

EDITORIAL

A Heartless Budget

The Union Budget was placed by the Finance Minister before the Parliament on Friday, 16th March 2012. Pranab Mukherjee presented his first budget in 1982 and this was his seventh. The budget has been presented when the whole nation has been reeling under severe price rise and slow growth of the economy. Measures to bring down prices of essential commodities and to redirect the economy towards faster growth were highly expected. But 2012-13 budget may go down in to history as one which could not please most sections of the society, even if it is due to divergent economic interests.

While there is a claim of increased expenditure in the social sector, we have to consider the fact that there is huge shortfall in the spending in schemes like MGNREGA. Food, health, education, shelter, employment, sanitation are the major areas requiring government expenditure. Spending on these has been historically low, but 17% and 22% increase in allocation to education and health and family welfare is surely a step in the right direction even though the absolute figure is much lower than what is required. It is also a major concern that even while only a meager amount is set aside on social expenditure, there is a significant short fall in spending. The spending on food subsidy remaining constant, points to the fact that the government is not seriously concerned about the Food Security Bill. Lack of coming out with anything substantial regarding FDI and the proposed amendments to the Income Tax Act have displeased the corporates. The amendment which says all persons, whether resident or non-resident, having business connection in India will be required to deduct tax at source and pay it to the government even if the transaction is executed on a foreign soil. This is a direct outcome of the Vodafone tax case. Measures are announced to promote higher levels of investment. Higher investment will not convert to higher growth unless the people have higher purchasing power. So it is crucial to examine the steps taken to address that.

Budget confirms its disconnect with ground reality by the proposal for increase in indirect taxes which will be affecting the poor more. The proposals for extra tax generation are one of the highest in recent years. The burden of increase in indirect tax has to be borne by the common man.

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This is a further jolt to people of India who are struggling with current price rise and inflation. Measures of disinvestment of public sector and reduction in subsidies are taken to overcome the fiscal deficit. Aam aadmi and aurat will doubt Finance Minister's concern on fiscal deficit when total tax revenue foregone Rs.5,29,432 crore (corporate and personal income tax plus excise and custom duty) is higher than the fiscal deficit of Rs.5,13,590. Big businesses have been evading tax through Mauritius and Cayman Island route for very long. Indian people will welcome any measure to stop this loss to exchequer. Dilution and deferring of GAAR in this context questions the credibility of finance minister in his claims to support the amendment to Income Tax Act. The time demands stern measures to stop the unscrupulous methods of tax evasion, at the same time immediate amendments to counter some reversals from the judiciary will not be in sync with spirit of stability of law which is crucial for investments. Amendment proposal to be with effect from 1962 shows a lack of vision from a finance minister cum politician with decades of experience who should be knowing the minimum essence of tax planning.

The fact that farmer suicides in India had officially crossed the figure 2.5 lakhs did not tempt the finance minister who had held the portfolio for a long time to devise any solution through his budget. In the 2011 Budget Pranab Mukherjee has slashed the import duty of raw silk from 30% to 5%. We were expecting at least a partial reversal of this for the farmers to come out of the crisis.

When the finance minister tells that fuel subsidy will be reduced by Rs. 25000 crores he does not take into consideration its compounding implications on inflation. Indians bear the brunt of one of the highest fuel prices in the world and we have a per capita income far below the global average. The tax on fuel in India is comparable to that of countries whose per capita GDP is thirty times of that of India. The notion of subsidy on fuel as a major stress on the exchequer does not hold ground. Revenue collected as excise duty and customs duty far exceeds subsidies and under-recoveries from oil companies. The proposal to reduce the subsidy on fuel and increase the tax will have a cascading effect of increasing the price of essential commodities.

It was a major disappointment to the IT industry when its request to reduce the MAT (Minimum Alternate Tax) of 18.5% imposed on developers and units in SEZ went unheard. MAT is the tax on companies that does not have any taxable income either due to tax exemptions or actual losses. MAT nullifies the tax benefits given on SEZs. The retrospective amendment defining 'royalty' to include any payment towards packaged software will have a huge impact on the IT sector. Being effective from 1976 the implication on software companies will run into thousands of crores of rupees. But as a sector which has a high growth rate and higher profits compared to any other industry, the minimum tax proposals should be taken in a constructive context.

Nevertheless, consistency of policy is a major factor which gains the confidence of investors. Simultaneously the interests of IT SMEs should have been protected as a longer term strategy, by the extension of tax benefits for SMEs. Budget lacked some concrete measures to take IT to tier 2 and 3 cities. Doubling of allocation under the National Skill Development Fund (NSDF) to Rs. 1000 crore and launch of credit guarantee fund for skills development is a welcome move.

For the 5.5 lakhs of engineering graduates passing out every year there is nothing promising in the budget. The 66th round of survey on employment conducted by the National Sample Survey Office reflects the decline in employment growth in the last decade. No concrete measures are announced to address these issues. Even when unemployment among educated youth is a reality and the employability of graduates is pathetically low as 25% there are no references in the budget in these direction. Aftermath of such negligence is evident from the increasing number of employment frauds.

A country going through a mean time cannot be blamed for expecting more from a veteran of thirty years and seven budgets. 2.5 lakh suicides and 77% of population earning below Rs. 20 are not enough to move the heart of the finance ministry. The attempt to bridge the fiscal deficit by increasing the financial hardship on the people should have been avoided at any cost.



Obituary



On 30th April 2012, we lost our beloved Rasinesh to a tragic road accident. Rasinesh was one of the founding members of ITEC and has all along been a supporter of all activities that were taken up by ITEC. He was a staunch free software activist and believed free knowledge is a must for a free society. As a passionate technologist, he was a role model for many in the path of self-learning and knowledge sharing. We shall carry forward his commitment to the ideals of a just society and will keep him alive in our memories through our actions towards realising his ideals. With a heavy heart, on behalf of everyone associated with ITEC, let us send out our condolences to Rasinesh's family.

Fun, Fulfillment, and Therapy – The Ugly Indian Way!

by Asha Mokashi

"Today, I feel a sense of fulfillment that I haven't experienced in a long time" - said one of our volunteers. If someone tells you that cleaning up stinking muck and dirt on a footpath and cleaning and painting disfigured walls with your friends is both fun and therapeutic, believe them. They may have just finished doing a spot-fix with the Ugly Indians.

The Ugly Indians are an anonymous group of people who believe that the best way to tackle a problem is by rolling up one's sleeves and getting down to the task, without expecting someone else to do it for you, or passing the blame. They have been cleaning up the streets of Bangalore, for more than 2 years now – one year of quietly doing the work themselves, figuring out the best way to work with BBMP, sweepers, local businesses, and then opening up and asking for volunteers. Featured in the media across India and abroad (the New York Times & BBC included) they have started a revolution which is spreading across the country, inspiring thousands of people to change the way we as a society look at our public places, and our responsibility towards them.

A first taste of spot-fixing

During the first spot-fix I did with them, along with a group of friends, we cleaned up the stinking dirty footpath on Magrath road-Brigade road intersection, which had become a public urinal. At first we thought we would faint with the stench, but once we got around to it, it was amazing how quickly the place became clean – and in 3 hours was transformed into a colorfully painted pretty place!

My friend Antara with her 1.5-year-old son who helped with the painting, were the stars of the day. Emilie, a French intern who was working at our company, was the first person to volunteer, she came and worked along with her boyfriend – and they did not flinch even once. Every single person who came – colleagues and ex-colleagues - made me so proud, with their dedication and good humour. There was so much laughter and fun, and so much work happening at the same time. It was Fun, Fulfillment, and Therapy all rolled into one.



Magrath Road-Brigade Road intersection:

"It was amazing how quickly the place became clean – and in 3 hours was transformed into a colorfully painted pretty place!"

Photos: <https://picasaweb.google.com/106491954401233999557/FulfilmentFunTherapyTheUglyIndianWay>

Video 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PyfUw-Al-4>

Video 2: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4314R8Ykgs>

The first video went viral, and before we knew it, we'd become some kind of minor celebrities. People started volunteering in hundreds to do similar spot-fixes – and the trend continues!

Team CDC has a great time!

Inspired by this, we also did a spot-fix with 15 employees from my company, CDC Software – it was an amazing experience! We spend so much time, energy and money to teach team-work and leadership and plan fun events for employees. But I've never seen such a brilliant example of team-work - no manager or leader, everyone picking up tasks on their own, helping and guiding each other, finding resources without delay, bonding and having fun and smiling and laughing throughout - as in the 3 hours of cleaning and painting a dirty footpath and wall that Friday morning - and that too on an empty stomach! This totally demonstrated the power of buy-in - if you believe in the common cause, no one needs to drive you.



Team CDC @ Work:

"..if you believe in the common cause, no one needs to drive you!"

We cleaned up the wall of Sir Visvesaraya's house, and the dirty footpath next to it, which had become a public urinal – it was so bad that small kids going to school were stepping on to the road into the heavy traffic, to avoid the stench. Months later, the place is still just as clean as we left it!

<https://picasaweb.google.com/106491954401233999557/TheUglyIndiansInspireCDCSoftwareToDoASpotFix>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ea0cNGIQJtM>

The Ugly Indians have built up immense credibility - because they don't preach, they just quietly work and show results and seek no fame. It didn't come as a surprise to me when a friend said that corporate Leadership coaches are screening these videos as a means of teaching how we can bring about change so easily, if we choose to act instead of crib!

Do you want to do a similar spot-fix? Mail theuglyindian@gmail.com.

The Ugly Indians on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Ugly-Indian/123459791046618>

Or visit them on their <http://www.theuglyindian.com/>



Internet freedom and the Nature of Content: A Question of Openness and Integrity

by Gokul Alex

As we blink and think, along with us internet is growing like never imagined. This multi-faceted network has become the other state of existence for humane society. But the rise of internet as the most potent medium beyond the national boundaries has generated unseen challenges for the society.

On one side we have advocates for internet freedom like civil society activists, bloggers, Wikipedia and technology giants and E-commerce corporates. And on the other side we have nation states and conventional media companies voicing concerns over the hate campaigns, political blogging and piracy over internet. As internet offers fathomless opportunities, each one has their own reason to dominate the flow of information over internet.

As this tussle goes on, it is worth understanding the nature of internet as a media as well as a network society. The massive amount of data, maturing commercialization of networks and the existence as a instantaneous communication medium defines the specific nature of internet.

The massive amount of data that is transacted through internet makes it chaotic to human senses. With the parade of innovations in the data storage and transmission, internet communication has become near to instantaneous. The more transient the communication becomes, lesser important becomes the historicity of data. Thus if a political issue is debated over internet, the huge volume of opinions created at that moment can possibly potentially mask the root cause of the issue. This is due to the limited capacity of perception of human mind. These factors can make rational judgement through internet

debates quite difficult.

Despite that when conventional political mobilization becomes next to impossible, internet naturally becomes the best alternative. But there comes a riddle. Even after two decades of inception, internet remains an apolitical entity to a large extent. Debating a political topic over a non-political platform is a tricky issue. Increasing awareness and protest from political society against the hate campaigns in facebook is a pointer towards the chances of confrontation between the existing political fabric and the rising internet based civil society. Already we have entered a terrain of contradictions between global market capitalism and nation states world wide.

Though the hate campaigns appear superfluous and harmless at the outset, they can create imprints in the social consciousness. They can act as the epic centers of civil society movements. As our society has become more and more ideological, symbols have a deeper impact on the political consciousness.

Social media in particular and internet in general advocates openness and transparency. In theory, these terms posits abstract and vague definitions. Only in relation to a specific context, openness and transparency achieves meaning. The information security is a vital issue not only for corporates but for political economy as well as personal life of netizens. But this fact is conveniently ignored by the interests of information capitalists driving social media.

On the other front we can see that internet has become a commercial platform for finance capitalism. We should see the newly drafted Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and Protect Intellectual Propriety Act (PIPA) by US congress in this light. These laws are

undoubtedly driven by motives to commercialize information further and deeper. But at the same time, the corporates like Yahoo, Google, Facebook and Microsoft also thriving by the free use of information created by user generated content. For both the parties 'Data is equal to Money'. Thus the situation demands a rational perspective and impartial analysis.

Freedom is a concept with open knots. It does not

envisage an anarchy of expression, but an urge for knowledge beyond the chains of inequality, money and irrationality. This is applicable in the terrain of technology as well. The people and realpolitik should move in this direction rather than becoming the shadows of the corporate rhetoric and market propaganda.

Political Economy of Information Industry

by Suresh Kodoor

The present era is often described by buzzwords like Information Society, Knowledge Society, Information Age, Global Village etc, indicating the increased role and influence of 'Information' in our social, economical, political and cultural lives. The description primarily reflects the structural change that has happened in the way our 'economic activities' are organized.

Information, knowledge and culture are vital to the human freedom and development. Information/knowledge has always played an important role in all the societies hitherto in the history and it shapes our world view and influence how we understand and react to our surroundings. The key difference now compared to the earlier times however is that the Information has evolved and transformed over time from being simple 'knowledge' to being a 'commodity' and further a 'technology' in itself encompassing all walks and activities of our lives. Space-time compression due to the revolution in the Telecommunication technologies has fundamentally changed the way Information is produced, distributed, accessed and used.

The transition from a manufacturing and product based economy, which primarily produces tangible goods, to an economy which is extensively 'knowledge-oriented' and dominated by information goods has been dramatic. The key drivers for the transition have been the globalization and the emergence of self-acting' transnational finance capital. Under the current system of economic organization, Information has seen increasingly being monopolized, sold and manipulated through restrictive legal regime with a single motive of furthering the profit for transnational corporations. The monopoly rights on

the information acts as the key reason behind the ability of the Information technology companies to amass huge wealth and unreasonable profit. These companies are being evaluated in the 'speculative' market rather than based on the real assets helps them project a highly inflated valuation in the stock market compared to traditional brick and mortar companies. Such speculative evaluations, disconnected from the real asset and economy, leads to the formation of a parallel virtual economy which is vulnerable to the high instabilities and bubble formations.

Information is a 'non-rival' good (The Wealth of Networks – Yochai Benkler),, which means that once an 'information' good is created, it does not require any further resources to create a second copy of the same. ie. The marginal cost of creating copies of already created 'Information' is practically zero. Any number of copies of the good can be created without losing any 'original' quality at zero cost. A software product, once created, takes practically zero cost to produce further copies of the same product. Same is the case with video, music recordings, book, reports etc as well. The other key attribute of Information is that it acts as both input as well as the output at the same time in the information production process. To create new Information, one needs Information which has been created prior. Combination of these two characteristics makes Information an ideal candidate for being a 'public good', most suitable for non-market mode of production.

An economy in which the information sector is more dominant than agriculture or industrial sectors is what is termed as Information Economy. The Information sector is one that deals with creation, manipulation,

processing, transmission, distribution and consumption of Information. Information goods, which may need considerable resources to create first time and takes no cost to reproduce subsequent copies, lead to an economy that is uniquely different from the economy of physical goods. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Industrial revolution fundamentally changed the production process and significantly impacted and changed the way people lived then. The capitalist mode of organizing production forces and the associated wealth accumulation process gave birth to big corporations and business houses. Over time, many of these corporations had grown so huge and had spread across continents that many of them could boast of assets and revenues more than the GDP of many countries around the world. With the rapid growth of operation and size, reliance on Information for business strategy, management, operation and administration became increasingly critical for the corporate. Growth of service sector and the effort to seek global market for the service industry necessitated new means of faster creation, processing and exchange of huge amount of information. Services offered to the far away markets necessitated means of processing and exchanging information fast, not only for providing the services themselves but also for enabling effective control, monitoring and management from/of remote locations. Emergence and rapid growth of global finance capital is the other factor that significantly contributed and acted as a catalyst to the evolution of Information economy. Growth of finance capital necessitated the technologies to enable faster processing and distribution of information across geographical boundaries. Through the relentless operation and execution of capitalist wealth accumulation process till date, huge wealth is now concentrated in a few hands world over. The 'Rich' park their wealth with the corporate and the corporate becomes the custodians of the wealth for the rich and always is on the lookout for further accumulation.

Since the emergence of the Internet as the global information network, it has increasingly started



playing the central role in the businesses, creating new business opportunities, transforming existing businesses and becoming integral part of every transaction in the business and financial world, thus causing the transition to a Networked Information Economy. Internet has tremendously empowered individuals, providing them the computing power and a global medium to express, with a means to create and distribute Information at a fraction of the cost compared to earlier times. Internet has provided a

global medium with huge potential to democratize the creation and exchange of Information which is critical to the freedom and development of the human being and the society as a whole. Internet however has also been increasingly commercialized. The Net is getting more and more crowded with advertisement and marketing and is becoming an electronic

shopping mall. The frenzy within the telecommunication, media and entertainment companies is to determine which firms will control the biggest share of the bits of information that will make their way into homes, classrooms, and work places all over the world. With the telecommunication infrastructure controlled by private enterprises globally and the technology to be guided and pursued based on its profit-making potential, the risk will be high that much of the promises of the global information network may go unrealized.

While the dominant sources of Information production are still the market sources, emergence of global information network has resulted in significant rise of Information production in the non-market mode and has increased participation of individuals in the creation of Information. One of the most important contributions of the global information network is that it inspired a considerable section of non-market sources to become part of the Information production, who otherwise could never have participated in the process unless they could afford huge financial investment.

A fundamental change in the production process in the new economy companies is the transition from the

'under one roof' production to 'distributed' production, fragmenting work into smaller individual tasks and executing the tasks at different physical locations. Global Information Network enabled companies to 'outsource' the fragmented tasks to remote locations across countries in search of low-cost labor and still able to monitor and manage the production process effectively.

Emergence of a global information network has radically changed the way we live, interact and do our business. Information is a core input to the human freedom and development and thus it is important to ask how it is produced, who owns it and who has access to it. Unrestrained access to both, the Information as well as means of producing Information

for every section of the society is critical to the progress of the society and to enhance the 'quality of life' for everyone. Emergence of a global information network has provided a huge opportunity, previously unseen and unthinkable, to democratize the Information production and to address the issues of freedom and justice. It is important that these advancements be utilized more for the public good and the control is vested with the larger public than with the corporate profit interests.

Image Credits: flickr



Inside Job: A Standout Experience

by Feddin Francis

Academy Award winning documentary "Inside Job" was a standout experience; a platform where rich thoughts were shared both by the documentary and a wonderful audience. "Inside Job" looks at systemic corruption in the financial services industry and its close to tragic effect of global economy and life of ordinary people.

The movie comes in five parts logically named and sequenced as "How we got here", "The bubble", "The crisis", "Accountability" & "Where we are".

Charles Ferguson drives his narrative via two prominent themes, which he cites as the reason for the economic recession of 2008. Deregulation being the first and policy making by Wall Street giants the second. The Documentary tracks the evolution of institutionalized economic deregulation from Reagan to Bush era via Burns and Greenspans of Federal Reserve. Academy Award winner, Matt Damon narrates for this documentary, and in his cold tone he describes how sleek it was designed for financial institutions to gamble with investors' money. Greed was the driver, and hence came financial instruments derived out of high risk debts, especially sub prime home loans. These products were dizzyingly complex and kept the picture muddy for normal investors. Credit agencies did their part to make these complex high risk products attractive by providing AAA & AA

ratings. Bankers paid huge bonuses to their traders so as to push these products hence parking huge amount of risk on its investors.

Economic advisers and policy makers of Washington were tightly associated with giants of Wall Street. Their resume shows associations with both Investment



banks and federal agencies which Ferguson refers to as a revolving door between the Wall Street and Washington. A most interesting and controversial perspective of this documentary is with

respect to the involvement of economists/ academicians from Ivy League educational institutes of USA. Premier economists churned out reports and policy recommendations promoting deregulation and were paid heavily by America's financial institutions. The documentary even questions the credibility and direction of economics as an academic stream in US universities.

Sad part of the story is revealed in the "Where we are" section. No significant regulatory measures were

introduced in the post crisis reconciliation period, hence allowing the rating agencies and lobbyists a free hand. Diligent voices of the sector raised red flag to regulate bonus compensation citing conflict of interest. This hardly found any takers. Obama administration which promised to clean up the system re-appointed the same Wall Street top shots as its top economic advisors. Somewhere in between the documentary there is a passing comment by one of the experts, "It's a Wall Street government", and that says it all.

When the bubble burst in 2008, pop was heard all across the globe, and in India it was the IT employees who heard it loud. Hence there was a passionate and instant connect this documentary had with viewers, which reflected in post movie discussions. Audience found resonance with the "Occupy Wall Street" movement and it was one of the prominent themes throughout the discussions.

The documentary set stage for discussions on class equations, exploitation of the working class and the need to enforce systematic support for deserved socio-economic sections. Considerable deliberations were around policy choices of bailout/ reconciliation period. The audience couldn't find any logic in the

choice of protective economic policies while the Govt was converting private debts to sovereign debts in the name of bailout.

The movie screening was organised by the ITEC film club. Inside Job was a natural choice for a film club which aims to promote progressive and socially relevant movies. This was the film club's second movie screening and it attracted an impressive, 50 odd strong audience.

The audience was pretty much a slice of Bangalore from varied backgrounds and age groups which brought its own flavours and perspectives to a comprehensive discussion following the screening.

"Inside Job", by Charles Ferguson is very much from the same school of his previous movie "No end in sight". "No end in sight" was focused on American administration's mistakes in its disastrous Iraq occupation. Both are gutsy, extensively researched, rich with first hand interviews and interestingly paced narratives. Both sympathetically analyze pawns of the game; ordinary people and their life. It's probably worth waiting for his next venture which is not that surprisingly on Julian Assange and the Wikileaks movement.



A Conversation with Mr. Prakash Belawadi - Part II

by Krishna Kumar & Arun Ramachandran

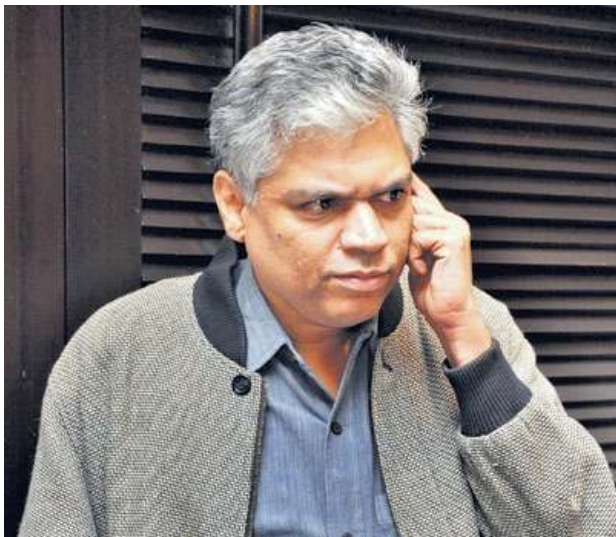
Here is Part II of the conversations with Mr. Prakash Belawadi, the National Award winning film director. We get to hear from him on issues ranging from the involvement of big corporates in the movie production business, his views on theatre and why he feels that the IT wave is just a passing phenomenon for Bangalore.

KK: We see a lot of corporate funding in movies especially in the post liberalisation era. How does it affect cinema? Does it kill creativity? Small budget movies get affected because of this. What is your view on this? The reason we are asking this is even the noted film makers are getting funded by big corporates. Well Done Abba by Shyam Benegal was funded by Reliance and Kutty Srank was funded by Reliance. Such movies do not generate profits.

PB: It depends on what is the purpose of making a film. I've seen Kutty Srank. But with Kutty Srank, because you have somebody like Shaji Karun, he can do

something independently regardless of who is funding him.

Why does a person make a film? There are a number of answers to that question and it all collapses to one thing: so that he can find acceptance. The corporates are saying that - We will deliver acceptance. We will manufacture consent. I've the cable rights to 35 million Indian homes. It is unlike in previous times, where you release the film in the market and you see whether the people like it or not. There is evolution of consent. Then you see whether film is a hit. But now, regardless of whether it is good or not, a film makes money at the



outset. Whether people like it or not, nobody cares.

You think you have got free sources of news or information now. But for the internet, what would be our fate today. We cannot believe anything. What do you do first when you are reading something? You check who is saying this? Who is funding? You have some reality balancing act.

With entertainment it is going to become like that. You will have no idea if the people like what they seen. It is a death of discourse really. That is what is going to happen to cinema once the corporates come in.

KK: Is there anything that you as a progressive filmmaker or a theatre personality, think can stop this kind of a trend.

PB: You must nurture alternative spaces that is outside control, that is outside regimentation, that is outside this manufacturing consent thing, where evolutionary content is there, where the crowd has power of rejection and it is not force fed to them.

People have an illusion of freedom. They even have an illusion of choice. So what we need to create is an alternative space where you have choice. You can screen the film they want and they have the right to reject it. There should be a right of failure. You can show something that people won't like.

AR: Something like independent art is easier to make in the case of a book for example, because the cost of production involved is very less.

PB: I want to correct you. It is not independent. It is dependent. The question is what is it dependent on. In

fact I can say the formula quite easily. If you know the audience, you are fine. But, the 'system' has created a barrier between you and the audience. The 'system' which says I will find the audience for you is really scary.

KK: The new crop of female directors seem quite promising. Be it be Anusha Rizvi and Peepli Live, who really shows reality. Or Nandita Das. They seem to be more into progressive movies than their male counterparts. What is your opinion on that?

PB: Let me take the most negative example of this – Kyun Ki Saas Bhi Bahu Thi kind. The TV industry was struggling to find the formula for TV solutions. Ekta Kapoor got spot on. I think women who get into a position where they can make a film for instance, must be already exceptional women. Because, the society is totally loaded against them. To get to this position to make a film, they must have fought through several things in their family, in their relationships, in their lives. To talk to a funding guy and cut through his prejudices and get to the point of making a film, they must be exceptional already. It is of no surprise that women will make better films. Having said that, the information flow is the same for all of us. Sensitively, it is going to be better cinema, but I am not so sure, whether they will make better cinema intellectually or artistically. It is going to take some time.

KK: You are a person involved in both theatre and films, what do you think, where is the scope for creativity more?

PB: Creativity should be measured against constraints. What is creativity? Let me try to define. Creativity is that thing that manifests in a work when a new possibility has been found with the same number or same quantity of inputs. Lets say I need 30,000 horses for a movie and you bring 30,00 horses. That is the exact opposite of creativity. You reduce the possibility of creativity there. Supposing you are given just 3 horses. In a constraint like that, I can have a person waving the horses go. I can see a doorway. Camera stays in the doorway and I make the horses run around and I show it for say 4 minutes. An illusion is created here. There is a constraint that actually forces the creativity.

KK: The theatre movement in Bangalore. We see only the highly educated class coming to see it. You don't see a people's movement in theatres. In states like

Kerala, we can see a lot of artists coming up through theatre movements like the KPAC. Or IPTA for that matter. These kind of movements, you do not see in Karnataka or in Bangalore. The main theatres in Bangalore like the Ranga Shankara, you see the audience, they are mainly the middle class. Why do you think this is the case?

PB: This has been the accusation of modern theatre - it is very bourgeoisie middle class. And it is. But it is important to look at the zone in which it operates. A play against the exploitation of farmers, if it runs in Bangalore. It will be artificial and bogus. Because it is not something that we experience. I personally do not deal with that problem at all. The plays I deal are about ethical choices, plays on identity, which is a very important question for me. I do not subscribe to the idea that Bangalore being the capital of Karnataka, should be a Kannada city. It leads to great conflict because of that. That is what I experience and that is what I want to experiment with for expression. I have zero interest on doing a play on farmers' issue. However I don't mind doing a TV serial on that. Because my operating zone changes. My audience is not located in one small field where I perform. My audience is located in a more universal zone.

The geography of what you do in performing arts is extremely important. Having said that, I will tell you this – nothing in the mass media, nothing in the performing arts, nothing is equal to theatre. You call it bourgeoisie, you call it whatever you want, it is an extraordinary act of defiance. It breaks all norms because the people who perform even in Ranga Shankara, those people would have rehearsed for about 8-10 weeks, they would have gone every day to rehearsals with some great difficulty to put that on. A reasonably good production would cost you about Rs. 2-3 lakhs. A houseful show at Ranga Shankara would give you Rs. 30,000 at the most. Nobody makes money out of it. No actor would ever get paid. Actors at least will be visible. But for every actor there will be at least two or three others working back stage. Why do they do that? Because they are entirely unsubscribed to practice of acceptance. To suggest that they should do theatre to address larger issues is a prescription from moral science.

AR: What about street plays? What is the potential of street plays?

PB: If you do street plays in Bangalore, I do not see a

great potential. I am being honest. I've seen groups doing it in Bangalore for several years. There is a group which does street plays every Sunday at Lal Bagh. It is benign. It is not dangerous. If you do street plays which makes the Congress Party kill you like they did to Safdar Hashmi, then only it matters. Otherwise why should you do street plays. You have to do street plays to disturb. Otherwise what is the point.

KK: Or may be to get attention. And say we care for you.

PB: That is not a bad idea. But you have to do it in that area. For eg, you went to a slum near Forum Mall and you did a play on how a land shark who sets fire deliberately to slums in connivance to government and builders so that you can clear land for land acquisitions to come. Doing one at Lal Bagh, it doesn't make sense. The thing with theatre is that the audience is everything. It is half of the story.

KK: How do you feel is the level of involvement of Bangalore IT youth in the cultural sphere of the city..

PB: Bangalore is a transforming city. There were four big waves that came. In the '70s, there was a very big wave of electronic industries coming to Bangalore. In the '80s we had the education boom. In the '90s we had the IT and the software boom which was accompanied by a big real estate boom also. In the 1st decade of the new millennium, it is all confusing. We don't know what the future is going to be like. Something else will come and take over. There is ground here to accept change. This is India's first Indian built city. All the others were built by the British. Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai were big cities before Independence. Even the princely cities were there before Independence like Mysore and Ahmedabad.

So, the IT wave would not last here because it does not connect with the economy of the city. It saw as an advantage to disconnect from the city. It located itself outside. It needs very little space for 1 person. If it was in the centre, then the whole culture would have been different. They would have participated in the culture of the city. They built townships and gated communities. So socially also they got disconnected from the city. And they cater to a market which is outside the city. So if they go away, nobody will even notice.

By the time the next generation comes, you have

written the death sentence. They are culturally, socially and economically alienated from the city.

KK: We have this film club which is an initiative from the IT community. What do you feel about this initiative and what is the future of this?

PB: I think it is a great idea. There has to be some sections from the IT crowd who will connect with the city and they will enrich the city. It can happen only with the sort of engagement that you are doing.

When the public sector wave came in the city, they had a similar model to the IT sector. They lived in colonies

close to their workplace. They were also disconnected from the city. There were some people who connected with the city, and they have made it big in the theatre and art circles here. These people took an effort to connect. The initiative of yours is similar.

KK & Arun: Thanks for taking your time out for this interview. It has been indeed a pleasure chatting with you.

And there were none!

by Amudha



2.5 lakh farmers have committed suicide over the last two decades. Imagine a day, there are no farmers left. We will all vanish from this earth. That day may not be far away.

Commuter Rail for Bangalore

by Sanjeev V Dyamannavar

Commuter rail, also known as suburban rail, can draw a large number of commuters - people who travel on a daily basis from cities/ growth centres like Tumkur, Devanahalli, Hoskote, Ramanagar, Doddballapur, Chikkaballapura, Hosur, Anekal, Yelahanka, Whitefield/ ITPL, Kengeri and Bidadi.

This can be achieved within an approximate one hour travel distance to Bengaluru with environmental friendly EMU trains, operating on existing tracks, doubled or quadrupled as necessary, for operation at a high frequency of 20 or more trains per day between each origin-destination pair, at speeds of about 50 km/h and some services restricted to peak hours. Bangalore City, its suburbs & growth centres can be easily connected by improving the required railway infrastructure, as this will cater to the needs of Commuter Rail/ Local Trains for better & improved Public Transport with minimum investments.

Bangalore has the required infrastructure to start Commuter Rail / Local Trains:

- Nearly 300 Kms of Railway Track exists, in and around Bangalore city
- 36 Railway stations exist in and around Bangalore
- 14 Pairs of Trains runs between Bangalore and Bangarpet, Hosur, Devanahalli and Tumkur
- A major part of Railway Track around Bangalore is getting upgraded for Doubling & Electrification
- 30 new stations have been proposed for the Commuter Rail
- Railway track to Nelamangala is ready for Commuter Rail operations
- GoK has assigned DPR work to RITES for Commuter Rail in Nov'2011 & it is ready for submission

Commuter Rail / Local Trains will benefit the following areas and segment of Citizens:

- Professionals working in major IT hubs like ITPL, Sarjapur Road, Marathalli, and Hebbal
- People working in Auto hubs Bidadi & Hosur, Textile hubs Doddballapur, Agri hub Malur, and Industries around Anekal, Yelahanka, Dabaspeth & Tumkur
- Workforce at BIAL, upcoming IT hubs, Health city, Financial District, Aero City, and International Conventional centre near Devanahalli Airport
- Students of major educational institutions like two Universities, several Engineering / Medical / MBA colleges & other institutions
- Big Hospitals, Parks / amusement centres, Shopping Malls located near to the Railway Tracks
- Major upcoming residential areas like Yelahanka, Suryanagar, KHB, Bidadi, Arkavathi Layout, Kengeri, Nelamangala, Chandapur & Hosur
- Commuter Rail will be integrated with Bangalore METRO at Byappanahalli, Yesvantpur, Nayandhalli
- People travelling by Intercity Trains can use Commuter Rail at Yelahanka, Yesvantpur, Hosur, KR Puram, Kengeri, Tumkur to reach their nearest places of residence

The benefits of the Bangalore Commuter Rail Service are multi fold

- With 6 Routes connecting 6 growth centres at a frequency of 24 trains per day per route, 375 kilometres and 50 lakh people can be covered
- Availability of labor for growth of the already established economic ecosystem
- Decongestion of the city, reduced highway congestion, pollution and energy dependence
- Increased efficiency in commute times
- Affordable housing for lower & middle classes
- Significantly lower capital expenditure on transport infrastructure

Proposed 'Namma Railu' Routes

Route	Distance (Kms)
Yeswantpur - Yelahanka - Devanahalli – Chickballapur	60
Benninganahalli - Thanisandra - Yelahanka – Doddballapur	37
Yeswantpur - Benninganahalli - Anekal – Hosur	66
Tumkur/Nelamangala - Yeswantpur – Benninganahalli	83
Yelahanka - Benninganahalli - Whitefield - Malur – Bangarpet	80
Yelahanka - Yeshwantpur - City - Kengeri – Ramanagara	50
Total route length (Kms) 376	

Proposed Map



Despite various studies over 27 years, Bengaluru is still waiting for a full fledged commuter rail service to serve its citizens whilst other similar, large cities like Mumbai, Hyderabad, Calcutta, Chennai, Pune have already been operating such services for a long time. Govt. of India and Govt. of Karnataka should come forward to implement Bangalore Commuter Rail services at the earliest.

