

Ever since first issue in 1966, EPW has been India's premier journal for comment on current affairs and research in social sciences. It succeeded *Economic Weekly* (1949-1965), which was launched and shepherded by SACHIN CHAUDHURI, who was also the founder-editor of EPW. As editor for thirty-five years (1969-2004) KRISHNA RAJ gave EPW the reputation it now enjoys.

EDITOR
C RAMMANOHAR REDDY

DEPUTY EDITOR
BERNARD D'MELLO

SENIOR ASSISTANT EDITORS
**LINA MATHIAS
BHARATI BHARGAVA**

ASSISTANT EDITORS
**SRINIVASAN RAMANI
RAMA SAMPATH KUMAR**

EDITORIAL STAFF
PRABHA PILLAI

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS
**P S LEELA
NEHA BATURA**

EDITORIAL CONSULTANT
GAUTAM NAVLAKHA

CIRCULATION
GAURAAANG PRADHAN MANAGER
B S SHARMA

ADVERTISEMENT MANAGER
KAMAL G FANIBANDA

GENERAL MANAGER & PUBLISHER
K VIJAYAKUMAR

EDITORIAL
epw.mumbai@gmail.com, edit@epw.org.in

CIRCULATION
circulation@epw.org.in

ADVERTISING
advt@epw.org.in, advt.epw@gmail.com

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY
HITKARI HOUSE
284 SHAHID BHAGATSINGH ROAD
MUMBAI 400 001

PHONES: (022) 2269 6072/73 | FAX: (022) 2269 6072

EPW RESEARCH FOUNDATION

EPW Research Foundation, established in 1993, conducts research on financial and macro-economic issues in India.

DIRECTOR
S L SHETTY

C 212, AKURLI INDUSTRIAL ESTATE
KANDIVALI (EAST), MUMBAI 400 101

PHONES: (022) 2887 3038/41 | FAX: (022) 2887 3038
epwrf@vsnl.com

Subscription Rates

Inland Subscription (Rs)	Six months		
	One year	Three years	Four years
Institutions	—	1650	4400
Individuals	650	1250	3200
Teachers/Researchers	—	900	2400
Students	—	600	—

Concessional rates are restricted to students, teachers and researchers in India, Nepal and Bhutan. To subscribe at concessional rates, please submit proof of eligibility from an institution. Remittance by money order/bank draft preferred. Please add Rs 35 to cheques drawn on banks outside Mumbai.

Overseas Subscription (\$US)	Air Mail		Surface Mail	
	One year	Three years	One year	Three years
Institutional Rates				
Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh	80	200	65	175
Rest of the world	200	500	120	300
Individual Rates				
Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh	50	125	30	75
Rest of the world	120	300	75	200

Web subscription (one year)			
India	Individuals	Rs 800	Institutions Rs 1400
Foreign	Individuals	US\$ 60	Institutions US\$ 110

All remittances to Economic & Political Weekly. For online credit card payment for subscription log on to www.epw.org.in

Reinvention of Identity

While Javeed Alam's article 'The Contemporary Muslim Situation in India: A Long-Term View' (January 12) deals instructively with the contemporary Muslim situation in India, it necessarily skips over the predicament of individual famous Muslims, who are targeted by "Hindutva" forces. An examination of two such well known cases might illustrate the larger predicament of Muslims, while also offering a commentary on "Hindutva's" loss of touch with itself.

Quite a large well-organised section of the population, who proclaims adherence to the "Hindutva" cause, seems to be intent on controlling the imagined growth of Muslim influence in India. Nothing else can explain the persistent harassment meted out to such individuals as the non-agenarian artist M F Hussain or the tennis star Sania Mirza, just out of her teens. There is a strong muttered feeling that Muslims, by the very fact of being Muslim, must be anti-national and disrespectful of Hindu culture, and in need of being put down with a firm hand, under any pretext. Sections of Muslim religious leaders have also joined hands in putting down Sania Mirza, which suggests that the fundamentalist leaders of both religions would like to see the Muslims under the control of traditional power structures that exact obedience.

Not that the elderly M F Hussain or the girlish Sania Mirza are a direct threat to the power structures that be. But their media popularity signifies the emergence out of obscurity of Muslims in new spheres of social activity and importance, and it is what such a trend might indicate that is so unsettling, and which leads to such over-reaction from fundamentalists within the power structure. And so, in bizarre coordination, young Sania is accused of being disrespectful to the Mecca masjid, and the Indian National Flag, from two fundamentalist forces, all within a couple of weeks of her entry into the first of the Grand Slam tournaments this year.

The cardinal sin that these two unique personalities have committed is that they both in different ways have stepped outside the identity politics of their country,

and tried to don another newer, defining identity. Hussain has become an internationally respected artist, with a globalised, hence subsumed "westernised" identity, whose paintings are bought by galleries, collectors and museums worldwide with the same eagerness displayed for the works of other western artists. He lives outside the social space permitted to Indian Muslims. Whatever his origins as a cinema-poster painter in Bombay, today his identity is neither merely that of an Indian, nor that of an Indian Muslim, but that of a great living artist of the world.

His approach to India, its culture and its social themes, is a self rediscovery, like that of Vidia Naipaul's or Salman Rushdie's. It is this very rebirth of enquiry from his acquired social eminence that gives his quest a childlike naïveté, which makes us forgive his imaging Indira Gandhi during her Emergency days as a risen Durga. In fact, his very fascination with the wonderfully colourful panoply of Hindu gods gives a clue to his self reidentification as a globally acknowledged artist, acknowledged in his own time, who looks with devotional wonderment at the world around him. His eyes are no longer those of the traditional Indian Muslim, but closer, most probably identical, to those of countless westerners who stream into India to discover the wonders of Hindu mysticism.

Traditional Hinduism, unlike the great Semitic religions, recognises as a 'puru-shartha', or purpose of life that ultimately leads to 'moksha' or liberation, the role of 'kama', which is misunderstood by the vulgar as mere lust, but it stands for the aesthetic realisation of the world around us, the first gateway of life through which we pass as children, before seeking 'artha', or economic welfare, and later 'dharma', or cosmic justice for all life. The artist to be artist finds his 'sva-dharma' in celebrating 'kama'. The great unknown artists of Hindu India, who beautified our temples, devotionally created the figures of goddesses as 'mahashakti', the eternal creative energy of the 'brahman'. It is only in the psyche of the modern, sexually

(Continued on p 82)

(Continued from p 4)

repressed, unconsciously westernised, Indian, that such figures can be confused with pornography.

The tragedy lies in the fact that the persons who set out to defend Hinduism are gazing at Hinduism as foreigners, completely convinced of colonial even Semitic judgments over ancient Hindu beliefs, which many in the modernised “Hindutva” forces find incomprehensible, and hence to be rejected. Perhaps, the long colonial period of foreign rule, that necessarily held Hindu beliefs as inferior, and the even longer ascendancy of ascetic beliefs, Christian, Muslim and Vedantic, have obliterated all emotional connections between Indians who believe they are Hindus and the essences of their ancient culture. Misinterpretation by colonial rulers, we know, reduced temple dances into mere ‘nautch’, rather than recognise their sacral role in sanctifying space through the incarnate figure of the

‘devadasi’. It is this very misinterpretation, for more than a millennium, of the role of the fertile and divine female figure in life that reduced the Hindu woman from a person with equal rights, including those in religious ritual, to a subordinate in her husband’s household. The “Hindutva” forces are now trying to reinterpret Hinduism in line with other modern commonly understood Semitic religious practices, and one feels for the tragic isolation of their position from the roots of Hinduism. It is even more tragic for them that Hussain whom they attack has a surer instinctive knowledge of Hinduism.

Sania Mirza is at the other end of the spectrum of reinvention of identity – she is not rediscovering India, she is escaping into the amorphous globalised world of the sports star. In that world today national emblems are brands that help to sell the country, its products and tourist allure. These emblems are not power symbols to be handled only by colonial

rulers, but to be used with easy and welcome familiarity by all. Old world strictures about skirt length or colonial notions about imperial flags make no sense in this modern world to which she has escaped. Maybe she can buy herself some peace, as undoubtedly Muslim business leaders do today for bottom line reasons.

In a globalised world many people have multiple identities, and some of the most famous, like the globalised steel tycoon Laxmi Mittal, may strategically call themselves Indian. But it is just plain silly to think of M F Hussain or Sania Mirza merely as Indian Muslims. One is mostly a global artist celebrity, the other mostly a global tennis celebrity, and they must willy-nilly accept the responsibilities, attitudes, and cultural practices of their major identity definitions. As side-effects, they bring more lustre to India shining, and also respect for Muslims.

Vithal Rajan

HYDERABAD

Notes for Contributors

Guidelines for writers who wish to contribute to *Economic and Political Weekly*

Special Article

EPW welcomes original research papers in any of the social sciences.

- Articles must be no more than 8,000 words including notes, references and tables. Longer articles will not be processed.
- All papers for the Special Article section must be submitted in hard and soft copy format. The soft copy can be sent by email; alternatively it can be sent by post on a CD. Both the hard and soft copies are essential for processing.
- Articles should be accompanied by an abstract of a maximum of 100 words.
- Papers submitted to the EPW should not have been simultaneously submitted to any other newspaper, journal or web site for publication. If the paper has appeared in a different version elsewhere, we would appreciate receiving a copy along with the submitted paper. If the paper has been posted on a web site, please mention where and when.
- It is essential that the raw data for graphs in the paper, if any, are also provided. This will be used for redrawing the graphs, if necessary. Please do not send graphs in jpeg or any picture formats.
- Every effort is taken to process received papers at the earliest. We receive more than 50 articles every week and adequate time is required for internal reading and external refereeing. It can take up to four months for a final decision on whether the paper is accepted for publication.

- Articles accepted for publication can take up to six to eight months from the date of acceptance to appear in the EPW. However, every effort is made to ensure early publication. Papers with immediate relevance for policy will be considered for early publication. Please note that this is a matter of editorial judgment.

Commentary

EPW invites short contributions to the ‘Commentary’ section on topical social, economic and political developments. Ideally, these should be between 1,000 and 2,500 words and exclusive to the EPW. Short contributions can be sent by email. Authors who send their contributions by email are requested to provide their full postal address.

Owing to the large volume of contributions we receive every week, it can take between two and three months for articles accepted for the Commentary section to appear in the EPW.

Book Review

EPW does not normally accept unsolicited book reviews. However, all reviews that are received are read with interest and where a book has not been sent for review, the unsolicited review is, on occasion, considered for publication.

Letter

Readers of EPW are encouraged to send comments and suggestions (300-400 words) on published articles to the ‘Letter’ column. All letters should have the writer’s full name and postal address.

Discussion

EPW encourages researchers to comment on articles published in the journal. Submissions should be 1,000 to 2,000 words.

General Guidelines

- Writers are requested to provide full details for correspondence: postal and email addresses and day-time phone numbers.
- Authors are requested to prepare their soft copies in text formats. PDF versions cannot be processed by EPW. Authors are encouraged to use UK English spellings.
- Contributors are requested to send articles that are complete in every respect, including references, as this facilitates quicker processing.
- Authors are also requested to provide 10-15 keywords for their contributions. That will facilitate better indexing and search on the EPW web site.
- Where there are major developments in the field of study after the first submission, authors can send in a revised version of their submission. EPW requests authors not to send revised versions based on stylistic changes, addition or deletion of references and other minor changes as this poses challenges in processing.
- All submissions will be acknowledged immediately on receipt with a reference number. Please quote this number when making inquiries.
- EPW posts all published articles on its web site and may reproduce them on CDs.

Address for communication:

Economic & Political Weekly

Hitkari House
284 Shahid Bhagatsingh Road
Mumbai 400 001, India
Email: edit@epw.org.in, epw.mumbai@gmail.com