly my husband did not utter a word regarding this matter. my daughter was not coming to me. i would stay at home all day crying. but my husband would not talk to me at all. it was the worst punishment they would give to me. then i decided to end my life and wrote a letter to this man. as if he was waiting for my letter he came one day morning and asked me to come with him. i followed him without any second thought. we both knew this was the last chance for us. we went to many places and finally settled down here".

i wanted to ask her whether she regretted her decision. but seeing their brightened up faces i had got my answers. i had grown up with an image of this woman which had now completely changed. whether they were wrong no more mattered to me. they were in love and had carried their entire lives with mutual affection and care. what more can you ask in love? didn't she cheat her husband and abandoned her child? yes she did. but then it was accidental. it is very difficult to decide the rights and wrongs when one cannot go through the circumstances which lead to those incidents. i came back a contented man for i knew the old couple had and are in love and certainly did not mean to harm anyone. it was just that they fell in love in a wrong place and time maybe. but who are we to dictate these things in our lives?