

**TEXT AND CONTEXT: AN ANALYSIS  
OF P.SAINATH'S  
'EVERYBODY LOVES A GOOD DROUGHT'**

Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

This dissertation titled " *Text and Context: An Analysis of P.Sainath's 'Everybody loves a good drought'*", submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.



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## *Contents*

• Acknowledgements	
• Introduction	1
• Chapter1	5
• Chapter 2	35
• Chapter 3	63
• Conclusion	
• Works Cited	
• Transcripts of personal interview conducted with P.Sainath	
• The Ramon Magsaysay Award Citation on Sainath	
• Profile of P. Sainath (prepared by Prof. Ananya Mukherjee)	
• Sample copy of the <i>Blitz</i> newspaper (out of circulation now)	

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## *Introduction*

The latter decades of the twentieth century have witnessed decolonisation in some of the major countries of the world followed by the establishment of globalising regime. This has meant that there has been a continuing divide between ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ countries. Here, major activity in terms of global policy making is centred in selected countries across the globe.<sup>1</sup> This has meant an obvious level of operation of politics in the way circulation takes place, of social, cultural and symbolic capital. Thus, the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America have been led through disillusionment at various levels of global negotiations. This post- colonial/modern set up has meant that apparently dismantled colonial and imperial set ups still prevail, albeit in distinct forms and manifestations. A major outcome of this context has been the failure of development project in India at various levels. The protectionist policy of the state was dismantled to welcome the “economic reforms” of 1991 carried by the Narasimha Rao government. The immediate context of nationalisation was dismantled to entertain foreign and private capital at various levels of policy making in the country.<sup>2</sup> This meant an obvious level of celebration with regard to desirable levels of modernity being introduced after years of license raj.

However, these reforms have failed on many fronts as far as replacement of role of state is concerned. The colossal failure of India’s development project was adequately understood in one’s capacity as a scholar on coming to terms with a unique literary innovation in post 1991 Indian set up. This pioneering contribution to the field of Indian Writing in English has been made by P. Sainath. The book in question, *Everybody loves a good drought*, has been a consequence of a fellowship that he undertook for the *Times of India* during the years of 1993-95, so as to focus on the lives of majority of deprived Indians in some of the poorest districts in the states of Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh.<sup>3</sup> The area of interest for the researcher/learner in this context is that not only did Sainath manage to complete the project successfully leading to his opening of a new chapter in the history of Indian journalism, characterised by a personal stay with the deprived for about nine months

every year, but he also successfully created a narrative out of the same. This was done through his utilisation of various literary manoeuvres such as roping in an elite publishing house like the Penguin books which led to a series of various aesthetic appendages resulting in national as well as global appeal for the work (Penguin Books accounted for its attractive front and back cover along with the publishing of illustrious biography of Sainath on the opening page as well as publication of national and international reviews earned by the book on its back cover ), his creative narrative strategy of utilisation of emotionally rendered titles, subtitles and personally clicked photographs of some of the most inaccessible areas and provision of an ethical basis to the narrative through effective utilisation of language.<sup>4</sup> The book is a representative narrative of its own kind providing an alternative glimpse to the much celebrated charade of 1991 reforms in mainstream India. The holistic mapping of terrain is done through playing with rules of language so as to convey urgency of situation without eroticizing the nature of deprivation and penury for the consumer.

Not without reason then, this narrative created in the form of a national story led to, as the Ramon Magsaysay citation on Sainath also observes, a major change at the policy making level and modes of reportage in the country. The point then is that a text created out of the aforementioned context (decolonisation, globalisation, development and its failure) reaches the consumer through a certain kind of representative machinery being put in place by the post colonial state. Here, what is active is mediation of the text through market forces which are themselves a consequence of this globalising context. These include national/international awards, modes of operation of publishing houses, global circulation of text in terms of print and translations and an ironic placement of an Indian text on development programmes of foreign universities.<sup>5</sup> This research then finds its appeal in approaching Sainath's text in terms of its location in a certain context- post colonial/modern- which, keeping in cognizance its literary appeal, ethical dimensions and radical potential, doesn't compromise on an analysis of larger global currents which have enabled both its generation and circulation.

The primary source of reading for this project is Sainath's book and secondary source material will be continually culled from reading texts in associated bibliography. The dissertation would be divided into chapters in a certain sense where the first two chapters would be devoted towards analysing both the global and the national as well as the post colonial/modern context that makes the generation of a text like that of Sainath possible. There would also be an analysis of inter-subjective technique utilised by the writer to present an authentic picture to the reader. The third chapter specifically analyses the text in question



in terms of its literary dimensions along with an analysis of representative machinery making its generation as well as spectacular success possible.

Here, a special mention needs to be made of the contribution that Sainath made in aiding this researcher throughout the process of undertaking this study. He had an answer to most of the queries of this researcher and was quick in his responses through mail exchanges, telephonic conversations and a personal interview as well. He even supplied this researcher with some significant writings from some of those newspapers which are not currently in circulation along with documentaries, books and publications authored by him. It becomes difficult for this researcher to ignore the seriousness of the same. Though a consistent ethic that has stayed with this researcher has been to remain conscious of not getting implicated in politics of any of the works or the writer that she is working on. This work emerges out of a completely neutral perspective and its ethical basis is a very distinctive kind of technique that the writer/journalist in question utilises to create a representative body of work on the problems of developing world due to the failure of concerned custodians of fundamental rights of most of these people. If there is a philosophical premise to this work, then it is a search for that basic level of humanism which both the researcher and a text of the nature of *Everybody loves a good drought* tries to put in perspective. Thus, a whole array of philosophical perspectives put in place by an authoritative bibliography along with the intensity of the primary text, material provided by the writer, and a vast range of other academic sources provide a basis to this study.

## *Notes*

1. This divide has been conceptualised in diverse ways in decolonised as well as Cold War context ranging from 'North' versus 'South', 'developed' versus 'developing' and 'first' versus 'third' world reflecting on inequality implicit in global structures of domination and subordination.
2. For further details on this, see Kapila, Uma.
3. For more details on how the book came about, see Sainath ix-xiii.
4. This bent of mind has been provided by a detailed study (unpublished) done on relationship between contemporary market and Indian writing in English, the first of its own kind from an academic point of view. For details, see archive project by the same name done at The Ferguson Centre of African and Asian Studies, OU, UK, by a team of researchers led by Dr Tapan Basu and Suman Gupta.
5. Sainath follows a unique literary strategy for composing this book. Here what is foregrounded in the context of issues like starvation and hunger, prevalence of water borne diseases, failure of credit mechanisms in rural India, failure of panchyats and gram sabhas, prevalence of caste oppression and operation of drought relief scam, is personally experienced emotional trauma due to a stay with these marginalised classes for about nine months for three years. Thus, his strategy sees usage of proper nouns in district specific stories, self clicked photographs and personally furnished commentary based on facts, experience and analysis. This experience stays with the reader as she is denied all forms of cathartic possibilities; see Sainath 31-71, 158-95

## *Chapter 1*

### **The text and its context- the global and the national**

P.Sainath's *Everybody loves a good drought* was first published by the Penguin Books India in 1996. The book is based on a series of reports that he filed for the *Times of India* from some of the country's poorest districts as a consequence of visits which he made in 1993 on a Times fellowship. So, to paraphrase Sainath himself, the idea was to look at poverty and deprivation as *processes* and not *events*. His strategy was both humane and interesting. He decided to visit these districts in those 200-240 days when there is no agriculture in these areas. This led him to a journey across 80,000 kilometres in seven states across the country and a filing of sixty eight reports through a concentration on eight districts (Ramnad and Pudukkottai in Tamil Nadu, Malkangiri, Nuapada, Koraput and Kalahandi in Orissa and Surguja and Jhabua in Madhya Pradesh). He chose these five states on the basis of official poverty figures of 1992. Furthermore, he has transformed the original 800 word reports into chapters of a narrative through additions from a second round of visits which he made to the districts in the form of postscript on subsequent developments. This was synchronised through a humanistic division of these stories in the form of distinct sections and chapters so as to enhance the effectiveness of reportage.<sup>1</sup>

This project is interesting both in terms of its space and history and that is where it becomes significant to understand the aspect of generation of the text. There is enough evidence in the book itself to point towards the disturbing aspects of India's development project. This is where the book and its writer make significant references to the underside of the much celebrated 'economic reforms' in the Indian context in 1991 by the Narasihma Rao government. These reforms might have been the logical aftermath of years of protectionist policy practised by the Indian state yet they have failed to deliver on humanistic grounds where successively inflated development figures obviously conceal the real picture of a majority of Indians. These Indians have been residing as farm labourers, marginal workers and agricultural classes in those corners of India which escape the vision of the elite. Ironically, it is the elite who account for these development figures without contributing to the lives of majority of these deprived Indians. It then becomes significant to take account of

those instances from the book where Sainath explicitly makes a mention of the underside of 1991 reforms as it would enable one to sufficiently contextualise the path of India's development on both global as well as the national level.

First, about the reforms though. The 1991 economic reforms, also popularly known as the LPG reforms, (liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation) were carried so as to take the country out from an unprecedented liquidity crisis aggravated by global developments of the nature of disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Gulf war of 1991. While Soviet Union was India's major trading partner in the Cold War years, the Gulf War of 1991 worsened the Balance of Payment crisis causing a virtual stoppage of remittances from the Indian workers in the Gulf.<sup>2</sup> The BOP crisis was aggravated by India's marginalisation in the world economy and this created the need of a structural adjustment programme where India's integration with the world economy was deepened, tariffs were substantially done away with and a major commitment was undertaken on the part of the country to liberalise its trade regime under WTO agreement along with dismantling of the industrial licensing system.<sup>3</sup> Thus, from the policy making point of view, the reforms might have led to increased GDP figures pushing India out of the serious liquidity crisis, the story in terms of qualitative indices has been very different.

The most obvious indicator of this has been India's placement on the Human Development Index (HDI). This index was developed by Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq. It determines the standard of living of nation and its people on the basis of qualitative indicators such as life expectancy, literacy rate as well as individual purchasing power. The HDI for India continues to be low (the latest figures released for the year 2010 gives India a low ranking of 119 among 169 countries). This is also indicative of the inter-state disparity wherein extreme poverty is concentrated in the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.<sup>4</sup> Sainath also makes a mention of this in his book and tied to it is an obvious failure of the Indian state to be able to provide its countrymen with its basic needs of survival. He explicitly makes a mention of the fact that "India's dismal position in the UNDP's Human Development Index has not improved in the last five years. It has, if anything, fallen" (435). These "last five years" obviously refer to the period of initiation of reforms in the name of national development.

The real picture provided by the writer in terms of changes in the plan outlay in the post 1991 period is disturbing. His observation on low plan outlay in a sector as crucial as health

by successive Indian governments, is followed by the observation that in the post-1991 context, “with the coming of Manmohanomics and savage cuts in health spending, even the paltry amounts tossed at health have shrunk” (26). He also displays a concern on the shrinking levels of GDP contribution in the crucial sector of education (Sainath 48). The realities of globalisation are displayed by an observation of the nature that the, “World Bank is one of the major agents of displacement. Oddly, it is one of its keenest students. Popular resistance to Bank funded projects resulting in forced evictions has grown over the years” (74). This is because institutions of the nature of World Bank, created in the aftermath of the Second World War at events of the nature of Bretton Woods Conference (1944), indicated the beginning of a globalising scenario with a desirability to end economic nationalism, hold good convertible currency and establish economic spheres of influence.<sup>5</sup> The disastrous consequences of this kind of a globalising regime and furthermore, opening sensitive sectors of the economy such as education and health to this scenario, without fulfilling the basic developmental needs of its people, has resulted in a skewed pattern of social progress disturbingly celebrated by both the media and mass opinion. Sainath makes an explicit mention of this in the last part of the book. He observes that all the countries which go through the mandatory regime of globalisation (he specifically mentions the case of South East Asian countries) went through a host of other significant measures such as fulfilling the basic needs of their people of literacy, land reform, health and education (421). He explicitly makes a mention of the fact that while “June 1991 represents a leap in major ways . . . it was not one in more progressive direction” (423). The situation is compounded by the fact that the number of poor in India has increased, availability of food grain per person in the country has declined, the PDS has collapsed, starvation deaths are on the rise, developing economies are being utilised by the international agencies for dumping purposes, basic needs of survival such as housing, drinking water, literacy, healthcare have not been provided to Indians and all this is aggravated by a biased coverage of media ( 421-37).

It is here that one can now analyse the context which generates a text of the nature of *Everybody loves a good drought*. Here one is interested in probing the social, political and economic conditions which provide the ethical and humanistic foundation to this work. The work, as observed earlier, through instances of fact based study, incisive reportage and personal encounter with the deprived, points towards anomalies of opening a developing economy of the nature of India to the scenario of rampant globalisation where insensitivity of international agencies, a disturbing preoccupation with statistical view of human

development, and the consequences of an arbitrary adherence to convention at the cost of ignoring crucial nature of situation of one's own home country has led to a skewed pattern of development. This has to be understood in the backdrop of developments in the latter decades of the twentieth century in the face of events such as decolonisation, globalisation and politics of international relations.<sup>6</sup> This conceptualisation of world history can however be done in a fascinating sociological dimension as well as historical tradition wherein Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* becomes the pioneering study with regard to a seminal understanding of the world events. This is also because Hegel is considered to be the first seminal thinker in the tradition of philosophy who proposed a dialectical understanding of world history. It was Hegel's understanding which encouraged successive philosophers and sociologists to interpret the specific conditions of their society in light of insight provided by him.

However, one needs a philosophical point of insight to sufficiently contextualise Hegel and his understanding of world history. It is here that Alasdair Macintyre's *A Short History of Ethics* did the needful. According to Macintyre, Greek ethic judges a person in lieu of a certain allotted moral and social category. He makes a reference to some canonical Greek works so as to substantiate his point. Thus a person being good or bad is more in light of him being a 'ruler' or an 'artist' or a 'craftsman' (etc) rather than being an individual in his own light. It is here that abstract qualities get transformed into social categories. To quote Macintyre, "Greek philosophical ethics differ from later moral philosophy in ways that reflect the difference between Greek society and modern society . . . The Greek moral vocabulary is not so framed that the objects of our desires and our moral aims are necessarily independent" (81-2). In the post-Kantian realm though, what takes place is a divorce between duty and desire. The significant moment of rupture occurs with the arrival of Christianity. This arrival occurs in the aftermath of a conveniently constructed belief system as well as religion in the Roman society, which despite being an integrative cult in some respects, essentially got appropriated for the fulfilment of political purposes of the Roman upper classes.

As Macintyre correctly points out, "Christianity introduced even more strongly than the Stoics did the concept of every man as somehow equal before God" (110). However what is also significant here is the fact that this individualising ethic got nevertheless diluted in the face of feudal hierarchy put in place by the Middle Ages so that, in Macintyre's own words, "Christianity which in order to provide norms has to be expressed in feudal terms deprives itself of opportunity for criticizing feudal social relations" (112). It is here that modernity

ushered a new ethical foundation to all norms of social life leading to the possibility of conceptualising the Hegelian dialectic of an ideal society. Consequently, it was this Hegelian formulation that could provide one with an acute sociological insight so as to come to an understanding of that complex web of international relations in the twentieth century wherein globalisation led to a certain set of dehumanising possibilities generating a text of the nature of Sainath's *Everybody loves a good drought*. This modern ethic, in Macintyre's formulation, was put forth through the writings of radical figures of the fifteenth and sixteenth century such as Machiavelli and Luther.

A paraphrase from Macintyre would suffice here. According to him, it is in the work of these two writers that there "appears a figure who is absent from moral theories in period when Plato and Aristotle dominate it, the figure of the 'individual' " (117). This is because their thought marks the break from synthesizing and hierarchical nature of the society of the Middle Ages. In Luther's thought, one could comprehend the individualising ethic where religion, instead of being about priestly order and commandments, becomes a matter of psychological faith. In the writings of Machiavelli, this attitude is displayed in the secular realm wherein qualities of an ideal prince are enunciated. Macintyre takes this further by then making a mention of Thomas Hobbes and Baruch Spinoza. Their understanding of necessity of controlling the warring nature of mankind through centralisation of authority and a genuine revival of freedom and reason so as to go beyond speculative tendencies (respectively) laid the foundation of modernity in the Western thought. It is from this point that one could move to the system of new values central to the work of the Enlightenment thinkers Macintyre takes up some significant British and French thinkers of the nature of Locke, Mandeville, Shaftesbury, Hume, Rousseau, Voltaire, Montesquieu (etc) so as to touch upon not just significant political and intellectual debates in Europe during the eighteenth century with regard to events such as the French and the American Revolution, but to also highlight their thoughts on the nature of state, distinct characteristics of human nature and significance of debate between the rationalists and the empiricists. These thinkers take further the break that had occurred between duty and desire/happiness on the advent of modernity. In Macintyre's words: "Happiness is no longer defined in terms of satisfactions which are understood in the light of the criteria governing a form of social life; it is defined in terms of individual psychology . . . Hence the whole appetites of passions, inclinations, principles, which is found in every eighteenth century moral philosopher" (161). Immanuel Kant took this further by placing autonomy at the centre of human existence and a reverence of

subjectivity of mind so as to propose a desirable theory of knowledge which united the claims of Newtonian physics and empiricism of Hume. He provided a desirable foundation to German idealism which was then effectively utilised by thinkers like Hegel and Marx; their sociological insight is central to this study.

Hegel was, in Macintyre's formulation, "culmination of the history of ethics" (192). Hegel began his philosophical exposition with an essential understanding that modern Germans are not like ancient Greeks because in the realm of modernity, "an individual looks to transcendent criteria rather than to those implicit in the practice of his own political community" (192). This comes because Christianity separates a "man" from the "citizen". Hegel has been seminal in the history of philosophy because he views the same through a dialectical mode wherein every successive stage follows from the previous stage. Hegel writes in the tradition of Plato and Christianity with regard to conceptualising the notion of individual salvation but becomes significant in putting forth a linear understanding of world history which should be leading towards an ideal order. This is because in his formulation "spirit" is central to the notion of world history. Also, Hegel's notion of absolute idealism emphasised on the concept of "being" where the Kantian subject had to know its object (that is human reason should possess an understanding of the world around it) so as to come to an inclusive understanding of its own identity. It is precisely here that history, as a compendium of individual psychological formulations, was characterised by both progressive and dialectical movement.

It is also here that the contemporary scenario of international relations as well as global inequalities traces its history back to Hegel. It was this Hegelian formulation which Marx effectively utilised in his critique of capitalist Europe. Though Hegel's ideas are distributed all across his body of work, one would be closely looking at *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*,<sup>7</sup> as this is that work which sufficiently provides one with an apt sociological insight as per the requirements of this study. His exposition on world history begins with classification of historical writing into three categories- original, reflective and philosophical history (12). He then clearly defines the movement of world history determined by rationality. The "philosophical history of the world", in Hegel's formulation, "concentrates its attention on the concrete spiritual principle in the life of nations, and deals not with individual situations but with a universal thought which runs throughout the whole" (30). It is this principle of rationality which also determines the functioning of the world in adherence to the



divine providence. He also explicitly acknowledges Christianity to be that religion which has revealed the nature and being of God to man.

In this light, what is significant for Hegel is that world history belongs to the realm of “spirit”. Hegel makes it a point to raise the “spirit” above then being a merely abstract category so that what one is instead interested in is the spirit of nation. His ideas can be best summarised in his own words when he says that “the world spirit is the spirit of the world as it reveals itself through the human consciousness . . . And this world spirit corresponds to the divine spirit which is the absolute spirit” (52). He then makes an effort to reflect upon this “spirit” and man’s freedom across early human history wherein Orientals knew that *One* is free (this freedom in Hegel’s formulation is merely that of a despot and hence the freedom in itself is characteristic of savagery and brutal passion), Greeks and Romans knew that *some* are free (as here the freedom was simultaneously characterised by the existence of slavery), and finally *our* individual consciousness of each man’s freedom which arose for the first time with the rise of Germanic nations and Christianity (I have utilised Hegel’s emphasis). As per Hegel, the process of evolution of nation is historical and natural as well as characterised by the movement of spirit towards self realisation and self knowledge. Also, when the creation of nation is complete, the dichotomy between its essence and real existence is overcome.

It is from this point that Hegel also begins to theorise about his dialectical understanding of history wherein if national spirit kills itself, it does the same so as to move to a higher form which is also its antithesis and this movement is directed by the spirit itself. Hence, “the universal spirit as such does not die; it dies only in its capacity as a national spirit” (61). The idea of transition is central to the history of philosophy. Hence, world history is nothing but a collective movement of various forms of national spirit, where even the negative of human condition occurs as a pre-condition to attainment of totality as well as the absolute idea. It is here that “the aim of all education is to ensure that the individual does not remain purely subjective but attains an objective consciousness within the state” (94). It is from this point that Hegel also finds himself in a position to make an equation between religion and state where the attainment of absolute idea is tantamount to recognition of one’s religious identity; his point of departure here as well is Christianity. Hegel’s perspective is again Eurocentric where within the historical tradition that he is working in, he equates the attainment of ideal religion as well as world spirit with Christianity. This is done in the aftermath of observance of inadequacies of other early religions such as that of the Orientals and the Mohammodens.

An important point made by Hegel in this work (as it was to be developed in his other works as well as to be taken up by later thinkers such as Marx) has been that the highest point in the destiny of a nation is attained when it has made a systematic understanding of its laws, justice and ethical life. It is in the last section of this work titled “Geographical Basis of World History” that Hegel makes some of the most interesting observations with regard to not just the purposes of this study but also provides an early point of insight into the genesis of contemporary events accounting for global inequality, like colonialism, basis of differences between the three continents as well as articulation of a Eurocentric perspective which was to justify all unfair acts which were to be committed in the coming ages. He makes a mention of “The New World” which is a reference to the continent of America; the “Old World” in Hegel’s formulation is a reference to the three continents of Asia, Africa and Europe. The discovery of America has been an extension of the “spirit” of world history, while the continents of Africa and Asia represent civil society in its last two stages respectively; of brutal savagery (Africa) and a step ahead of it but below the ideal order (Asia). Hence Hegel’s conclusion that “world history travels from East to West; for Europe is the absolute end of history just as Asia is the beginning” (197). Hegel concludes with the fact that the attainment of the world spirit belongs to the realm of secular knowledge and Europe has been playing a central role in the same regard.

Hegel’s observations were to be central to the work of Karl Marx. Marx however went a step ahead in utilising Hegel’s theory pertaining to both individualism as well as social progress in the light of capitalist developments in Europe. This is because he writes around the mid nineteenth century and in one of the early phases of his career became fascinated with Hegel’s writings and especially the notion of Hegelian dialectic. He also became involved with a group of radical thinkers known as the Young Hegelians who were circled around Ludwig Feuerbach and Bruno Bauer.<sup>8</sup> However, what is significant to observe is that while Hegel analysed developments of the world from an idealistic paradigm where Platonic and Christian frameworks could be effectively utilised to propose a notion of world spirit and dialectical understanding of history, Marx’s witnessing of developments around him compelled him to be specific as well as take resort to radical options of the nature of popular journalism as well as necessary organisational activities. His analysis was also based on a common observation of deprivation at the human level wherein a vicious circle of money and commodity fetishism was instrumental in creating alienated wage labour. The work that one

would be looking with regard to the purposes of this study would be Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.

This work has been ignored by some of the critics on the premise that not only was this one of the early works of Marx but was written in a slightly generalised way as compared to his later specialised texts of the nature of *Das Kapital* and *Communist Manifesto*. However, this study consults the work for these very same reasons. This is because not only has this work been written in a humanist vein making it apt for non-specialist readers but in its brief analysis of issues like alienated wage labour, money, relations between different classes and adequate appropriation of the Hegelian dialectic It provides the correct foundation for the analysis of twentieth century developments which are central to the question of generation of Sainath's text. Marx's analysis also begins on interesting grounds. He observes that in an essentially capitalist scheme of things, a worker suffers more than a capitalist. Also, "the accumulation of capital increases the division of labour and the division of labour increases the number of workers" (24). The greatest misfortune in a political economy is that it considers labour as commodity.

Also, when labour begins to exist as commodity, alienation of a worker gets more highlighted as labour begins to exist outside him as objective existence. The only arena where man finds himself actively operating is in the domain of those animalistic activities (such as eating, drinking, and procreating) where, "he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal" (71). The ideal order that Marx then propounds is the communist order which not only rids the society of its contradictions but does the same through the Hegelian mode of progression from one stage to its opposite. It is in this ideal order that mankind could experience "the positive transcendence of private property as the appropriation of human life" (97). This for Marx is the necessary return from one's social and familial existence to basic questions of human existence. Also, the entire domain of savings and capital accumulation is ultimately connected with the annihilation of leisure principle in one's life. This is also an issue widely taken by Charles Dickens in the popular critique of the Victorian society which he put forth through his fiction in the nineteenth century.

In the latter half of the text, Marx clearly articulates certain ideas which provide a base to this study. These ideas pertain to his understanding, appreciation as well as critique of the Hegelian dialectic in the light of newly emergent contours of political economy. He

specifically looks at two of Hegel's works- *Phanomenologie* and *Logik* (Marx's emphasis). Marx's starting point itself, as clearly laid out in this work has been, "how do we now stand as regards to the Hegelian dialectic?" (133). He points towards a disturbing tendency of critics with regard to lack of awareness about the relationship of modern criticism to the Hegelian philosophy as a whole and especially to the Hegelian dialectic. He regards Feuerbach as being the only one successful amongst the Young Hegelians<sup>9</sup> "who has a serious, critical attitude to the Hegelian dialectic and who has made genuine discoveries in this field" (135). Marx takes on Hegel on very specific grounds of premising his philosophy on abstract idea attained in the aftermath of negation of negation which nevertheless has positive essence inherent in it. This according to Marx is extricated from the real history of man.

This is best displayed in Marx's observation that "Hegel's standpoint is that of modern political economy. He grasps *labour* as the essence of man . . . he sees only the positive and not the negative side of labour" (141). As per Marx, Hegel's positive achievement (also leading him to become a seminal thinker in the history of thought) is the fact that he enabled one to concentrate on positivity of the absolute idea. However, rise of specific political and economic conditions necessitated a rereading of the Hegelian dialectic. It is the nature of these specific conditions which are highlighted by Friedrich Engels in the usefully written appendix to this work. He emphasises on the avaricious foundation of the mercantile system where dead accumulation of capital furthers building of society on activities of similar kind. Also, this new political economy is a consequence of an unfair social and economic system consolidating itself in the eighteenth century, getting trapped, as it were at the stage of antithesis thereby giving rise to modern factory system as well as slavery. To quote Engels, "We gladly concede that it is only the justification and accomplishment of free trade that has enabled us to go beyond the economics of private property; but we must at the same time have the right to expose the utter theoretical and practical nullity of this free trade" (164).

The disturbing aspect of the modern political economy with the rampant aspect of free trade is that competition between individuals has become fierce, seeping down to the level of societal structures, where ills like dissolution of family and child labour have been consequences of this system. Also, between the workers themselves, some are employed and some are thrown out of employment on an arbitrary basis. It is here that one can extend an argument that one has been making so far in the interests of this study. An evolution of social structures with regard to Europe was instrumental in ushering those forces of modernity

which privileged individual subjectivity, reason and learning through experience. However, the developments like the invention of the steam engine initiating the Industrial Revolution, celebration of ideals of liberty and equality through the French Revolution and declaration of the rights of independence through the American War of Independence led to that kind of centrality of individualism in political, economic as well as social theory which bordered on excess. As the values of capitalism begun to overthrow those enshrined in feudalism, the principles of free trade and monopoly led to the parallel event-- colonialism.

The history of colonialism cannot be traced to a single date or event but what is significant in this regard is that the various travels of the European explorers beginning from the early fifteenth century, the discovery of the New World and establishment of trading companies in the East along with a mad scramble of power between different European powers led to an aggravated situation around the nineteenth century wherein almost more than one half of the world was colonised. This situation reached its highest point around the nineteenth century. It is here that Vladimir Lenin's *Imperialism-The Highest Stage of Capitalism* provides a fascinating point of insight with regard to the purposes of this study. This work is seminal in that line of thought which places at its centre, the unfair nature of global relations in the twentieth century yielding the possibility of generation of a text like that of Sainath. Lenin's work takes J.A Hobson's book *Imperialism* as his chief reference point. In a brief preface to the French and German Edition, Lenin makes pointed references to the contemporary events of his time. These range from his observance of expansion of railways and industrialisation to mention of devastation caused by the three imperialist powers of the world-Germany, Japan and the United States and consequent humiliation to countries carried in the name of Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and Versailles. Lenin points towards the disturbing nature of modern capitalism where competition gets translated into monopoly.

He very specifically points towards the origins of modern capitalism in the twentieth century where what one witnesses is a movement beyond free competition into the realm of cartels and monopolies. It is here that the yoke of even a few monopolists becomes fearsome. It is this practice of cartels and monopolies which is giving rise to the phenomenon of a single collective capitalist. To quote Lenin, "the beginning of the twentieth century marks the turning point from the old capitalism to the new, from the domination of capital in general to the domination of finance capitalism" (57). Also, almost in a continuation from where Marx left, Lenin observes that in this newly emergent capitalist structure, "export of capital has become the typical feature" (76) and for countries like Britain, which made its expansion

between the years of 1860-80; the principal spheres of investment have been their colonies itself. It is developments of this nature which mark the beginnings of a world market.

Interestingly, as per Lenin's observations, "after 1876, colonial possessions increase to an enormous degree, more than one and a half times" (98).

Thus, it is from here that one could move towards a crucial linkage which would take one to the inequality implicit in globalisation and international relations which is central to the aspect of generation of Sainath's text. During the high phase of imperialism beginning from the mid nineteenth century, one could surmise a new form of development happening at the global level. This development pertained to strengthening of nationalism of a new kind wherein nation state came to be placed at the centre of international relations. With developments of the nature of mass literacy, a fall of monarchical regime and some form of an attainment of understanding with regard to political, geographical and ethnic sovereignty, nation-state became a logical development before the era of globalisation. An impetus to this development was also provided by the incidents of the nature of revolutions in England and France within Europe which had begun to emphasize on the rights of the individuals and political sovereignty. It would suffice to look at three seminal theorists who have made contributions in this direction. An understanding provided by a reading of their works would tie up with the post World War II context providing an immediate global context to Sainath's text. One would then begin with a pioneering study in this direction- Ernst Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism*. This work is an extension to some ideas streamlined in this direction in one of his previous work, *Thought and Change*.

Gellner's starting point is culture in an agrarian society. As per Gellner, agrarian societies which have existed for over five millennia have been characterised by that central fact, "where almost everything in it militates against the definition of political units in terms of cultural boundaries" (11). Even if there were political units of some kind, they existed in two forms- local self governing communities and large empires. Majority of members in these communities are agricultural producers and they are governed by a minority. The movement from agricultural to industrial society has been a movement in terms of progress and division of labour. It is in this new form of social order "that monopoly of legitimate education . . . is more central than monopoly of legitimate violence" (33). Also, the transition to nationalism can be explained by a change in political, economic and social structures of the world wherein agrarian production gave to industrialism and, this in turn, led to further

developments of the nature such as imperialism and decolonisation; each of these successive stages meant a change in conception of both national identity as well as nationalism.

Also, interestingly, the difference between agrarian and industrial society is that while the former is Malthusian seeking population growth, the latter curbs the same and instead focuses on economic growth which in turn leads to both division of labour and class conflict. He also mentions that in the light of evolution of societies from hunting gathering, agrarian to the industrial, one cannot rely on Marxist complacency of having a solution to societal ills. In his conclusion, Gellner clearly states that his aim has been to depict that nationalism can only survive in a specific form of society, which, in its modernity, has enough apparatus to sustain its literacy, fluidity and mobility. It is here that the history of both industrialism and nationalism cannot be extricated from Protestantism. Here one can now move to a unique theorisation of national identity in context of twentieth century developments through Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. This work arose out of immediate developments in the context of late twentieth century such as "armed conflicts in Indochina which provided the immediate occasion for the original text of *Imagined Communities*" (Anderson xi).

As per Anderson, inadequacy of theories on nationalism notwithstanding, it becomes significant to relook at questions pertaining to nationalism, as "since World War II every successful revolution has defined itself in national terms- People's Republic of China, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and so forth-and, in so doing, has grounded itself firmly in a territorial and social space inherited from the prerevolutionary past." (2). His starting point in this regard is about the common observation as per a cultural change in the European context pertaining to decline of dynastic realms, fall of monarchy and changes in languages and literatures. Both the newspaper and novel, through their advent as eighteenth century carriers of modernity, made some kind of representation of "imagined community" possible. Both these events are connected to the printing revolution that happened in Europe beginning with the publication of the Gutenberg Bible. He conceptualises these developments in the name of "print capitalism". Also, as per Anderson, in the context of Western Europe, developments of the nature of administrative vernaculars, the Reformation and proliferation of print gave rise to a national consciousness while simultaneously causing dethronement of Latin. This is succeeded by developments of unique nature which would then have an impact on how nation was to be conceptualised in modern times; an idea central to this study.

In both the Americas and Europe, political and geographical sovereignty came to the forefront like never before. In the case of Europe especially, two characteristics that stood out were- centrality of national print languages and a radical model provided by the French Revolution. This was coupled with developments in the field of literacy, communications, industry, commerce and state machineries. Thus, by the nineteenth century, a model of independent national state was available which was based on the populist character of early European nationalisms. In conjunction with developments like imperialism, there was a growth of “official nationalisms” inside Europe about the mid nineteenth century. Understandably then, in the words of Anderson, “the First World War brought the age of high dynasticism to an end” (113). With the arrival of the League of Nations, what became the international norm was the “nation state” and in the post Second World War context, this tide reached its full flood. The significant point made by Anderson about twentieth century nationalism is the fact that it is of a modular form, premised on print capitalism and also borrowing from previous available models of nationalism where apparatus of functioning of the state is organised on a linear scale so as to balance the needs of global parameters as well as national identity. To put it in the words of Anderson himself: “the ‘last wave’ of nationalisms, most of them in the colonial territories of Asia and Africa, was in its origins a response to the new style global imperialism made possible by the achievements of industrial capitalism” (139). Thus, nations and national identity are more of a consequence of an “imagined community” where a feeling of oneness has been a sociological consequence of developments of the nature of print capitalism, increase in literacy, development in tools of mass communication and adherence to constitutional principle of citizenship. Where it was first a consequence of different developments in both Europe as well as America, it became a different category altogether in the decolonised and globally transformed context.

One would expand on this idea through the utilisation of E.J. Hobsbawm’s *Nations and nationalism since 1780*. The central point that is of interest to this study is that Hobsbawm traces the growth, development and transition in the conception of nationalism through changes in the world economy. Thus, nineteenth century European nationalism arrested capitalism at its initial stages. With the incoming of the twentieth century and developments of the nature of First World War, establishment of the League of Nations, the Russian Revolution, an undesirable form of ethnic nationalism in the 1930’s and 40’s through countries like Germany and Italy and consolidation of an international world-economy during the 1950’s, the idea of nationalism had to rethink its erstwhile political and geographical



connotations to now familiarise itself with newer meanings where national identity wrestled with global identity on an everyday basis.<sup>10</sup> Thus developments in Europe such as the Peace of Westphalia, the French and the American Revolutions, the collapse of the Russian Empire after the First World War, along with an increase in intensity of movements of decolonisation across the globe transformed the meaning of a nation state and by implication, nationalism. This now became a means of reconciliation with the global identity in the twentieth century.

It now becomes imperative to trace those developments, of both historical and sociological kind, which led to the global set up of the mid twentieth century. This is because one needs a global overview to come to the national context which would then tie with the aspect of generation of Sainath's text. We have already sufficiently observed that how this text arose out of the failure of 1991 economic reforms in India on humanistic grounds. A sufficient global and national context would enable one to observe closely that how this text foregrounds these issues with regard to failure of development project in post colonial India. Anthony Giddens has a fascinating way to provide a sociological insight into evolution of societies and an understanding of modernity; both these issues are of central interest to this study.<sup>11</sup> Giddens classifies pre modern societies into four categories- hunting and gathering (from 50,000 BC to the present), agrarian (from 12,000 BC to the present), pastoral (from 12,000 BC to the present) and traditional societies (6000 BC to the present). Giddens then goes on to point that the ushering of modernity has been synonymous with the advent of industrialisation which has also placed 'nation-state' at the centre of international affairs.

These, in Giddens' formulation are, "political communities divided from each other by clearly delimited borders rather than vague frontier areas that used to separate traditional states" (41). He further attributes two chief criteria to the arrival of forces of modernity- developments in the field of thought and secularization of human outlook. In political and economic terms, the consolidation of democracy and capitalism respectively came to define the modern state apparatus. Globalisation then became a logical extension to all these developments. It was concerned with consolidation of information, communication as well as technology networks in the post Second World War era, mushrooming of transnational corporations in distinct parts of the globe with base usually being in the rich countries of America, Europe and Japan as well as consolidation of an international economy with prevalence of global commodity chains, presence of global governmental as well as nongovernmental organisations. This meant that the post Second World War context was characterised by excessive proliferation of devices of the nature of computers, phones and

internet as well as strengthening of regional cooperation through incoming of institutions related to Europe (the single European market), Asia Pacific (the Osaka Declaration) and North America (NAFTA). This is coupled with strengthening of global institutions of the nature of the United Nations and the European Union.

It is here that Giddens' formulation of global inequality is central to the needs of this study. He mentions, in agreement to what one has been observing so far with reference to of Sainath's study, that the institutions of the nature of the World Bank, the IMF and the UN, have an inappropriate methodology which guides them in the direction of distribution of resources.<sup>12</sup> Giddens explains this by observing that the World Bank utilises that form of classification of national income for countries across the globe which rely on average income and hence is at the risk of ignoring income inequalities in these countries. Similarly organisations of the nature of the IMF relies on voting rights of its rich members and, ironically through its policy of providing debt to poorer countries of the world ends up precipitating their crisis as conditions of repayment are unfair and impractical. Similarly, some of the major decisions with regard to the world affairs are determined by the voting rights of five permanent members of the UN. Some of the organisations of the UN itself like the WTO have been criticised for heaping unfair terms of trade on the developing countries. Also, in the era of global governance, participatory democracy has become a norm with technology and power coming to aid so as to help those countries which have been struggling to attain democratic freedom. Within a globalising context, poorer regions of the world have been exposed to the onslaught of hunger, famine and environmental damage and things like weapons of mass destruction and terrorism are being exported all across the globe.

In this context, the decade of 1990's was a turning point in the history of the world. One would be utilising Francis Fukuyama's path breaking study in this direction, *The End of History and the Last Man*. Fukuyama's study initiated an entire array of positions in the global scenario with regard to the direction of world history. This study utilises him since, his concentration on the decade of 1990's and the events which led to the same, provides a global framework to come close to the national context which would enable one to understand the circumstances of generation of Sainath's text. Fukuyama's starting point is the unexpected collapse of communism during the decades of 1980's as authoritarian state models put in place by both Soviet Union and China during the beginning of the twentieth century embodied a victory of the Marxist-Leninist principle for the rest of the world, more so for the newly independent countries. The collapse was all the more surprising since it happened in



the face of victory of the principle of liberal democracy which now began to resemble a stable political model through its consolidation in the countries of both Europe and the United States. This provided an obvious ethical foundation to unstable regimes in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The champion of this principle of sovereignty was the United States which also began to determine what kind of action should be initiated against those countries which defy the principle of democracy through institutions preaching global governance such as the United Nations.

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The model of authoritarianism which came into practice in the twentieth century was very different from the one that was in place in the nineteenth century. It was inspired by the authoritarian realm put in place by countries like the Nazi Germany and Soviet Union during the Second World War. While the Soviet Union collapsed in the 1990's, incidents of the nature of violent crushing of peaceful protests by the Chinese Government at the Tiananmen Square in 1989 represent that why the world did not have any model of authoritarianism to look forward to by 1990's. However, Fukuyama also problematises the model of this newly emergent liberal democracy wherein, "newly democratic countries of Eastern Europe face wrenching transformation while the new democracies in Latin America are hobbled by a terrible legacy of economic mismanagement. . . The liberal revolution has left certain areas like the Middle East relatively untouched" (44). However, the only political model that has survived till the end of the twentieth century in Fukuyama's formulation has been that of liberal democracy. Here, what is interesting is that the model of "Universal History" which Fukuyama puts forth begins with Christianity moving onto Kant, Hegel, Marx, and is reinterpreted by Alexander Kojève in the twentieth century. The advent of forces of science and philosophy of Enlightenment provided an impetus to this rationalising of history.

Fukuyama also mentions the case of the some of those very successful Asian economies (particularly of East Asia and Japan) which have successively utilised principles of liberalism, democracy and free trade to argue against the favourite tune of dependency theorists of why Marxist principles should be more relevant in the face of twentieth century context of both colonialism as well as neo-colonialism.<sup>13</sup> The next point of insight that he provides with regard to the interests of this study is that in this neo-colonial age, the principle of democratic liberalism has created those institutions which thrive on the basis of international agreements and global governance. Fukuyama's study is ambitious in terms of its range of ideas from the realm of Western philosophy as well as observance of those historical and contemporary events which get concentrated in the final victory of liberal

democracy in the 1990's. However, his analysis would now take one to the developments during the Cold War decades which are instrumental to the needs of this study, pointing as they do to the consolidation of various forms of inequality at the global level. This would then take one to national context where India's social, political as well economic history would enable one to deeply explore the necessity of a text like that of Sainath.

Before proceeding to these developments, though, it is significant to contextualise the colonial encounter, as it lies at the centre of global inequality in the twentieth century. Also, it is the realities of colonialism which gave rise to the subversive tendencies inherent in the gestures of the developing world in the decolonised context. My main point of reference in this regard would be Robert J.C. Young's *Postcolonialism-An Historical Introduction*. He points out that if by the time of the First World War, Britain controlled one-fifth of this world's population, then the independence of India in 1947 marked the beginning of the process of decolonisation which is now more or less complete. The history of colonialism itself began around 1492 and is "a history which includes histories of slavery, of untold, unnumbered deaths from oppression or neglect, of the enforced migration and diaspora of millions of people – Africans, Americans, Arabs, Asians and Europeans, of the appropriation of territories and of lands, of the institutionalization of racism, of destruction of cultures and the superimposition of other cultures" (4). Young then largely expounds on the centrality of Marxism to both postcolonial theory as well as decolonisation in the twentieth century (this would be of more interest in the next chapter).

What is of interest here is that he points out that the United States was the only country in the twentieth century which, despite being a democracy in the real sense, proceeded with colonial expansion. This case is different from other countries such as France (which did not give its women voting rights till 1945) and Britain (which was only a democracy in the sense of rule of a certain section of elite). However, if there was something that posited a successful alternative to Western model then it was Lenin's revolutionary Marxism and his shaping of the Russian Revolution on the same grounds. Thus, according to Young, it was "Lenin's Comintern that in 1920 offered the first systematic programme for global decolonization . . ." (10). This became a necessity in the face of complex history of colonialism which stretched back to the Roman Empire. With the discovery of ocean routes and new modes of navigation, ships became the key to sixteenth century European empire which now spread across the world-its unexplored as well as the Eastern territories. Young also pointedly distinguishes between the colonial and the imperial model. While the former developed more in terms of

settlement by individual communities or a trading company in a haphazard way and was the norm till the nineteenth century, the latter became a logical and ideological necessity and was at its peak in the twentieth century, as also mentioned by Lenin in the aforementioned analysis.

According to Young, the first “empire” in the modern sense of the term was created by the Spanish and this was largely pre-capitalist modelled on the Roman and Ottoman Empire of directly taxing the subjects. Also, as he further mentions, there was little sense of a British empire as an administratively structural unit till the division of British dominions into Colonial and Indian empires (25-6). Despite the presence of many colonial powers during the nineteenth and the twentieth century, Young himself chooses to focus on Britain, France and the United States, as their actions largely shape the inequality implicit in the global politics of the twentieth century. Also, it was not before the 1880’s and the 90’s, in the aftermath of internalisation of race as cultural ideology, that the policy of British imperialism came to be regarded favourably in the British culture (Young 35). Young fascinatingly elaborates on the concept of neo-colonialism in the interests of this study. According to him, three major changes that happened on the advent of decolonisation were undermining of the erstwhile imperial powers, a process complete by the time of the Second World War; the emergence of an alternative bloc of power represented by the temporary victory of revolutionary Marxism in countries like Soviet Union, China and Cuba and setting of new benchmarks in international relations with the unparalleled rise of the United States (44-5).

In Young’s words, “the term ‘neo-colonialism’ was introduced in 1961, just four years after Ghana had become the first African colony to win its independence. It was soon elaborated in theoretical terms by the Ghanaian leader, Kwame Nkrumah, whose book *Imperialism: The Last Stage of Capitalism* dates from 1965” (46). It is here that Young reminds the reader about a point that Nkrumah also mentions. In an age of rapidly increasing inequality, Western nations choose those centres as their realm of activity where state can control input and production costs. This possibly is one of the reasons of the rise of countries like China as manufacturing hubs of excellence. Here what one witnesses is “the control of technology; the increasing number of often unsupervised nongovernmental organisations, frequently funded by US foundations; pressures of population control; the relocation of production so as to escape western environmental controls; the targeting of third world countries for the export not of surplus western consumer production but of product regarded as unhealthy . . .” (48). This argument is similar to the one made by dependency theorists<sup>14</sup>

who would be used in a short meanwhile. Interestingly, dependency theory also provided the economic context for the non aligned movement of the third world in 1955 (Young 51).

However, Young quickly reminds one that the irony of this situation was that this sort of moral standard failed in terms of an alternative economic vision as some of the major countries of Asia and Africa (India being a major example in this category) opted for measures like import substitution and each of these countries had to face a major moment of liquidity crisis in the later decades. This dependency theory has been subject to critique in term of its homogenising tendencies of grouping the countries as “core” or “periphery”, yet some of the ideas proposed by its practitioners suit the needs of this study. Also, Young’s summary of anti-colonial struggle in distinct parts of the globe is interesting for the purposes of this study. While white settler colonies of the nature of Australia and Canada came to have forms of participatory government by the white settlers themselves, in the “non white exploitation colonies”, the case was more complex with an alternating reality between government by a section of the native elite (India being an example of the same) and strong traditions of anti-colonial resistance (164). Interestingly, according to Young, “after Lenin, anti-colonial Marxism was largely the product of the Third World” (168). Also, the Bolshevik Revolution did not bring about any fruitful consequences immediately as the only colony to have gained independence between 1917 and 45 was Ireland (178). This anti-colonial thrust also got implicated in the post-1945 Cold War context where United States was competing for its own spheres of influence in continents like Asia and Latin America while “African anti-colonialism was largely directed against white settlers and old imperial powers” (180).

Interestingly, Young says that, “after 1956 and China-Russia split, much of the Third World allied itself ideologically with China . . . Mao’s peasant revolution laid the basis for the tricontinental reorientation of Marxism in Fanon, Cabral and Guevara” (188). The globalisation of anti-colonial resistance was more effective in launching of Havana International rather than Bandung Conference, which more than being some tangible political alternative to the politics of Cold War, succeeded in creating a foundation for realities like the “New International Economic Order” at the UNCTAD Conference which served as the basis for the Group of 77.<sup>15</sup> He also particularises the anti-colonial struggle in different parts of the world. Herein, Latin America has been the earliest to encounter the “post-colonial” moment in the sense of anti-colonial resistance to Spanish and Portuguese imperialism in the nineteenth century. Interestingly, instruments of the nature of Monroe Doctrine<sup>16</sup> have

subjected regions like Latin America to neo-colonial ventures of the United States. The ramifications of the same have been articulation of endeavours of the nature of Latin American Dependency theory and the Havana Tricontinental (Young 193-4). In the context of Africa, “nationalism, perhaps more than any other anti-imperial movement was always distinguished by its internationalism and the degree to which it was developed cooperatively by Africans in Africa, America, the Caribbean and Europe” (218). This was also evident in post-First World War efforts of the nature of revival of Pan African Congress (Young 220).

It would now suffice to make a reference to some of Samir Amin’s works so as to come close to the crisis of Cold War decades in a better manner. Not only are his and Wallerstein’s works required for the purposes of this study but they also facilitate one to understand the kind of global inequality which has had some serious dehumanising consequences in the developing world. In *Imperialism and Unequal Development*, Amin writes “as an extension to Lenin’s arguments which have already been discussed above and also with regard to “rebirth of Marxism, which itself flows from the radicalization of anti-imperial struggles” (1). This, in Amin’s formulation, is linked to the struggle for socialism and crisis in capitalism.<sup>17</sup> In this scenario, a significant development was that the Russian model now came to be overshadowed by the Chinese Communist model. Amin’s starting point in the book is with the sociological changes that have occurred in Western Europe in the history of civilization. In this formulation, “the nature and status of pre-capitalist commercial profits are a category of profit distinct from commercial capital” (40). Amin’s starting point for obvious reasons is Karl Marx and his formulation in the nineteenth century.

Paul Baran had already provided a starting point to the dependency theorists through his path breaking work, *Political Economy of Growth*, where he analysed the underdeveloped economies on the ground provided by the renowned economist J.M. Keynes and the twentieth century critique of Marx’s notion of “surplus value” .<sup>18</sup> Thus Amin’s beginning point is that in the history of societal transformation from feudalism to capitalism, “what was peculiar to Europe was the relation which emerged between the development of commercial bourgeoisie and the disintegration of feudal relations” (53). According to him, the interesting aspect about the twentieth century world system is that the third phase witnesses the industrialisation of agriculture under the dominance of monopoly capital. Also, as per him, debates around imperialism were only revived in the 1960’s. This was the beginning of its second crisis as it had been emptied of content since the 1930’s (111). His exact formulation is worthy of observance: “Imperialism has undergone two expansionist phases- that of its installation

(1880-1914) and that following the Second World War (1945-70)- a first major phase of crisis (1914-45) from which the Russian and the Chinese revolutions emerged and is now undergoing a second major crisis” (113).

An absolutely significant observation that Amin makes is the fact that the present system of unequal development and exchange is leading to destruction of traditional economic systems due to unfair demands of the world system such as exports and manufactured products, disappearance of traditional patterns of culture and lifestyles, especially in the underdeveloped countries and a history of modernization of agriculture in the Third World being done at the cost of dispossession of peasantry (163). An extension of these arguments is made in the later revisionist work, *Class and Nation: Historically and in the Current Crisis*, conscious as it was about “clear failure of revisionist Marxism and with the cultural revolution in China, of the elaboration of a global alternative” and also an exploration into “third world in general and Africa and the Arab world in particular” (viii). This book is premised on the idea that “class” and “nation” are two of the most important concepts in contemporary debates. This analysis is based on twentieth century interpretations of Marx’s historical materialism. This becomes all the more necessary since the time of Marx as “participation of peoples in Asia and Africa in capitalist and socialist history has enriched historical materialism” (4).

In this work, Amin’s proposed schema is about division of human societies into three consecutive stages-primitive communism, tributary mode of production and capitalism so as to reach to the fourth stage of communism (4). His thesis is interesting based on ideas like capitalist mode being based on exchange value and tributary mode being based on use value, peripheral location being a necessary prerequisite for capitalism to consolidate itself and Europe fulfilling these conditions at a crucial juncture in history. What is of significance to this study is Amin’s observance that the imperial break marked the first point of crisis in rising progression of capitalism and a beginning of its crisis. This is because capitalism might have headed to continue after 1880 but it did not bring into emergence any new centres. Lenin’s success lay in the fact that he could “formulate the strategy for the socialist revolution in the new conditions of unequal development within the imperialist system” (206). Also, the Soviet experience has credibly demonstrated that socialist transformation does not necessarily lead to communism (207). Working as he is within the centre-periphery model, he then talks about the other two phases of both imperialism and capitalism leading as they do to the two world wars and its aftermath when the scene has already shifted from



Europe to the United States. Since Amin is writing in the Cold War days, he concludes on an ambivalent note about the “centre” which is the capitalist model put in place by the United States and “periphery” which is the (problematic) socialist model put in practice through states like Soviet Union and China waiting for a model that might claim to planetary consciousness in the last decades of the twentieth century.

The latter decades of the twentieth century created that kind of a context where the rise in oil prices became possible due to a global rise in industrial production leading to increased energy demands and the basic policy issues were led towards “who will gain the competitive edge in the new technologies of microelectronics, biotechnology and energy resources” (Wallerstein 63).<sup>19</sup> Tibor Mende’s *From Aid to Re-Colonization* is the correct point to take one into the national context necessary for studying Sainath’s text. This text, which possibly arose out of Mende’s experience of working with the international organisations in the face of developments of the twentieth century, argues for a humanistic grounding as well as an alternative to what has come to be known as “aid” reflecting the changing dynamics of North-South relationship in the decolonised context. Mende’s starting point is the obvious level of differences in project of industrialisation in the West and the underdeveloped countries, where the latter experienced the same more through colonialism rather than direct experience. He makes a clear mention of the beginning of the international aid experiments in the decolonised context of the nature of Bretton Woods Conference and the United Nations as being based on strict banking principles which made it difficult for the underdeveloped countries to borrow money right from the start. The beginnings were made by the United States through the Marshall Plan.<sup>20</sup> It was to lead aid experiments as it emerged as the political and economic victor from the Second World War. The British Commonwealth declared its Colombo Plan in a short while so as to demonstrate its responsible streak in the face of its colonial past (Mende 31-8).

Thus, by the time, “decolonisation was practically completed, most advanced countries had clarified their ideas as to how far their short term interests could be allowed to trespass on their image of magnanimity leaving the multilateral institutions to operate on the margins as mere keepers of good conscience” (39). Mende then goes on to make some very significant points for this study. He rightly complains that aid experiments never genuinely take into cognizance the welfare of some of the most deprived sections of the developing world and a disturbing trend has been shrinkage in the official development assistance since the 1960’s (54-5). According to him, each of the Western power in the decolonised context, along with

the Soviet Union conducted aid experiments to suit their political and economic ends. Also, it is these aid giving countries which lead the international trade in weapons during the 1970's out of which "a third were sold to the underdeveloped countries" (111). It is these aid experiments which also begun to determine political and social upheavals in countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Mende also astutely observes that whatever experience pertaining to capitalism and industrialisation has emerged in the developing world never led to any creation of indigenous bourgeoisie; indeed what was witnessed was the development of class interests in tandem with foreign interests (148-9). Instead of benefits to the most deprived sections of underdeveloped societies, aid programmes continue to be enmeshed in international politics, little touching the lives of the people who need it the most by not bringing any transformation in qualitative indices.

One can now move to the immediate national context which explains the extremity of situation leading to a text of the nature of that of Sainath. The Indian subcontinent was largely colonised in that major part of the time frame when Europe and its various countries welcomed modernity. Beginning with the thirteenth century, it was first exposed to the onslaught of the Mughals during the medieval period. During Jahangir's reign, the English East India Company entered India. The crumbling of the Mughal dynasty after Aurangzeb was coupled with lack of an emergence of an alternative hegemonic centre either through the Marathas or other local as well as regional groupings. A series of successive victories enabled the English to not just defeat other colonial claims over the Indian subcontinent but also facilitated the transformation of a mere trading company into an all India administrative wing which slowly became an all India power through its consolidation on the Presidency of Bengal. This was done through a series of land tenure legislations which left little with the local peasantry. The spirit of dissent accumulated for over half a century made already manifest through a series of peasant rebellion movements, tribal and civilian uprisings on an all India scale led to a final explosion in the form of the Revolt of 1857.

While the Revolt was suppressed, its aftermath also witnessed the direct transference of power of the Indian subcontinent from the East India Company to the British Crown. The above discussed global developments of the previous centuries such as colonialism and Industrial Revolution now began to have its impact on the Indian subcontinent. The raw materials, such as cotton, were exported from India at cheap prices for the British market and India became a testimony to the imports of expensive manufactured goods from Britain. This led to not a drain of an enormous amount of wealth from India but it also meant that huge

sections of the local Indian population were maimed and left helpless. A series of political developments of the nature of founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885, the Swadeshi Movement of 1905, Jallianwala Bagh massacre and Khilafat as well as Non-Cooperation movement around 1920, paved the way for an upsurge of distinct manifestations of nationalist activity. These led to the placing of Mahatma Gandhi at the centre of nationalist activity, events of the nature of Ghadar and the Home Rule League, entry of other political players on both sides of the political spectrum such as Veer Savarkar and the Communists and the transformation of nationalist uprising into a mass movement through the Civil Disobedience and the Non-Cooperation Movement culminating in the Partition of the country and its independence in 1947.<sup>21</sup>

When India attained independence, it inherited an economy which was ravaged by famine, food shortages, poverty and abysmally low development figures.<sup>22</sup> The structure of the state under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru was kept socialist. India came to eschew foreign goods and replaced it with import substitution. Here, under the aegis of P.C. Mahalanobis who came to be the architect of India's ambitious second Five Year Plan (1956-61), the focus came to be on a closed economy growth model, industrialisation, self-reliant economic growth and the leading role for the public sector.<sup>23</sup> This was coupled with an apparent non-aligned foreign policy with an implicit tilt towards the Soviet Union. After the death of Nehru; her daughter Indira Gandhi led some significant economic measures of the nature of nationalisation of banks and the Green Revolution during the 1960's.<sup>24</sup> A series of developments then led to that point where, as observed earlier as well, India had to face a major liquidity as well as BOP crisis which led to the introduction of LPG reforms. This meant that an inherently bureaucratic and socialist state with a centrally administered bureaucracy as well as public sector was to now entertain foreign investment and open sensitive sectors of the Indian economy to the vagaries of global inequality prevalent in the latter half of the twentieth century in the face of newer developments accompanying decolonisation such as a common currency and a spurt in institutions managing global governance under the leadership of erstwhile colonisers (as already analysed above).

Sainath's *Everybody loves a good drought* is a text that arose out of this context. Though originally filed as newspaper reports, it became that literary phenomenon, which, through its responsible analysis, fact based study, intricate observations and a personal stay with the deprived, became the representative book of human suffering in the developing world. Here, the reforms of 1991 failed to correct the excesses of a bureaucratic administration where

officers refused to go beyond literality of files and governmental necessity (Sainath 4-19); a flourishing public sector failed to correct the excesses in the fields of health and education massively corrupted by an unequal global regime along with exposure of a significant amount of the Indian population to diseases of the nature of tuberculosis and malaria, lack of rural specialists in both health and education coupled with low level of public investment in the same (Sainath 23-68). Furthermore, when development happened, it not just led to massive levels of displacement in the name of projects funded by international organisations but also it led to that situation of homelessness and deprivation which has failed to provide rehabilitation to thousands of countrymen till date (Sainath 69-132). This is followed by absurd survival strategies deployed by the poor; at times leading them to the moneylender; at times handicapping them in the face of ills like prostitution and trafficking and at times, just compelling them to take their lives in the face of no better option.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, a context put in place by Western rationality yields the necessity of a text like that of Sainath where centuries and decades of human suffering and inequality gets concentrated in the form of a cry for help; an abysmal situation where everybody has come to love a good drought. His literary technique of residing with the countrymen in the non-agricultural season creates awareness but our ethical reasoning continues to ignore his advice. It is, after all, more easy to “love a good drought”.

## *Notes*

### *Chapter 1:*

1. All these details have been culled from Sainath's usefully written introduction to the book. See Sainath ix-xiii.
2. While the Cold War (1947-91) was the post World War II phase of political conflict, military tension and economic competition between the countries of the communist world (Soviet Union and its satellite states) and powers of the Western world (US and its allies) culminating with the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991, the Gulf crisis (1990-91) was a war waged by a United Nations authorised coalition force consisting of thirty four nations led by U.S against Iraq.  
A BOP (Balance of payments) crisis is also known as currency crisis wherein currency changes quickly undermining its ability to serve as medium of exchange or store of value. It is quite often associated with a real economic crisis.  
My major source of these factual details has been *Wikipedia.org*
3. These observations have been culled from Uma Kapila's excellent study on the social and economic history of the post-colonial Indian state. I would be utilising her as a major reference point in this study as her analysis is authoritative as well as caters to the demands of non-specialist readers. She is a popular name in the academic circles and her analysis is based on neutral opinion and rich secondary source references such as Amartya Sen, Jean Dreze, Kaushik Basu etc. Not without reason, she has been utilised as a standard reference at both the school and college level. See Kapila 91-113.
4. For further details on this, see Kapila 27-44.
5. This information is accessed from popular internet websites. For further details on this, see *Wikipedia.org*
6. The bibliographic frame for this study has been Ashcroft/Griffiths/Tiffin edited *The Post Colonial Studies Reader*. This is because this study locates itself in that post colonial/modern moment which rendered the possibility of a text like that of P.Sainath's *Everybody loves a good drought*. This text locates its significance in the face of failure of the post-colonial state on development grounds through a resort to post-modernist ethic where it becomes necessary to personally document individual subjectivities and stories as they hold the key towards grasping the larger essence of human existence. This is what Sainath does through his detailed documentation made possible through personal interviews with the victims of neo-liberal globalisation in post-colonial Indian state. More on this in the next chapter.

7. I have consulted the English translation of Johannes Hoffmeister's critical edition of the introduction to Hegel's work. This is because this provides sufficient details required for the purposes of this study which is only interested in culling the essence of Hegel's argument. Also, this is the only critical edition of any portion of this work available in English.

No full English translation of this work has ever been produced. The first English translation was made from Karl Hegel's manuscript by John Sibree (this is also available online and has been extensively read once for the purposes of this study) in 1857 and is often used by English speaking scholars in the universities.

My intensive study has been from the Hoffmeister edition for the reasons mentioned above.

8. This information has been accessed from some of the popular websites on Karl Marx. For further details on this see *Wikipedia.org*
9. The Young or the Left Hegelians were a group of Prussian intellectuals who in the decade or so after the death of Hegel in 1831 wrote and responded to his ambitious legacy. The Young Hegelians drew on his idea that the purpose and promise of history was the total negation of everything conducive to restriction of freedom and irrationality so as to mount critiques of first religion and then the Prussian political system. Some of the prominent Young Hegelians have been Bauer, Feuerbach, Marx and Engels. I have culled this information from *Wikipedia.org*.
10. For further details on this, see Hobsbawm 162-92.
11. I take Giddens as my starting point as he has been one of the most renowned sociologists of the twentieth century. His theory of structuration and holistic view of modern societies has made him possibly the most referenced author in this field. I have culled these details on Giddens from popular websites like *Wikipedia.org*
- Also, two of Giddens' works which are central to this study are *Sociology (Fifth edn.)* and *Consequences of Modernity*. The specific details mentioned in the study at this stage have been culled from the previous work. See Giddens 30-69, 382-428, 840-889.
12. The World Bank is an international lending organisation that lends loans for development projects in poorer countries. The IMF is an organisation of 184 countries and its main work is to maintain stability in the international financial system. Both these organizations are known as the Bretton Woods institutions and were set during the Second World War with their headquarters in Washington, United States and their membership is made of countries across the world. The United Nations, perhaps the best known of international organisations is comprised of membership of countries all across the globe and has initiated funds and programmes to tackle problems of political, social and economic nature in the post Second World War scenario.
13. For further details on this, see Fukuyama 98-108. I talk at length about the dependency theorists in the later part of this study.

14. Dependency theory as a theoretical model arose in social sciences around the 1970's pioneered by the works of specialists like Paul Baran and taken further by world system theorists like Immanuel Wallerstein and individuals like Samir Amin and Andre Gunder Frank in different regions of the world.

It is predicated on the notion that resources flow from a "periphery" of poor and underdeveloped states to a "core" of wealthy states enriching the latter at the expense of the former. It is a central contention of dependency theory that poor states are impoverished and rich ones enriched by the way poor states are integrated into the "world system". I have culled this information from *Wikipedia.org*.

15. UNCTAD stands for United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and was established in 1964 as a permanent intergovernmental body. It is a principal organ of the UN General Assembly dealing with trade, investment and development issues. It also grew from the view that the existing institutions like WTO, IMF and the World Bank were not properly organised to handle the particular problems of developing countries. By extension, the G-77 is a loose coalition of developing nations designed to promote its members' collective interests and was founded at the UNCTAD in 1964.

This information has been culled from *Wikipedia.org*.

16. The Monroe Doctrine was a well intended policy introduced by President Monroe of the United States in 1823. It stated that further efforts by European countries to colonize land or interfere with the states in Americas would be considered as an act of aggression requiring US intervention. This doctrine got misused in the later years in the light of US expansionist interests. Information culled from *Wikipedia.org*

17. Here it would be pertinent to point out that the two major works of Samir Amin utilised in this study, *Imperialism and Unequal Development* and *Class and Nation: Historically and in the Current Crisis*, were written around 1970's and 80's during the years of Cold War when the collapse of communist state model was not as explicit as it was in the post-1990's context.

18. This information has been culled from *Wikipedia.org*.

19. Though this study has tried to be faithful to the above mentioned bibliographic frame provided by Ashcroft and others, yet it concedes its limitations on grounds of lack of availability of some significant source material in the presently accessed libraries which are based in Delhi. Also, no effort was made to go beyond one's means to search for these books outside Delhi as there is a realisation that detailed works of globalisation and dependency theorists like Wallerstein or Paul Baran or Roland Robertson are ultimately beyond the scope of this study which is both brief and focussed in its central exploration of Sainath's text and significant issues surrounding the same.

20. Marshall Plan was the large scale economic programme (1947-51) of the United States for rebuilding and creating a stronger economic foundation for the countries of Europe after the Second World War. Information culled from *Wikipedia.org*.

21. These details have been culled from my reading on Indian history. My chief reference in this regard has been Bipin Chandra. Here, the effort has not been to align this study to one specific school of history. But constraint of time and space and centrality of focus demand one authoritative source. Chandra's study suits those needs and is broadly aligned to the tradition of Marxist historiography. This dissertation inevitably finds itself in that tradition as well.
22. For further details on this, see Kapila 58-70.
23. For further details on this, see Kapila 71-90.
24. It becomes difficult to pin down debt to any one single source for these observations which stay in mind after years of reading. But in terms of an immediate reference provided by my bibliographic frame, I am indebted to my reading of Sunil Khilnani's *The Idea of India*.
25. For further details on this, see Sainath 133-418.



## *Chapter 2*

### **The text through its context- Inter-Subjectivity in *Everybody loves a good drought***

In the preceding chapter, one dealt with the urgency of a book like *Everybody loves a good drought* on valid humanitarian grounds where the liberal policies of the Indian government have failed to bring a transformation in the lives of countless deprived Indians. What is remarkable in the case of a writer/journalist like P.Sainath is the realisation that effectiveness of any form of reportage gets enhanced when an effort is made to go beyond the generalising tendencies of journalism, as merely statistics and issue based coverage often misses out on individual stories of deprivation. This understanding is realised through resort to a creative narrative strategy utilised in the book which takes resort to an inter-subjective technique. Here Sainath, instead of claiming to speak on the behalf of victims in a know-it-all way, instead provides his readers with proper names, individually documented stories, personally clicked photographs, taped conversations and various rounds of visits made to these districts. He is able to do the same in an effective manner because of his decision to stay with the people and become a part of their lives through a major part of the year (characterised by the non-agricultural season) so as to make sense of what are their survival strategies during this period of hardship.<sup>1</sup> Most significantly, he does the same through the utilisation of an inter-subjective technique.

This implies that in the book there is no one perspective or subjectivity which can claim the knowability of truth. He provides the reader with his own perspective and analysis, does the same for countless victims of deprivation along with providing the perspectives of analysts from fields as diverse as NGO's, academia and policy making. It is here that it becomes significant to understand the necessity of documenting individual perspectives instead of claiming the knowability of truth through an overarching narratorial perspective. Before one analyses Sainath's narrative strategy in detail, it becomes important to understand this idea through a definitive philosophical tradition. Significantly, it is this understanding which would

enable one to come close to that post colonial/modern context of the late twentieth century which rendered the possibility of a text like *Everybody loves a good drought* which utilises an inter-subjective technique for its thematic purposes. A suitable starting point in this regard would be David Hume's philosophy as manifest in his seminal work *A Treatise of Human Nature (Book 1)*. In the words of V.C. Chappell, unlike other seventeenth/eighteenth century philosophers, "Hume's interest was in the social sciences, the studies of man as moral agent and social being." (vii). Thus, the significance of the first book lies in Hume's exposition on operation of the human mind through perceptions. The other significant points made are with regard to imagination and causation. He thus begins by dividing human mind into impressions and ideas. The perceptual outlook of man is further composed of simple and complex ideas and impressions (25-30).

The impressions are derived from ideas and can be further classified into sensation (deriving from the soul) and reflection (deriving from our ideas) respectively. Also, these impressions are utilised by the two faculties of memory and imagination. He also provides an experiential basis to knowledge in his observation - "To explain the ultimate causes of our mental actions is impossible. It is sufficient if we can give any satisfactory account of them through experience and analogy" (45). Also, it is difficult to not form an idea about any object, "as all our reasonings concerning causation are derived from the experienced conjunction of objects, not from any reasoning or reflection . . ." (118). Also, it is the faculty of imagination which regulates the flow of passion and sentiments in human nature. The human mind is nothing but united by a collection of different perceptions. Hume's philosophy proved to be seminal in the realm of Western metaphysics as unlike the rationalists who came before him, most notably Descartes, he concluded that desire rather than reason governed human behaviour.<sup>2</sup> Thus Hume's ideas enable one to understand as to how experiential knowledge, association of ideas and impressions along with primacy of imagination and perceptual power of man make human subjectivity, the prime player, in determining the truth governing human existence.

Here it becomes significant to briefly contextualise this philosophical tradition in the context of twentieth century writings on perception as well as human subjectivity. It is here that a mention of phenomenology assumes significance. This is a broad philosophical movement emphasizing conscious experience and was consolidated in the early twentieth

century by Edmund Husserl in Germany, gradually spreading to the other parts of the Western world. Coming close to a tradition of cognitive ethical subjectivism put in place by Hume; concepts such as intentionality, consciousness, perception and memory, became central to Husserl's writings. When Heidegger modified the same through his concept of *dasein*, he shifted the focus from individual consciousness to consciousness becoming peripheral to human existence; a tendency which became of huge relevance to psychoanalysis in the later years.<sup>3</sup> Here, a brief analysis of some excerpts from *Being and Time* would suffice. The question of "being" was central to Western metaphysics since Plato and Aristotle. In Heidegger's view, it never assumed that kind of dominance and depth since Aristotle and his aim thus became to explore its possibilities in the manner of the Greeks.<sup>4</sup> In his account on establishment of the relation between interpretations of ontology, being and time, Heidegger mentions: "From our analysis of Aristotle's concept of time it becomes retrospectively clear that the Kantian interpretation moves within the structures developed by Aristotle" (23). Also, phenomenology of *dasein*, "has the character of *hermeneuein*, through which the proper meaning of being and the basic structures of the being of *Dasein* are made known . . ." (33).

The next significant point of departure as per the needs of this dissertation is Maurice Merleau Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. He was writing after Husserl and Heidegger and also within a deep philosophical tradition which included not just phenomenology but stretched back to that philosophical tradition initiated by Rene Descartes through which one emphasized on mind-body dualism. The most significant extension of this became what is now considered to be the cornerstone of Western metaphysics- "I think, therefore I am". This also became the most significant rationalist impulse to which subsequent philosophy was to turn back, react and respond. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Ponty foregrounds the significance of human perception through suggesting an integrated site of body and soul. Here human subjectivity assumes primacy in a way such that it is not about one controlling the other through a dualistic ontology but rather through a sense-perception which is integrating and holistic.<sup>5</sup> The exact way through which Ponty makes an observation of the same is through the fact that not just "Heidegger's 'being-in-the-world' appears against the background of phenomenological reduction", but also the "chief gain from phenomenology is to have united extreme subjectivism and extreme objectivism in its notion of the world of rationality" (xix). At the centre of Ponty's formulation are then the concepts of sensation being a significant component of perceptual experience, the role of judgement in determining

the significance of both perception as well as sensation, association and affinity being the central paradigm of perceptual life, the “absolute permanence” of the body in its participatory role within the perceptual experience, the new mode of existential analysis moving beyond the traditional alternatives of rationalism and empiricism and the significance of spatiality and language in perceptual experience along with the existence of a “being” at the end of all our experiences (3,37,53,92,136,371).

It is here that one must note a significant point of conjunction between ontological/philosophical and sociological as well as political and historical spheres. Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* is an important book in this regard. The book was published in 1958 and is significant to the purposes of this chapter which ultimately seeks to create an understanding about the relevance of human perception and inter-subjectivity in the face of changes in modern times so as to come close to an appreciation of Sainath's narrative strategy in *Everybody loves a good drought*. She begins with an important insight which remains with the reader till the end of the book. This lies in the fact that the “modern age has carried with it a theoretical glorification of labor and has resulted in a factual transformation of the whole society into a labouring society” (4). Her aim then in the book is to analyse modern human condition through an analysis of public and private realm. The three central chapters of the book are titled “Work”, “Labour” and “Action” and explain the significance of transformation from *vita contemplativa* to *vita activa* (these are terms used by Arendt herself). Her analysis then begins with the tendency of disturbing any form of hierarchy between action and contemplation in a both philosophical as well as sociological sense.

She then delves into the reasons behind the balance between public and private realms in classical Greece. What distinguished the two however was that, “the *polis* was distinguished from the household in that it knew only ‘equals’ whereas the household was the centre of strictest inequality” (32). Contrary to this, “in the modern world, the social and political realms are much less distinct” (33). Again, modern attitudes of hybridity with regard to the public and private realm are distinct from the Christian conception of work and exclusivity of the private sphere in medieval times (35). She then begins her detailed analysis on labour in the chapter by the same name. She traces her analysis to an understanding of institution of slavery in antiquity to comment on how it became “the attempt to exclude labor from the conditions of man's life” (84). She then concentrates on the analysis of labour in some more recent writings of the likes of Adam Smith and Karl Marx. She does point towards the simplification of the idea of labor in the writings of Marx in general and an entire tendency in

recent Western writings related to political economy wherein “the modern age in general and Karl Marx in particular, overwhelmed as it were, by the unprecedented actual productivity of Western mankind, had an almost irresistible tendency to look upon all labor as work . . .” (87).

Arendt is then astute in observing that, “the contempt for labour in ancient theory and its glorification in modern theory both take their bearing from the subjective attitude and activity of the labourer, mistrusting his painful effort or praising his productivity” (93). Here, it is significant to observe that in Arendt’s formulation, it is from Locke onwards (followed majorly by Adam Smith and Karl Marx), that one witnesses the “sudden, spectacular rise of labor from the lowest, most despised position to the highest rank as the most esteemed of all human activities . . .” (101). In the context of work as an activity, a potential multiplication is inherent, which is different “from the repetition which is a mark of labor” (142). Also, in modern times, it is the rhythm and motion of the process which dominates labor and the work processes. Again, in tune with Arendt’s criticism of modernity, there is an observation that, “the implements and tools of *homo-faber*, from which the most fundamental experience of instrumentality arises, determines all work and fabrication” (153). Action, on the other hand, enhances human plurality (Arendt 175). Also, action is the basic determining force in the public realm. Also, it has been the modern age which has defined “man primarily as *homo faber*, a toolmaker and producer of things . . .” (229).

In that sense, action has been the defining realm of human affairs in modernity. Also, “one of the most persistent trends in modern philosophy since Descartes and perhaps his most original contribution to philosophy has been concern with the self . . .” (254). Descartes, in this sense, was the first to conceptualize modern doubting. The basic crux and conclusion that Arendt then provides the reader with is that the essence of modernity lies in *vita contemplativa* being demoted to a secondary role in comparison to *vita activa*; say in comparison to what was the situation during the time of Christianity or the Middle Ages. This was an obvious consequence of scientific experimentation, logical enquiries and, most prominently, coming of the Cartesian doubt to the centre of human affairs. Also, within this realm of doing, it was labouring which came to be accorded the highest esteem. Here, the conclusion that one reaches to, in the face of all the above made observations is that the ushering in of modernity has brought with it that “human condition” which has not just destabilised all the traditional hierarchies of the previous decades but it has done the same through, as existential and phenomenological analysis of the above philosophers and thinkers

suggest, an apotheosis of individual subjectivity, recognition of perceptual power of mankind, a bridging of the gap between public and private realms through foregrounding of labouring activity in the context of modernity, and most significantly, a realisation that it is difficult to claim the knowability of truth with regard to human existence.

It is this kind of a sociological and philosophical context which explains the significance of foregrounding multiple subjectivities in the face of hardships of modernity. It has become that realm when no claim to truth can either be substantiated in a generalised way nor is it considered desirable to do the same. A closer analysis of the text would enable one to understand this point in a better way. The details of the factors leading to the generation of the book have already been touched in the previous chapter. Now the focus would be on its contents through an analysis of its narrative strategy and thematic significance. Firstly, unlike a conventional narrative of journalism, this book, as Sainath himself pointedly mentions in the introduction, is divided into chapters with emotionally rendered titles and sub-titles which are at once ironic as well as incisive. Thus the first section of the book titled “Still Crazy After all These Years- A brief introduction to the absurd” is about not any one issue but rather a whole range of issues such as bureaucratic anomalies, skewed strategies of development and an inability on the part of official machinery to understand what is the intensity of actual problems faced by the people.

However, instead of providing an overarching perspective, what Sainath provides the reader with is, specifically documented stories which carry the name of the victims along with detailed accounts, at times produced through interviews and at times, taped conversations or in other cases, through notebook support. Thus, the reader understands the sorry state of affairs not as much as much due to the fact that Sainath wants him to but due to the dilemma of Ramdas Korwa who doesn't understand as to why the government is building a road in his name calling it tribal development when his basic needs of water and irrigation haven't been taken care of (10-14). Similarly, bureaucratic absurdity becomes interesting only when there is a Majhi Dhurua to narrate his strange story of his tribe being robbed of basic benefits due to a spelling error in the government files (15-19). In sections on education and health, Sainath foregrounds a different narratorial dimension but with the same purpose. Instead of delineating multiple subjectivities, the focus here is on also looking at national dimensions to these problems. Thus, sections on both health and education begin with a journalist's perspective on what has been going wrong with the management of these crucial sectors.

This includes low levels of expenditure on these sectors and lack of infrastructure for adequately dealing with problems pertaining to health as well as education or a lack of enough practitioners or even their presence coupled with factors ranging from pragmatism to fraud or greed (Sainath 25, 28, 31, 48, 54, 62). Both these sections, titled “The Trickle Up & Down Theory- Health in Rural India” and “This is the Way We Go to School- A look at rural education” depict the magnitude of the situation through a documentation of personally clicked photographs which range from unearthing the practices of a *dissari* to an empty school building depicting scarcity and sorry state of affairs (Sainath 35, 55). What the reader witnesses in this section is incisive pieces of reportage, an unearthing of scams in both these sectors in rural India and interviews with activists and observers and an observance of stories of grit and determination through quoting of individual examples. These range from quoting senior officials, local heads like the *sarpanch*, intellectuals, senior staff members, civil servants, tribal welfare department officials and NGO activists (Sainath 31, 39, 30, 42, 52, 60, 62, 63, 67). The point then is that in a text of the nature of *Everybody loves a good drought*, there is no single overarching perspective which claims to know the entirety of situation.

Instead if there is something, then hybridity of perspectives, each complementing or critiquing the other, ultimately getting woven through Sainath himself playing multiple roles; at times of an aggressive journalist, at times of a hapless spectator and at times donning the hat of a militant reformer. Some more interesting aspects appear as the narrative progresses. In the sections of the nature of “And the Meek shall inherit the earth-Until a project comes along” and “Beyond the Margin-Survival strategies of the Poor”, human subjectivity is tapped so as to point towards extreme pain and suffering of the existing situation in the concerned areas. This is where in the name of neo-liberal globalisation, post independent India has witnessed that kind of displacement which is at once inhuman and debilitating and the situation is worsened by the fact that it is carried either in the name of a state project or in the name of a World Bank or some mining or an army project. The intensity of the situation is explained through personally clicked photographs documenting the trauma of a displaced Asur tribal; a thrice displaced Gadaba family or depiction of countless villages cut off due to the Balimela reservoir project (Sainath 80, 91, 127).

The absurdity of the existing situation is further highlighted by pointing towards survival strategies of the poor in those 200-240 days when there is no agriculture in these areas. In Sainath’s own words-“. . . their dignity in the face of such circumstances, and their quest for

self reliance, begs one question. Is there anything these people cannot achieve if given the right opportunities?" (135). The survival strategies of these people, documented at once through a personal stay as well as interviews with them are at once painful, absurd and shocking. These range from Ratnapandi Nadar's act of climbing countless trees to earn as little as "five to eight rupees a day" (137). The aggravation gets coupled by Sainath's confession that "in Ramnad, every one of the *panaiyeri* Nadars I interview is heavily indebted" (140). Then there are cases of the kind of Kishan Yadav who toils hard enough "for carrying as much as 250 kg of coal across distances of forty to sixty kilometres" (143). Interestingly, Sainath utilises an informal conversational mode of journalism which consists of frequent first person pronouns, extensive usage of quotes derived from his acts of interviewing and witnessing, and utilisation of those perspectives, which matter the most due to the intensity of deprivation. Again, personally clicked photographs have been utilised to demonstrate cases of the nature of "adolescent labourers who stagger out of the pit, carrying around 20 kg of bricks towards the stocking area. . ." (158). The cases of inhumanity can range from as appalling as Dharmi Paharani who "four feet three inches tall weighs less than the 40 kg of firewood on her head." (169).

This is where utilisation of an inter-subjective technique enabled Sainath to portray the gross inhumanity of situation where individual stories of humiliation documented by victims in their own words get coupled with a multiple perspectives including that of Sainath himself, so as to give the reader a holistic idea of an unacceptable mismanagement of resources and wealth, where development figures conceal these human stories of suffering as well as absurdity. Here in sections of the nature such as "Lenders, Losers, Crooks and Credits-Usury, debt and the rural Indian" and "Crime and No punishment-Targeting the poor", the misery of these people is highlighted through expounding on the role of some of those factors where policies and agencies of the states can aggravate the already sorry state of affairs. These are again documented through individual cases of people like Ramnad who taught the writer "how moneylenders could set the agenda within poor villages; how levers other than physical violence were no less capable of ensuring repayment." (195). Again, in these cases as well, an analysis of the collapse of rural credit or emergence of the phenomenon of the moneylender is connected to an understanding of what has gone wrong with the project of the post-colonial state at the national level. But again, coverage of these issues becomes effective as the reader is sensitised to the story through direct observations from the victims themselves.



In this regard, it is significant to observe some of the things that Sainath himself mentions in the case of his coverage, reporting and style of writing.<sup>6</sup> For this purpose, inputs from a personally conducted interview with him were highly useful. As per Sainath himself, his descriptive criterion while writing is to not sensationalise the misery of the people about whom he writes. There is no attempt to describe them in terms of physical details; instead an effort is made to make the reader realise the gravity of their misery through their sheer helplessness in the face of massive failure of the post colonial state. Thus, when Ramaswamy, the chilli farmer, “watches as though hypnotised” (202), he does the same because “by advancing him Rs 2000 just before the start of the season, the agent brought up Ramaswamy’s entire crop even before it was sown” (202). This is beautifully demonstrated through a personally clicked photograph as well (204). There is a personally induced element in the narrative through testimonies of victims like Chakkiliayans or Bhagwan, “a tribal in the Kotegaon village of Bhoden” or Sanat, “who couldn’t afford the bus ticket to Raipur- till he got his bicycle. It allowed him to develop a fund raising technique . . .” or Nahakul, “who has been living without a roof for several days...” or a Thakurdas Mahanand, who is compelled to hire a bullock cart so as to fetch the right price of his onions only to learn the hard way that “the wholesaler-retailer-moneylender-merchant linkages are simply too strong” for him and thousands of other small farmers in the Nuapada-Kalahandi region (208,215,220,224,228).

All these instances point towards the unfortunate linkages between usury, credit, indebtedness, caste oppression and poverty to an extent which mocks the very idea of basic amenities which a free state ought to provide to each of its citizens. Thus, in all these cases, there are no sensationalist aspects to describe people. Rather, an effort is made to understand the genuineness and depth of their problems and any corresponding idea that the reader is given is on the basis of an in-depth analysis and relevantly clicked personal photographs. In the section “Crime & No Punishment”, “crime”, in Sainath’s own words, “begin with those tried in the courts but go beyond them.” (233). Caste oppression is evident where dalits and adivasis end up bearing the maximum brunt. There are unfortunate cases of the kind of Subhaso who had “failed to repay a loan taken from the Bhumi Vikas Bank “(239); the irony of the situation being that even a loan of this nature was pillowed onto their heads without their complete knowledge as well as taking an advantage of their illiteracy. Sainath’s narrative strategy demonstrates brilliance when coupled with Subhaso’s subjectivity, not just exposing the reader to all the angles of the situation, but also enabling the possibility of a

neutral perspective, like, “the adivasi woman is the most vulnerable and the least protected of Indians’, says advocate H.N Shrivastava” (242). Then there are cases of the kind of a Ranbir Korwa or numerous others of his kinds who become victims of land grab and other forms of corruption worsening their plight to such an extent that the reader is brought in a position of appreciating the overarching perspective of the writer/journalist because he understands that it arises out of a direct witnessing and a painful experience of all that is going wrong with these doubly marginalised people on the basis of their caste as well as low economic status.

Thus, when Sainath observes that, “the fate of an adivasi or a harijan visiting a government office is not a pleasant one; at more than one such office I visit during more than fifty days in Bihar, the adivasis met with contempt and humiliation” (244), the reader is in a position to appreciate the truth of the situation more than compared to her/him being nudged to believe in the situation. The inhumanity of the post-colonial state and the hollowness of its administrative policies are exposed in cases like of the Parhaiya tribe who “continue to bear the stigma of a ‘criminal’ tribe” (246). The reader is given the privilege of a personalised understanding of the situation through a personally clicked photograph where a poverty-stricken Parhaiya woman is “cooking the balls of getti that are a crucial part of the diet innocent of sugar and short on pulses . . .” (249). The horror of the situation is described in detail in successive chapters where the phenomenon of bonded labour exists through members of one tribe being held in the face of necessity by the members of another tribe (252-56). Here, an interesting point needs to be made before proceeding to the analysis of the next section. In an interview to one of the leading news channels, Sainath acknowledged that his mode of writing as well as his style of development journalism should not be confused with purely an exercise meant to depict all that has gone wrong with a majority of this country’s population. It might be at the centre of his writing but, there is at the same time, a focus on humour and characters of countryside, on their typicality, their smiles and idiosyncrasies, their ability to both laugh and cry and experience joy and sorrow at the same time.<sup>7</sup>

It is these characters that appear in the section titled “Despots, Distillers, Poets and Artists-Characters of the Countryside”. In his own words: “In a selfish sense, rural India is a journalist’s paradise. You’d find it hard to match its rich array of characters. . .” (273). These characters range from “Man Eater of Manatu” to Jayachander and Muthu Bhaskaran to Melanmai Ponnuswamy or Pema Fatiah. Sainath’s mode of documenting their lives, stories and modes of passion is at once ironic, funny and at the same time, thought provoking. Thus,

again, an interesting use of photographs is made to at once bring out the vibrancy of Manatu Mhowar as a character of the countryside and at the same time, comment on the seriousness of situation through a commentary on bonded labour (275-79). Again, the reader is simultaneously introduced to the richness of art, tradition and culture of these places through instances such as performances of tribal cultural troupes, transformed nature of cockfight and its multiple connotations, songwriters with a message to convey the story of Valia, the honest chowkidar, Melanmai Ponnuswamy's writings, "honest to the realities of this village . . ." or Pema Fatiah's strange story of being transformed from "the foremost exponent of the Bhil art of 'Pithora' to now living in the condition of penury." (280, 289, 296, 299, 304, 309).

Here it would be interesting to look at some of the other pieces of Sainath's journalism so as to be able to understand his narrative strategy in a better light.<sup>8</sup> He holds a similar kind of thought provoking strategy in his coverage of some very genuine issues that have been affecting people's lives countrywide ranging from agricultural indebtedness, irrigation woes, food security needs or basic livelihood and survival needs not being taken care of in his newspaper editorials being published in *The Hindu*. Thus when he writes in a vain such as, "When Jayalakshamma finishes her 12 hours of labour . . . she's entitled to less than a fourth of rice given to a convict in prison . . .", the reader knows the pain and agony of being doubly dispossessed in a country where a lot many landless, who were initially landed farmers<sup>9</sup>, are consuming their lives in South India, leaving their family members, to the mercy of the state which provides its appendages in the name of so called subsidised food worse than what is fed to a "convict in a prison. . .". Similarly, a heart-wrenching photograph arises out of the experience of witnessing "the bi-weekly 20 km walking trips" of Sarada Badre and her daughters who have to deal with the everyday reality of "water being a mirage in Vidarbha". Sainath's way of then intruding or making a constructive intervention in the field of policy making has always been through a testimony of the sufferers; an account of what is it that they go through on an everyday basis through an experience of travelling into the interiors of India and living with them for a considerable number of days and months tirelessly watching them live a life of suffering and penury, which they little deserve, but are forced to embrace in the face of failures of the post colonial state.

These failures include an inability of the state to provide its citizens with basic amenities thereby compelling them to resort to migration to other countries in the face of lack of resources and illiteracy; a helplessness so debilitating that it has been compelling the drought affected to, at times, switch from one crop to another or, to make a sale of their cattle, so as to

keep up with their fragile conditions. The reader is provided with a reality check of the situation when development journalism is combined in right measures with creativity, multiplicity of perspectives and a personalised foray into the lives of affected; these range from Babytai Bais' demonstration through an electoral symbol of a "candle" in the face of her only "asset" being a "bank deposit of Rs 70,000 the government gave her as compensation when her husband, a distressed farmer, committed suicide" to an expose into those realities of policy making where the supposed altruistic policies like NREGA are not exactly "cast in stone"; all of these measures combine to humanise the suffering of the people to an extent where the focus is not on politics or personal fulfilment of writer or his writing (if any), but the courage of bringing a plurality of inaccessible voices of the affected to the doorstep of the reader.

The last three sections of the book then bring all the above discussed themes as well as issues. Thus, in the sections titled "Everybody loves good drought- Water problems, real and rigged" and "With their own weapons- When the poor fight back", a genuine need for reform is again made through an introductory journalistic analysis. The reader is then sensitised to observations which do not simplify issues. Instead what you have is a reminder that in the rural areas, "A great deal of drought 'relief' goes into contracts handed over to private parties" (317). Also, "bringing blocks into the DPAP is purely a political decision" (318). The situation is aggravated "when available resources are colonised by the powerful" (319). The demystification of the "drought" phenomenon in a predominantly agricultural country is again done in the ensuing pages. Here again, through personally clicked photographs which are at once heart wrenching and shocking, individual testimonies and a series of post-scripts, the focus is on issues which ultimately get entwined through an exposure of all that is going wrong with people's lives- prostitution, human trafficking, water related scams, stories of political neglect and administrative failure, drought related deaths and devastation so as to foreground the anomaly between availability and distribution of resources and a helpless withdrawal in the face of a death-like situation where the country fails to safeguard its citizens of its basic fundamental rights (Sainath 317-370).

Similarly in the section, "With their own weapons-When the poor fight back", Sainath observes that, "Given a chance, people hit back at the forces that hold them down . . . But fight back they do." (373). These survival strategies are at once motivating and disturbing- the former because they demonstrate the endurance of their grit in the face of failure of the state and the latter because they speak for a failures of state where an individual becoming a

custodian of his own rights is a simultaneous cry of helplessness; an act of rebellion moulded into an unfortunate strategy. This strategy can range from women working in the quarries to that situation where arrack “seems a close companion of poverty across the state. . . Each year, the poor in Tamil Nadu part with hundreds of crores of rupees to the makers of illicit arrack” (382). This has led to a situation where women of these households have to construct newer strategies to deal with the damage inflicted by arrack on their households such as conduction of literacy campaigns. The struggle of these people comes alive not so much through the narratorial perspective but through Sainath’s resort to an inter-subjective technique and other props utilised in the service of the same where each of these individual’s struggle is ultimately his own struggle; each of their modes of survival is ultimately a confrontation with issues of both global as well as national significance. Thus organisation of environmentally conscious movement at various levels or emergence of cycles as a consequence of activist drive- all of these are ultimately a way of humanising one’s suffering in the face of exhaustion of all other options (392-417).

The ultimate point then is, as Sainath pointedly mentions in his introduction (ix), to look at poverty and deprivation as “processes” and not “events”. This, to cull out the essence of his argument, has been a major failure of the mainstream media and the way it goes about in its coverage. A problem or an issue is accorded the dimension of the same when some disaster gets associated with it. This is to say that everyday issues of countless deprived Indians such as hunger, malnutrition, lack of resources and irrigation and an absurd struggle for their survival and dignity are discussed as national issues from those skewed perspectives which care little to analyse or understand them through that required time, effort and depth, ultimately exposing them as the failure of the development project of the post-colonial state at all levels. Thus, when one lives with these people in their households in the non-agricultural season, collects their individual stories, documents their perspectives and collects enough evidence of their suffering then the focus is not so much on where one has gone wrong but why one has gone wrong so as to come to this situation. Why is it that it is not so much about lack of resources as much about their inadequate distribution, why is it not so much about lack of proper policies as much their implementation, why is it not so much about a ‘drought’ as much about why “everybody has come to love a good drought” and why the struggle has to continue the way it has to because there is the media and there is the government and the public to take satisfaction from their status-quoist tendencies to

ultimately convince themselves with the fact that post-1991 India has been an unparalleled success story of development.

Here, it is now significant to analyse these points at another level. The focus then would be to make sense of that post-colonial/modern context which rendered the possibility of a text like that of Sainath through multiplicity of its perspectives yet unity in focus; an inability to at times find proper words for the struggle of the people yet uniting each of them with the reader through apt phrases and expressions and a genuine way of documenting truth in the face of awareness that the knowability of the same is ultimately difficult to garner and collect. Thus, through an array of post-colonial, modern and structural theorists (this is because this post colonial/modern moment is ultimately locating itself in the post-structural context), one would first try to make sense of this moment. The attempt then would be to explore writings on the Indian context through perspectives and angles which respond to these theoretical developments to ultimately conclude with another round of analysis of the text which would tie with the first one. However, since the basic mode of conception for this study has been the Hegelian/Marxist framework, it first becomes significant to understand the post-Marxist paradigms before proceeding to the desired context. A significant starting point to be made in this regard is to be with Antonio Gramsci's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*.

Gramsci has been one of the most important Marxist thinkers in the twentieth century. His experience of imprisonment under the Fascist regime in Italy led to the *Prison Notebooks*. A lot of the concepts provided by the same have been effectively utilised within the field of Western Marxism in the twentieth century and thus hold a lot of conceptual relevance for this study. Some of the important things that he observes from the point of view of this study are an exposition on the role of intellectuals in the state where, "all men are intellectuals . . . but not all men in society have the function of intellectuals" (9); the connection between "organic" intellectuals and the working class and the necessity to take them together<sup>10</sup>, the distinction between civil and political society in general and the ethical interests of the state, ultimately being tied to those of the ruling classes (245-58), and the problems of Marxism, as well as the concept of hegemony being ultimately tied to impossibility of socialist revolution in the twentieth century, due to capitalist structures now becoming entrenched through force as well as consent. <sup>11</sup>As per Gramsci, in his identification of "the specific weaknesses of the Italian national state which emerged from the Risorgimento" (45), the point of analysis that emerges is that post-Marxist paradigms are comprised of a transformed nature of relationship between the base and the superstructure where it becomes essential to develop a changed

conception of the role of the intellectual in particular and civil society in general so as to counter hegemonic structures which operate through force and consent.<sup>12</sup>

This post-Marxist paradigm facilitates an understanding of the post colonial/modern/structural moment which would then tie up with an understanding of context leading to deployment of an inter-subjective narratorial apparatus by Sainath. A beginning in this regard can be made with Jean Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. In this context, it would be interesting to observe that Lyotard is the appropriate point of philosophical intervention as his 1950's writings on phenomenology demonstrate his interest in Husserl and Ponty.<sup>13</sup> This work was commissioned by the government of Quebec and was published in 1979. This work then became a sceptical point of intervention through distrust for all forms of metanarratives. What you have instead is a re-writing of the Enlightenment project through a claim about difficulty in rationalising the truth. Thus if modernist experience affirmed a break in the realistic gesture of some form of finitude through an emphasis on individual experience and autonomy of existence; the post-modernist impulse took it forward by claiming that there can be no one way through which truth could be affirmed; the focus is instead on plurality and fragmentation and a multiplicity of perspectives enhanced by the claim of each of them towards the knowability of truth. Some exact instances from the text would do the needful here.

The work begins with a classic introduction written by Frederic Jameson. There is then an emphasis on "transformation in the context of crisis of narratives" (xxiii). In his introduction itself, Lyotard declares "*postmodern* as incredulity towards metanarratives" (xxiv). An understanding of language games becomes necessary as: "Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable . . ." (xxv). In terms of time element, it is the technologized context of the post-industrial 1950's where one can mark the beginning of point of entry into the postmodern age (Lyotard 3). The post-modern world in its loss of "nostalgia for the lost narrative" is now characterised by typicality of "linguistic practice and communicational interaction." (41). An interesting point of continuation can be made through a mention of Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism- History, Theory and Fiction*. She begins by expounding upon challenges and contradictoriness of post-modernism as a phenomenon, an affirmation of the point made by other postmodernist thinkers, most notably, Frederic Jameson in *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, of the postmodernist impulse arising in response to "late capitalist dissolution of bourgeois

hegemony and the developments of mass culture” (6). In conjunction with the philosophical premise of this chapter, Hutcheon goes on to observe, that “another consequence of this far reaching post-modern inquiry into the very nature of subjectivity is the frequent challenge to traditional notions of perspective, especially in narrative and painting” (11). The dissolution of the notion of a coherent or a unified subject is also descriptive of Sainath’s narrative strategy where the technique of inter-subjectivity is utilised to enhance the complexity of situation for the reader. Hutcheon picks on an array of examples from the field of painting, architecture, music and cinema to explain her point in a better light.

Here, it would be appropriate to make complete sense of the “post” moment. This moment, characterised by different theoretical paradigms (structural/colonial/modern), is ultimately representative of a crisis in historicity, subjectivity and language. It is that moment which inverts the humanistic paradigms put within a consolidated framework since the Renaissance and Enlightenment. The events in world history (the previous chapter touched on some of them from the purposes of this study) in the twentieth century shook the conscience of the world to an extent making it difficult to accept truth as a consequence of any coherent or unified subjectivity. The humanist affirmation of the days of the Renaissance, scepticism and rationalism of the Enlightenment and destruction caused in the name of expansionism in the colonial and the neo-colonial period, brought humanity to that juncture in the post-World War II decades when any form of singular affirmation, became more an enterprise in defeatism rather than progress. What you instead witnessed was doubt, plurality of perspectives, fragmentation, questioning of power and authority and a point when the modernist notion of exile got replaced with an absurdist post-modernist celebration of futility of life and subjectivity itself. The entire civilisational ethic was questioned in the light of pre-existing standards. What was instead affirmed was an exploration of individual experiences which questioned the very notion of coherence in language and human subjectivity. It is this kind of a context which facilitated a writer like Sainath to make utilisation of an inter-subjective technique, as even in the face of his vast experiential knowledge, any claim to truth of why things go wrong is impossible as well as undesirable. What you thus have is a documentation of perspectives and testimonies from intellectuals, activists and victims themselves to create some sort of an effective affirmation witnessed in the name of *Everybody loves a good drought*.

Michel Foucault’s writings would provide one with the required philosophical base in this case. As per M.A.R. Habib, Foucault, “had a seminal impact on the New



Historicism that was initiated by Stephen Greenblatt, as well as on queer theory . . . the central theme of most of Foucault's works was the methods with which human civilization creates and controls human subjects, through institutions such as hospitals, prison, education and knowledge. . ." (766). Foucault rejected the postmodernist label and also distanced himself from structuralism instead classifying "his thought as a critical history of modernity rooted in Kant".<sup>14</sup> A classic example of Foucault's effort at questioning institutions glorified by the civilization at the cost of individual experience is contained in his seminal work *Madness and Civilization* (1961). He attempts a revisionist understanding of madness challenging the rational interpretations of out casting mad men. In that sense, Foucault considers birth of an 'asylum' not as much an indispensable necessity as much as civilisation creating its bedrock from the days of Enlightenment in the name of clinical practice and medical institutions. Thus Foucault' analysis begins with the disappearance of leprosy in the Middle Ages to be replaced by "a new incarnation of disease" (1). The unnamed disease at the moment is expunged through "the Ship of Fools" (5).

Interestingly, Foucault says: "The Middle Ages had given madness a place in the hierarchy of vices" (21). Again, "scarcely after the career of mad ships, we note the appearance of the theme of the 'Hospital of Madmen', the 'Madhouse'" (32). It is here that the Enlightenment years of the early seventeenth century become hospitable to all forms of madness (Foucault 33). What then one witnessed was the creation of enormous houses of confinement institutionalising the same in the seventeenth century, a celebration of the theme of the animal mad-man in the eighteenth century, isolation of houses of correction, places of confinement and hospitals in the eighteenth century, a creation of a whole new round of concepts surrounding the awareness of madness in the eighteenth century and the emergence of scientific and clinical treatment of madness in the nineteenth century, notably at the hands of Pine and Tuke (34,70,208,228-74). In *Power/Knowledge-Selected Interviews and Other Writings-1972-77*, one notices a similar tendency. These set of writings express Foucault's views on a host of significant issues such as problems of judicial management in the modern age, the institution of prison, operation of power in modern society and issues pertaining to sexuality. They also reveal Foucault's interest in interrogating how modern society concocts power through creation of institutions around human existence revealing not just his interest in political, social and economic affairs around him (with specific relevance to the French society), but also his consistent anti-humanist project questioning the very premise of Western rationality.

These accounts range from his discussions with Maoists on popular justice, his interview on the institution of prison to J.J Brochier, an interview on “Body/Power” with the editorial collective of *Quel Corps* and a couple of lectures combined with talk on question of geography, truth and power along with “the confession of the flesh”. He traces the consolidation of a centralised judicial system to the fourteenth century and its necessity subsiding peasant and urban revolts, the act of popular justice in Western Europe being profoundly anti-judicial, the creation of the institution of the prison linked to the eighteenth century rationalist impulse of “a synaptic regime of power” (Foucault 39), the creation of bodies of knowledge as a consequence of structures of power, exposition on “Panoptism” as an invention in the order of power, the transformed nature of power at the collapse of Fascism, operation of power through consolidation of discursive practices, limitations on the right to sovereignty and mechanism of discipline defining the complex relation between modernity and power, “truth” being as much a construct as any other discursive practice subject to specific social, economic and political conditions, the fascinating link between what previously was architecture with what became fulfilment of specific social and political ends towards the late eighteenth century, and the growth of psychoanalysis out of the strange phenomenon of medicalisation of sexuality in the West (5, 6, 38-40, 51, 71. 87, 93, 106, 131-2, 148, 191).

Here, it would suffice to make a mention of Diane Macdonell’s *Theories of Discourse-An Introduction*. Macdonell aims to look at the developments in post- 1960’s Europe, especially in France, to theorise about the newly emergent discursive practices making their presence felt in the wake of incoming of post-structuralism as well as deconstruction. As a reading of Macdonell suggests in the introduction to her work, this kind of theorising becomes all the more necessary as prior to post-structuralism what one witnessed was Ferdinand Saussure’s seminal work, *Course in General Linguistics*(1915), which demystified the entire idea of language and human subjectivity by ultimately demonstrating it to be composed of signifiers and signified. Post-Saussure, everyone then came to articulate that language is composed of differences which meant that distinct modes of articulation for different people made any singular set of responses impossible. Where post-structuralism became different from structuralism was in its proposal that it is difficult to come to any kind of certainty about human subjectivity, existence or language in the light of arbitrariness surrounding the same. Here, it conflated with the post-modernist perspective of plurality and fragmentation analysed above. Before then analysing Macdonell in detail, it becomes significant to look at Jacques

Derrida's contribution to this field, as his observations pertaining to post-structuralism as well as deconstruction are significant to the philosophical needs of this study.

In this context J.A. Cuddon rightly observes that, "while post-structuralism develops as a response to, and displacement of structuralism (a European phenomenon largely), deconstruction focuses on rhetoric and reflexivity (i.e. self-referential aspects of language in a way that American New Critics had encouraged earlier in the century" (210). Cuddon also goes on to observe that not only is deconstruction the most characteristic feature of post-structuralism but the chief contributor to the same has been Jacques Derrida. Also, he observes that according to Derrida, a text can betray its own meaning in by defying the notion of a single or a stable interpretation. By this implication, "any form of traditional literary criticism which employs the practical tools of comparison and analysis . . . is a self defeating practice. . ." (211). Derrida also "destabilises and displaces the traditional 'hierarchy' of speech over writing to suggest that speech can ever be subject to the same instabilities as writing. . ." (Cuddon 211). Macdonell's arguments happen in this vein in her observation: "In the movement at the end of the sixties that brought into view the concept of discourse and the conflicts between discourses, there has been a departure from structuralism, but no retreat into humanism." (11). She does a detailed analysis of Althusser (with specific reference to his conception of ideology), Pecheux, Hindess and Hirst and Foucault (she does a specific analysis of *Madness and Civilization*). In this context, it is interesting to observe that previous to Macdonell, the priority of both cultural studies as well as studies on discourse was class. She directs the same towards the neutral category of knowledge through the set of writers that she analyses.<sup>15</sup>

It is this dimension which fits in both the post-structuralist and post-modern dimension into the post-phenomenological framework put in place in the aftermath of writings of both Husserl and Heidegger. Hume's emphasis of experiential knowledge broadens itself through an emphasis on individuality of perspectives and defiance of the idea of coherent and unified truth. It is this which provided the philosophical premise for understanding Sainath's narrative strategy in *Everybody loves a good drought*. This can be taken further through some observations made from a reading of Jonathan Culler's *On Deconstruction*. The book is apt to quote here in more senses than one. It tries to make its way amidst the complicated terrain of literary and critical theory in the twentieth century. Interestingly, Culler does the same through an emphasis on the special role of reader amidst his analysis of a range of works, literary characters and critical perceptions. Through this, he seeks to align distinct fields of

post-phenomenological criticism, feminism, reader response criticism, post-structuralism and deconstruction. His analysis, in a very obvious sense begins with Derrida and deconstruction as clear from a reading of his preface. There is a detailed account on reader's experience within the domain of feminist criticism followed by Culler's detailed discussion on deconstruction, Austin's exposition of the speech acts, critical consequences of deconstruction for literature especially its emphasis on the marginal, followed by a final note of conclusion, examining the complexity of deconstructive criticism and its relationship to structuralism. The point then has been to enhance Derrida's challenge to the humanist project put forth by Western rationality where, "nothing outside the text" became representative of his tendency of destabilising a belief in paradoxes which Western civilisation both celebrated as well as glorified.

An understanding made of these theorists is now to be tied up with some significant dimensions of post-colonial theory which are relevant for the needs of this study. This would also enable one to sufficiently contextualise the developments of some significant decades of the twentieth century providing an impetus to not just the theoretical positions analysed above, but also to problematise the limitations of theory in the face of what adequately representation should be doing, especially, in the context of the Indian situation. Some observations from Elleke Boehmer's study of post-colonialism would do the needful here. She very interestingly reminds the reader of the legacy of post-colonialism stretching itself to the days of activism against colonial regime in the early and the middle decades of the twentieth century. In her account then the writings of individuals like Frantz Fanon and Mahatma Gandhi emerging out of their activist leanings and actual experiences of witnessing colonial exploitation form the actual base to what is now recognised as post-colonial theory. This is what became institutionalised within the realm of an academy and crucial to the same has been parallel developments in the field of post-structuralism and related theoretical paradigms (as analysed above). As per Boehmer, it is this "deconstructive or interrogative impact of, in particular, French post-structuralist thinking (of Derrida, Foucault and Lacan) which has shaped the influential postcolonial theories of critics like Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Ania Loomba, Gyan Prakash, Leela Gandhi and others." (343).

Further, Boehmer says: "The political and cultural reforms proposed by anti-colonial movements in such countries as India, Egypt, Algeria, Ghana, and Kenya, and in the Caribbean, therefore formed the fountain head of what we now call post colonialism." (343).

Some of the seminal events which she mentions with regard to post colonialism as an experience and theoretical enterprise are- the intense action of the 1950's such as the Mau Mau guerrilla activity in Kenya, the Algerian Civil War, independence in Ghana in 1957 or a flurry of nationalist activities in the 1960's ranging from independence of some of the major African countries to formalising of political actions such as NAM. In this regard, the "academic" and "theoretical" dimensions of post-coloniality notwithstanding, "As the examples of Fanon and Aurobindo demonstrate, as do those of Gandhi and Memmi, the postcolonial critique which has come down to theorists derives from a long tradition of anti-colonial, radical nationalist thinking and is also highly eclectic in terms of its politics and tributary histories" (347). She takes up the specific cases of post-colonial theorists like Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, to comment on the "academic" and "theoretical" dimensions of post-coloniality in the works of these leading thinkers in the twentieth century. She observes that it was Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), "which in institutional terms marked the beginning of postcolonial studies" (350). The book became seminal for the theoretical aspect of understanding post-coloniality as it "applied non-materialist post-structuralist critical theory in particular that of Michel Foucault, to the political, cultural and material realities of colonization. . ." (350).

There is a mention of some of the key concepts provided by both Spivak and Bhabha as well and the indispensability of their concepts within the field of twentieth century post-colonial studies (the concepts that are of interest to this study would be taken in a while). However, a very significant observation made by Boehmer, as per the needs of this study, is her acknowledgement of critique being levelled at these theorists on "socio-geographic grounds". They talk about third world oppression but are well established Western academics; they theorise about oppression in countries of their birth but are also making use of the advantages of being theorists in a globalised context. Boehmer makes a mention of the studies by Aijaz Ahmad and Arif Dirlik being ultimately directed towards their theorising on this ground itself. The concluding part of this chapter would make use of some of the observations provided by Aijaz Ahmad on these grounds. This would tie up with the concluding as well as the key observation that this chapter is heading towards. It ultimately aims to make a case for post-colonial context necessitating a case not so much for academic theory but a desirable form of representation which is cognizant of depth and intensity of the problems faced by people in the developing world through a realistic socio-geographical location and direct encounter with the victims. This is not to say that this study seeks to

provide some kind of value judgement on the work of these critics or it tends to ignore their genuine contribution to the lives of people other than their act of just being theorists. Far from that, it only in its own humble and modest way, through the placement of Sainath's *Everybody loves a good drought* at its centre, seeks to make sense of that philosophical moment, which in its post- colonial / structural / modern halo, argues for a case of realistic representation of people and their problems. Thus, it becomes significant to just briefly touch upon these institutional aspects of post-colonial studies to elaborate upon the significance of Sainath's strategy of representation.

A beginning can be made with Edward Said's 1978 book *Orientalism*. He begins discussing Orientalism "as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering the Orient through the Western consciousness. . ." (6). Also, more than being any form of a technical appendage, Orientalism is more of a geo-political awareness of a set of relations between the Orient and the Occident traced to the history of colonialism to the present day. In his own words his focus then is on studying Orientalism, "as a dynamic exchange between individual authors and the large political concerns shaped by the three great empires-British, French, American- in whose intellectual and imaginative territory the writing was produced." (15). He labels his principal methodological device for doing the same as *strategic location*, "which is a way of describing the author's position in a text with regard to the Oriental material he writes about . . ." (20). He traces the "Oriental Renaissance" to the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. Also, it was during the nineteenth century that "the field increased enormously in prestige . . ." (43). He mentions a case of a few Oriental institutions in this regard. He then proceeds by means of being a specialist tracing the origins of Orientalism to an analysis of the aspects of the nature of Orient being studied as a "textual universe", distinct modes in which Orient came to be known to the West such as the Bible, rise of Christianity and foregrounding of travelling expeditions of the likes of Marco Polo at the centre of world history and an exposition on the Orient through the significance of the three parties involved in the same, namely the Orient, Orientalist and the Western "consumer" of Orientalism (Said 12,52,67,117,130).

This work was principally influenced by the works of thinkers like Foucault, Gramsci and Chomsky. It has been criticized on various grounds ranging from its lack of coverage on various issues to its simplification of the relationship between the Orient and the Occident.<sup>16</sup> Thus, combining anthropological viewpoint, post-colonial apparatus and his experiences of being a modern Arab subject, Said provided post-colonial theory with its institutional

dimensions taken forward by critics like Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha. Like Said, Spivak has been very consciously writing in the post-structuralist tradition. Her very starting point has been deconstruction (she describes herself as “practical Marxist-feminist deconstructionist”)<sup>17</sup>. This also led to her translation of Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* and also reflects on the much influential *Can the Subaltern Speak?* in 1988. The starting point of this work has been again, “the failure of Deleuze and Guattari to consider the relations between desire, power and subjectivity” rendering “them incapable of articulating a theory of interests”. She analyses an entire tradition of Western Marxism ranging from Hegel, Marx and Althusser and coming down to post-structuralists of the nature of Derrida and Foucault to ultimately analyse the silencing of the third world woman as a subject. Her representative example is an analysis of the practice of *sati* in colonial India. The specific case is that of Bhuvanewari Bhaduri’s *sati*-suicide and what is interesting is Spivak’s observation that whatever reconstruction of the same is done, happens through a host of discursive practices regulated by power-culture nexus, giving a shape to the story of this subjected woman; the crucial and determining element ultimately being that “the subaltern cannot speak”.

In Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture*, one sees a continuation of an exploration of these ambivalent spaces which determine the nature of relations and discursive tendencies between the East and the West. His analysis begins with an emphasis on the category of the hybrid and the most representative case in Bhabha’s analysis is Frantz Fanon who “speaks most effectively from the uncertain interstices of historical change: from the area of ambivalence between race and sexuality. . .” (40). There is then an attempt to define what mimicry is and this has come to be considered to be Bhabha’s chief contribution to the colonial discourse. He terms mimicry as “the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power” (86). In a similar vein: “Hybridity is the sign of productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name of strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal” (112). Interestingly, the concept of hybridity is significant as it is premised on the basis of “strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power” (112). In that sense the “postcolonial space is now ‘supplementary’ to the metropolitan centre; it stands in a subaltern adjunct relation that doesn’t aggrandize the presence of the West . . .” (168). In his own words, his “poststructuralist theory emerges from this postcolonial contra modernity” (175).

In this context, Leela Gandhi provides some seminal points of insight into contemporary debates surrounding post-colonial theory. She makes an observation that the “alliance with poststructuralism has indeed enabled postcolonialism to gain a privileged foothold within the metropolitan academic mainstream” (25). Her observations are in tune with the philosophical premise of this study when she attributes the presence of “anti Cartesian turn” in the writings of Foucault, Derrida and Lyotard. Also: “Each of these thinkers is concerned with the destructive powers of Western rationality, and all of them invoke the nihilistic figure of Nietzsche to bolster their onslaught on the epistemological narcissism of Western culture. . .” (37). Gandhi also enters into the contested territory of critique of contemporary post-colonial theory by the likes of Aijaz Ahmad and Arif Dirlik, where on one hand neither Foucault nor Spivak “concede an absolute schism between intellectual activity and political realities”, and on the other, Ahmad’s “objections take a disturbingly prejudicial turn when he begins to treat all postcolonial theoretical practice as purely recreational” (56). Gandhi, though not as explicitly as Ahmad or Dirlik, seems to herself have problems with containment inherent in this nexus of recent post-structuralist/colonial theory evident through this observation: “Given its poststructuralist inheritance, recent postcolonial critique tends to favour those varieties of counter-hegemonic anti-colonialisms which subvert rather than reverse the chronic oppositions of colonial discourse” (112). This is also best expressed in her observation of how postcolonial literary critique owes a double inheritance to deconstruction, which on one hand enables it to “glean and defend the radical energies of writing” and on the other, “acquires the habit of investing texts with values that cannot be located or fulfilled in reality” (160).

It would now suffice to bring together all the observations made in this chapter as being logically derived from the previous chapter. Before doing the same however, it is significant to look at some of the observations made by Aijaz Ahmad as his critique of contemporary post-colonial theory ties up with that suitable mode of representation which this study places at its centre. In his seminal work, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*, Ahmad makes some significant observations relevant to the needs of this study. In the introductory section; “Literature among the Signs of Our Time”, Ahmad observes the post World War II tendency of transforming all forms of political dissent and activist tendencies into textual dissent and institutional commitments. The question associated with broad political commitments to Marxism now got translated into a poststructuralist and postmodernist tendency of a disturbing kind. This has got to do with his political affiliation to Marxism and hence



noteworthy is his observation: “The notable achievement of ‘children of 68’ is that they did not even intend to give rise to a political formation that might organise any fundamental solidarity with the two million workers who are currently unemployed in France” (2). Also, an inherently disturbing tendency amidst the culture of dissent in the 1960’s is the reality wherein a “radical theorist takes up the role of a professional academic in the metropolitan university, with no accountable relation with classes and class-fractions outside the culture industry” (6).

What characterised the aftermath of decolonisation was the beginning of a new phase in 1980’s in which “the regimes of the national bourgeoisie had already been assimilated into the imperialist structures, and any revolutionary potential had been successfully denied to states which arose out of wars of national liberation . . .” (30). Also, according to Ahmad, the consolidation of post-colonial nation state has largely been a struggle with first socialism, then nationalism and finally in the face of failure of all of these, a convenient resort to post-structuralist appropriation by theorists who could now take satisfaction in being ‘globalised’ intellectuals occupying those spaces of hybridity and migrancy which enabled them to homogenise the realities of a nation-state through apparatus at their service (68). Writing within an explicit post-Marxist paradigm as he does, Ahmad devotes specific chapters to study the writings of Frederic Jameson, Edward Said, Salman Rushdie and Karl Marx (on India), to examine those points of convenient appropriation of heterogeneity of the developing world wherein terms such as ‘Other’ or the ‘Orient’ suitably fulfil the requirements of discursive techniques in a globalising world. Ahmad then problematises any theoretical paradigm which transforms activist leanings into textual culture at the cost of struggle of people in the developing world. His point provides one with sufficient basis to conclude various observations made in the text through once again returning to one’s primary text.

Sainath then chooses that mode of literary representation which though at once arising out of this post colonial/structural/modern moment of dissent does not compromise on the representative aspect of adequately covering the consequences of failure of policy makers of the Indian state on people’s lives. This is not to say that one is making an inadequate comparison between theoretical paradigms and representative models. All that one has been trying to study is the philosophical premise of the middle and the later decades of the twentieth century which enables one to both critically engage as well as be in a position of appreciating Sainath’s representative model. Here inter-subjective technique is utilised to

enhance the heterogeneity of situation where in the post-1991 Indian context, the economic reforms carried in the names of modifying the lives of Indians have in actuality failed to touch the lives of majority of them. What you instead have is a situation where social and political realities of the Indian context such as consolidation of the bureaucratic state, lack of concern for crucial sectors of the nature of health and education, an uncritical acceptance of globalisation in the name of development at the cost of people's lives, an inability to synchronise the priorities of the media with grass root level Indian realities and an inability to guarantee adequate distribution of resources has created the need of a critique based on a representative model which captures the essence of their lives by being a part of the same. Furthermore, an inter-subjective technique is utilised to make sense of a multiplicity of perspectives so as to resist the risk inherent in simplification and homogenisation. While a phenomenological and post-phenomenological, both in its appreciable and problematic dimensions, explains the philosophical underpinnings to *Everybody loves a good drought*, Sainath's representative strategy explicates on the need of moving beyond the same so that the reader is ultimately able to grasp the actuality behind why ultimately "everybody loves a good drought".

## *Notes*

### *Chapter 2:*

1. This information has been culled from Sainath's usefully written introduction to the book. For further details on this, see Sainath ix-xiii.
2. I am indebted to my reading of *Wikipedia* for this information.
3. For further details on this, see *Wikipedia* and Habib 708-36.
4. This information has been culled from a usefully written account on the work. For further details on this, see Joan Stambaugh's translation on Martin Heidegger.
5. Two significant sources of online referencing for the same have been *Wikipedia* and *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.
6. For further details on this, see transcripts of an interview conducted with P.Sainath by this researcher reproduced at the end of this dissertation.
7. This is a paraphrase from an interview of P.Sainath conducted by Manvi Dhillon. For further details, see Sainath's interview with NDTV through citation made towards the end of this study.
8. For this purpose, one is indebted to a reading of Sainath's recent pieces of journalism documented at a place together and mailed by him through a "recents' list" to the researcher.
9. This is a general observation on the people whom Sainath writes about not necessarily being relevant to this specific article. For further details on this, see transcripts of Sainath's interview with the researcher.
10. For further details on this, see introductory note to "On Education" 24-25 and *Wikipedia*.
11. This information has been referenced from the *Wikipedia*.
12. For further information on this, see *Wikipedia* and Hoare's translation of Gramsci 14, 45,177,189.
13. A crucial source of reading in this regard has been the Jean Francois Lyotard page on *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.
14. This information has been culled from one's readings on Foucault at *Wikipedia*.

15. Along with a reading of Macdonell's work, one is indebted to a reading of an online source, the University of Pittsburgh essay "Towards a Neo-Lacanian Theory of Discourse". The authorial details of the same could not be located.
16. The criticism of this book has been referenced from a reading on the book at *Wikipedia*.
17. The phrase has been referenced from a reading of the Spivak page on the *Wikipedia*.

### Chapter 3

#### Understanding the text through the politics of its context-*Everybody loves a good drought* as a literary phenomenon

The previous chapters made an attempt to understand P.Sainath's *Everybody loves a good drought* through a certain set of philosophical positions, debates within those positions, as well as content, theme and technique of the text, along with aspects leading to the generation of the same, within a certain time and space in India's recent history. This chapter would be less interested in probing the philosophical complexity like previous chapters. It instead emerges out of a certain privilege which this study has in terms of its position of working on a contemporary writer who is actively contributing to the process of opinion making in the country through editorials and coverage for a reputed national daily, association with prestigious universities in India as well as overseas, an incredible achievement in the form of writing experience of about three decades leading to a host of national and international awards in journalism along with himself being a mentor and a teacher to many students.<sup>1</sup> Here, the focus would now shift from the aspects of generation of the text and its inter-subjective technique of commenting on the failures of the post-colonial nation state, to the factors contributing towards it becoming the kind of literary phenomenon that it has in the recent decades. This includes a focus on its translations (both regional as well as national), the style of the writer and the mode of utilisation of language in the book, the awards and glory earned by the book, its market status in terms of its countless prints and non-fiction bestseller label its story of making its way through the politics of market, while earning a success, which to some extent, has been a consequence of this global set up. This can be explained from the fact that the same global set up which explains the necessity of critique in the book of the economic reforms of 1991 on humanitarian grounds also explains its phenomenal success and its ability to reach and interact with the consumer/reader in the first place.

Here, what should be clearly mentioned is that in spite of this very useful collaboration with the writer, this study has a certain neutrality as well as individuality of perspective and is ultimately, more than anything else, interested in a very basic human ethic on which the text is grounded. This refers to its faith in utilising subjectivity of every single affected person to facilitate a genuine critique of what has ultimately gone wrong with the development story in India. The starting point in that sense could first be a brief overview of Sainath's writings, life as well as career.<sup>2</sup> A beginning can then be made with his writings for the *Blitz* dating back to the early 1980's.<sup>3</sup> An analysis on these grounds becomes significant as not only was it the starting point in the career of the concerned writer but a lot of details, themes and perspectives integral to *Everybody loves a good drought*, can be traced to his style of writing, observing and conceptualising in

this newspaper.<sup>4</sup> This newspaper was active in the process of opinion making in the country during the 1980's which was a time when there was not much pressure on the media of the market forces which came to determine a certain trend of "hyper-commercialisation" (an expression utilised by Sainath in the interview to the researcher) in the journalism of 1990's. Thus, there is a focus on special issues which form the conscience of a nation and determine the way in which national processes shape individual lives.<sup>5</sup> An analysis of the special issues ranging across the decade from 1980's to 90's leaves the reader with some interesting observations. Firstly, there is hardly any advertising in these editions. The papers seem like a research oriented study with an in-depth analysis into issues of the nature such as housing, gender bias or problems with the health system. The reports are characterised by brevity and clarity of perspective with hardly any issue being carried to the next page.

Also, as a close analysis of some of these editions would suggest, there is that same inclination towards utilising photography as a technique to supplement the descriptive aspects of the analysis which is evident in Sainath's contemporary writings as well as the book. There is clarity of perspective and unity of thought in analysis of most of these issues and again, a direct encounter with their lives enabled Sainath to do this kind of writing. The sharp and honest nature of most of these write-ups can hardly be envisioned as possible in the journalistic context of today. Also, the focus on a single issue either carried in the name of "A Sick Society" or "How the Other Half Lives" or "Unwanted Girl Child" supplemented with data from government reports, heart wrenching photographs, collaborative intellectual effort and individuality of opinion ultimately provides the reader with an affirmative understanding about the qualitative deterioration in today's situation. From this point, it would suffice to just briefly mention the aftermath of *Blitz* years in Sainath's life as they would ultimately tie up with an overall analysis of the representative machinery surrounding the text. In this regard, it is also significant to briefly analyse some of his publications as an overarching perspective provided by them would not only tie up with the thematic significance of *Everybody loves a good drought* but also their mode of articulation inclusive of participation of foreign universities and publication houses, a collaborative intellectual participation at the global level and an uncompromising vision as well as critique, would tie up with the analysis of representative machinery put in place by globalisation.<sup>6</sup>

Here, a beginning can be made with some of those publications which have been handed in a certain order by the writer to the researcher (see the works cited list). In this context, one can begin with his published chapter in the book, *Informatics/Development-Information, Economics and Power: The North-South Dimension*. The book has been a consequence of conference proceedings held at the Graduate School of Journalism, University of Western Ontario in 1984 and was compiled and edited by a team of Peter Desbarats and George McNair. The school has a keen interest in the field of development journalism and Sainath's contribution in this compilation has been a consequence of him being the visitor in the same year.

His paper is titled “Information, Economics and Power-A Journalist’s Perspective” and arose out of a concern for information and communication being monitored by select centres of power in today’s transnational context. Thus the priorities of the Third World media are set elsewhere and what is to be heard about the problems about the developing countries is, in a sense, beyond their control. This issue assumes urgency when a call is made in the context of coverage of the apartheid: “How much of Mandela do we see in the same newspapers? How many of my North American friends have even heard of him, let alone know anything of the life and struggles of this legendary African leader?” (88).

Mandela does not get popular coverage in international media or does not win the Nobel Peace Prize because, “the transnational information corporations are part of an international economic order that has a crucial stake in the survival in the survival of the racist state.” (88). Thus, fairly enough, one seconds Sainath in his bewilderment at BBC and Reuters being perfect representatives of freedom of expression when they represent a mindset which colonised more than half the world in recent decades. Surprisingly, the combined budget of leading media agencies of USA, UK and France put together, “outstrips the cumulative communications budget of most of the developing nations put together” (91). There is also connivance amongst the transnational and national news agencies in subversion of norms considered to be desirable with regard to distribution of foreign news by foreign agencies in India (Sainath 96). Again in India, as is the case with most of the developing countries, advertising is controlled “by a handful of multinational advertising agencies, mostly U.S. based, with dire implications for editorial content and independence.” (97). The Westview Press publication, *Triumph of the Image-The Media’s War in the Persian Gulf-A Global Perspective*, arises out of a skewed coverage of how the Gulf War was literally sold to the rest of the world. The arguments made by Hamid Mowlana in the preface to the book are worthy of being quoted at length:

New communication technologies made it possible to transport images and words about the war in the Persian Gulf in real time to hundreds of millions of people around the world . . . what was in fact witnessed was media imagery successfully orchestrated to convey a sense of triumph and thus to realise results that reality and reason could never have achieved.(xi)

In his write up for this compilation titled “The New World *Odour*: The Indian Experience” (Chapter Five), Sainath makes a mention of how ultimately the CNN has arrived in India. This is his usual brilliantly sarcastic and incisive mode of analysing the effect that this war had on the economies of the developing world. In a rather interesting way, he captures the effect of this war on the Indian sensibility where “news reports about a war against a villainous dictator (even if relatively unknown to most Indians) cut little ice with an Indian public that had seen tens of thousands dead in three wars launched against them by U.S. backed dictators” (73). Sainath’s conclusion is interesting as well as thought provoking in his observation that while the Western media suitably manipulated the war in their own interests ironically, “the Indian

media in reproducing most of the very material that made the Western media successful ensured their own failure.” (74). There are some very interesting aspects in his write up titled “Fact and Fiction” published in the book titled *Exploring the Heartland-An Agenda for the Media*( edited by Umashanker Phadnis) and brought out by the Gyan Publishing House (1998). The publication “is a succinct account of the proceedings of three workshops organised by the Press Institute to promote the coverage of human development problems of which not much notice has been taken by the media, particularly the press.” (Ajit Bhattacharjea-Preface). Even here, though in a completely different context, a lot of observations made by Sainath echo in *Everybody loves a good drought*, also explaining his style of writing and the uniqueness and ethical basis that he provides to the same.

Thus, he begins with a situation of optimism for print media in this country, to be followed by the lament, as to why, does he feel that rural reporting is not going to take place in the present context of crisis reporting. This is because, “we have to stop looking at crisis as an event and start looking at crisis as a process” (18). The essence of Sainath’s argument is a quality also inherent in his book. His constant reminder to the reader is that any natural calamity, any crisis situation, or for that matter farmer’s suicides and agricultural indebtedness or rural migration and crisis in irrigation or infrastructure, should not be viewed as “events” but as “processes”. This means that a change cannot be brought about only when calamity of the nature of a disaster suddenly strikes; the events behind the same have to be sufficiently probed, reported, understood and analysed. More importantly, this has to be done not through a distant critical gaze but an inward look of concern and genuineness where situations, people and their problems are not simplified. It is this kind of a concern which enables Sainath to write across a range of issues which are unique, interesting as well as not much talked about in the mainstream media. This is evident in two of the documents that he prepared in collaboration with the Indian School of Social Sciences, Mumbai, titled, *Why the Prasar Bharati Bill is Flawed* (1990) and *Patent Folly* (1991). The former arises out of a state of concern for regulation of government owned media and what a proposed bill in this direction did to the same. His opposition stems from his consistent concern of transferring money of the public to monopoly business houses under pressures of the nature of advertising, sponsorship etc.

The document then proposes several amendments to the Prasar Bharati Bill. Some of the major problems that he mentions get concentrated in a statement of the nature: “The bill could effectively confer on Big Business the unfettered right to enter the drawing room of millions of Indians and impart to them and their children the values and ethics best suited to the furtherance of private monopoly interests” (3). In a similar vein, in *Patent Folly*, Sainath extends his concerns to the Indian drug industry whereby he mentions: “What would be the likely impact on employment if foreigners were allowed to monopolise the importing of vital goods into the country, without having to manufacture those goods in India, while Indians themselves were not allowed to manufacture those goods or import them independently?” (1). There are some noteworthy



aspects about this document. There is a utilisation made of animations which are designed as conversations with messages reflecting the effects of excessive foreign intrusion and multinationals on the Indian pharmaceutical and medical industry as well as healthcare. Secondly, it is also one of those documents that was written and typed in a span of twenty four hours in response to demands by a major anti-WTO rally which needed a booklet.<sup>7</sup> Also, the situation is dismal to an extent wherein, as per writer's observation: "Third World countries will lose anywhere between US\$ 43-102 billion annually if the industrialised countries succeed in changing international trade regulations to force them to pay royalties for patented products and technologies" (18). He then concludes with the significance of India taking a "firm stand at GATT taking an open position on deliberations both in home and in Geneva" (25). The final call is against the compromise of economic sovereignty in the face of India's amendment of her Patents Act.

There are two publications by the IHJ, Japan Foundation. He has made some significant points in his write-ups published in these books. These two publications are titled, *Unequal Worlds and the Roads Ahead* (2004) and *Contradictions of Globalization-Democracy, Culture and the Public Sphere* (2008), edited by Marian Pastor Roces and Tessa Morris Suzuki respectively. As observed in the preface to the 2008 edition, the IHJ, though initiated in 1952 for bridging the gap between the East and the West, (more specifically with reference to the U.S-Japan relations), realised the need of entering into the domain of the interdisciplinary by going beyond a merely bilateral framework.<sup>8</sup> His write-up in the 2004 publication is titled; "The Age of Inequality-Life in the Times of Market Fundamentalism". This particular write-up again touches on some of the most relevant themes that appear in most of Sainath's writings-agricultural indebtedness, poor or the developing countries losing out in the face of progress in the developed countries at multilateral negotiations, and an increasing rich-poor divide with the intensification of activities related to globalisation. So gravity of the situation is explained by instances of the nature as these: "India has now piled up fifty million tons of food grain despite a severe prolonged stagnation in agriculture" (5). Furthermore farm suicides are happening, small health centres are being closed and luxury hospitals are being built, libraries are being closed and multiplexes being opened and interestingly: "We complain of the century's greatest drought-but build hundreds of water parks and golf courses" (6). He makes an interesting observation of the kind of global attention that SARS received, even in India, though in tangible terms, the consequences on the population were not that grave, say as, compared to tuberculosis or malaria which regularly afflicts rural population in India. He then provides a brief analysis with regard to situation in Japan and analyses the same in light of issues like development, debt, poverty etc.

In the second publication (2008), the proceedings of the conference have been reproduced with Sainath's write-up titled "The Age of Inequality". The focus here is again on the realities of India in the post-1991 economic reforms context wherein, "India now ranks fourth in the world in the number of billionaires. But it ranks 126<sup>th</sup> in human development" (76). The list of problems is endless and disturbing; more so when it is

concealed by the development jargon of the media. These include low life expectancy rates, low per capita GDP, high rate of child deaths, the high number of people going hungry in contrast to a select few billionaires celebrated by the media and the reality of this country facing the worst farm crisis as well as suicides by farmers (Sainath 77). The frustration of being poor in this country, the agony of being dispossessed and forsaken and most significantly, being a farmer in what has been predominantly an agricultural country is summed up in an expression as apt as-“The dream of the Indian farmer is to be born a European cow”.<sup>9</sup> The book, *India, Another Millennium* has been edited by Romila Thapar (2000). Sainath’s chapter features in the book in amidst stalwarts such as Romila Thapar, Krishna Kumar, Dhruv Raina, Bina Agarwal, Dipankar Gupta, N.Ram etc. It is written in a context where a millennium comes to an end and a new one begins. In that sense, some kind of an understanding of what is it that the future holds is required. Thapar’s call in the introduction is ultimately to take cognizance of that “visible duality in Indian society between those who are privileged in various ways and those who have to somehow survive” (xxi).

Sainath’s articulation in his essay titled “The Age of Inequality” is of a similar nature when he observes the conflicts over the distribution of resources are being carried forward from the 1990’s to the new millennium. In his trademark brief, incisively clear, effectively articulate, yet thought provoking way, he argues that the story of India’s development has become synonymous with institutions like the World Bank or the IMF calling the shots at the policy making table without any awareness of how grass root level realities reflect the lives of Indians (Sainath 153). There is an observation pertaining to low level of spending in sectors as crucial as health and education. Some of the recent noticeable trends in terms of the events passing by with the millennium; have been instances of the nature of increasing illiterates, growth in federalism in terms of an enhancement of the Centre-State relations, an assertiveness in Indians with regard to a greater awareness of their basic democratic rights, rise in violence as well as communal hatred in distinct parts of the country, an increasing corruption as well as stagnation in bureaucracy, a major Dalit upsurge in some of the significant parts of this country and a sharpening of already prevalent inequality with the incoming of new technologies (Sainath 156-166). The concluding call is then through an evocation of the idea of Victor Hugo; a hope that there will be a new millennium where social and economic justice will prevail.

The purpose of culling these observations from Sainath’s write-ups in various publications or proceedings of a conference or a seminar is not to create some kind of an understanding about his body of work. The purpose rather is to gain observance of that humanistic essence where his vision and articulation does not fail to take into cognizance the subjectivity of the most deprived and marginalised along with providing a neutral and an opinionated perspective to the reader which is based on facts, observations and a concern for why has India’s development project been such a failure on holistic grounds. His writings are spread over a range of books, newspapers and magazines which have been a consequence of not just national but a global

understanding with regard to the aftermath of colonialism being characterised even by a worst form of inequality. Now one country does not rule over the other openly, rather, resources, think-tanks, international institutions and policy making scenario is manipulated by a few countries to aggravate social, economic as well as political issues of the developing world. It is this which provides one with an enhanced understanding of *Everybody loves a good drought*. This study is not dedicated to a writer or his work; it emerges out of an acknowledgement and appreciation of depth and significance of the same, yet it eventually is about analysing a global and national context, which led to a book of the nature of *Everybody loves a good drought* to become a representative voice of the human suffering in the developing world, along with becoming the literary phenomenon that it did. Both this chapter and study would eventually move towards that kind of an understanding. This is also necessary because one has to recognise that ultimately, even in reading or appreciating Sainath, one is within a representative framework created by the writer and his ethic.

Also, his critique of forces of globalisation or liberalisation should not make reader/thinker forget the fact that ultimately the book and his mode of operation is a consequence of these globalising forces in the decolonised context where both journalism as well as modes of articulation have got a kind of platform where they can be heard more and hence be relatively more powerful tools of discursive practices as compared to previous years. As Sainath himself observed at one of his talks, it is something to represent an action journalistically but the real change comes when all institutions of civil society get together to transform this reportage into a policy; into a thought which is endowed with the capacity of bringing transformation in human lives.<sup>10</sup> In this regard, what is interesting to observe is that excerpts from Sainath's book as well as his newspaper articles are included in some seminal publications taken out by elite publishing houses. Thus, there is a section from *Everybody loves a good drought* ("A dissari comes calling") titled "Reports from Orissa" published in the book *The Penguin Book of Indian Journeys* (edited by Dom Moraes). His reports have also been included by a leading publishing house, Ordfont, in the volume *Best Reporting of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* alongside giants like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Studs Turkel and John Reed.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, some of his finest articles from *The Hindu* are utilised by Anupama Rao in a rather significant book titled *Gender & Caste* (2003). This series is on analysing the issues surrounding Indian feminism and "renewed national debate about the politics of caste inaugurated by the Mandal decision in 1989" (3). Also, the reader looks at areas and issues when gender converges with caste to throw light on new issues surrounding the lives of Indian women. In her own words, Rao suggests, "that dalit feminism would involve the re-examination of *gender relations as fundamental to the broad categories of caste*; that we must understand the multiple and changing manifestations of caste in Indian society" (5).

Sainath's reports published in Rao's book are titled "Unmusical Chairs" and "Heart-loads and Heartbreak" and they investigate "the conditions of dalits across the country, offering vivid accounts of the

perverse forms of sociality that constitute the perpetuation of untouchability today” (31). These are again, in the typical style of Sainath, investigative reports from the field. The first one (“Unmusical Chairs”) is reported from Nagapattinam and is related to the election of Abhuravam, a female dalit farm labourer, to the post of being the head of the panchayat. The struggle and toil begins from here with Abhuvaram being compelled to face harassment on an everyday basis, at times in the form of a death threat, or at times through the disturbing form of exclusion. And as the other report demonstrates, there are female manual scavengers of Rajasthan, who get a *roti*, in exchange of the work that she does. Again, in Sainath’s words: “Manual scavenging is a caste-based occupation” (342). The politics of the writer or his representation notwithstanding (all writers and writing for that matter is political), these reports again demonstrate the pain of being doubly excluded in a country that prides itself on all inclusive development, through utilisation of first hand testimonies, proper nouns and a delineation of the situation as it is. In this context, what is interesting to note is that Sainath has been holding exhibitions of various photographs that he takes for his reports in different parts of the country. Since 2001, an exhibition of his photographs has toured India seen and exhibited at places attracting rural audience.<sup>12</sup> The coverage of his photography has been done by reputed magazines of the nature of *Art India* (Volume XII, 2007). In the well researched lead essay titled “Outside the Dark Room”, Shukla Sawant provides examples from Sainath’s exhibits *Visible Work, Invisible Women* and *Brick Kiln Freeway*, and observes that not only has Sainath’s photography provided new discursive spaces to make a call against injustice but the same has happened as his “photographs are not escapist fantasies” (32).

Here, it would be fruitful to briefly look at some of the documentaries made on Sainath’s journalism and his way of searching and reporting from some of the most inaccessible corners of this country.<sup>13</sup> These movies made on his life have not been done in a mainstream fashion. They are largely within the mould of being documentaries. These two works are titled *A Tribe of His Own: The Journalism of P.Sainath* and *Nero’s Guests*. The former has been directed by the Canadian filmmaker Joe Moulins and has won fourteen international awards at various film festivals. As observed in the account of his life, career and writings handed by Sainath to this researcher: “From 1995 onwards, Vancouver based documentary maker Joe Moulins made two extended visits to India across several years, accompanying Sainath to some of the poorest villages of the country, where the journalist often bases himself. The film is the outcome of the tracking of that work, which Moulins found inspiring. . .”. This documentary is for fifty minutes. Deepa Bhatia’s *Nero’s Guests* is a more recent film derived out of Sainath’s coverage of farm crisis and suicides in areas like Vidarbha and went on to be acclaimed at international festivals in the years of 2009 and 2010. These two films adequately sum the entirety of Sainath’s career and writings. Some of the seminal points his career have been his writings for the *Blitz* group, his Times fellowship enabling the possibility of both his reports for the *Times of India* as well as content of *Everybody loves a good drought* and his writing period

for *The Hindu* from 2004 onwards, which enabled him to give that kind of primacy and centrality to rural reporting, which has been a first of its kind in India's recent history (Magsaysay Award to Sainath was largely a consequence of these efforts and Deepa Bhatia's film covers this period of his career).

In *A Tribe of His Own*, Moulins largely utilises a global perspective on journalism to cover Sainath's reporting which eventually led to the writing of the book. These perspectives include other stalwarts in the field such as Peter Desbarats who elucidates on how ultimately, both a clear vision, as well as lack of propaganda, enables Sainath to give primacy to human suffering in his reports. There is a utilisation of perspectives of the marginalised, local activists and those suffering on the edge so as to provide a holistic view to the consumer. This consists of not just what has gone wrong with the development project in the country, but is a personalised point of entry into their lives through their visuals, interviews and snippets from the lives captured in the form of a moving image. The only difference is that while the reader could imagine and view them in the book; now he has the privilege of seeing, hearing and reliving these moments with these people. One can also witness a younger Sainath telling his tale with a mixture of youthful idealism and reality of experiences to fight with what ultimately should not be a false glimmer of hope for these people, as well as himself. This documentary largely covers the stories of the book. The observance of the same becomes necessary as each aspect of the same would tie up with this chapter's analysis of the story of both the global circulation of the book as well as the literary phenomenon that it became after its publication.

*Nero's Guests* is a more wholesome and recent film covering the legendary status of its writer as well as his recent coverage on the farm crisis in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra showcasing how his reports for *The Hindu* forced policy makers and politicians to visit these districts and hold sessions in Parliament leading to steps like announcement of loan waiver etc. It also puts a perspective on global inequality where, the life of a poor cotton farmer is contrasted to the beautiful lives of those inhabiting the metropolis, where an IMF or a World Bank chair has come to determine the realities of those labourers and farmers of the developing world which they have little idea about. In that sense it is both an extension as well as a fitting conclusion to Moulins' film gathering the changes which have happened on the national front. The basic problems and limitations however remain the same. This is where Bhatia's capturing of Sainath's mode of investigative journalism as well as reports from the field is reminiscent of Moulins' style. There have been some changes in Sainath's mode of functioning as well but the basic techniques as well as apparatus remains pretty much in place with the writer still going and living with these people and carrying a multiplicity of perspectives to write not more than an 800 word report on the ills plaguing the development jargon. These communicative tools are then utilised to provide a wakeup call to a metropolis inhabitant, who knows about his/her rural counterpart through a pitiful generalisation, but not through a face-to-face encounter. Sainath does the same by letting the victim speak in his words; combination of his testimony with his photographed image and conveyed through brilliant and hitting sub-text. These films also make an important observation

pertaining to a change that Sainath brought to his writing style after being a popular name through the *Blitz* group of publications in the 1980's. An adherence to conventional journalism was not helping him much and this is where the Times fellowship enabled him to do the kind of work which eventually led to the book becoming a breakthrough in his career. (See the interview published at the end of this study)

At this point, it would suffice to return to one's primary text to make some observations on how language is utilised as a medium of social change. This would tie up with an overall analysis of circulation as well as representative machinery surrounding the book. Sainath's mode of articulation as well as using language is effectively simple and incisively articulate. He avoids long sentences, does not care that much about the rules of language but instead modifies these rules as per the demands of the existing situation. Thus, if there is a rhetorical flush or sarcasm or sympathetic tone, it is all the calling of the situation which he is himself experiencing and then documenting for the reader so as to arouse those emotions and reactions which are as possibly close to the authenticity of the situation as possible. Here, as Sainath himself shared with this researcher at a point of time, his ultimate aim is to enhance the reality of the situation through language and not the other way round as he knows an array of languages "equally badly".<sup>14</sup> This is also a characteristic feature of Sainath's pieces in his journalism and other publications analysed above. He respects brevity and his few words communicate a lot in the face of human suffering. There are no ethical digressions or philosophical expositions or narcissistic endeavours. Even if there are instances of the same, these are brilliantly woven with language being utilised as a medium of social critique, genuine articulation and persistent pursuit of truth.

He accomplishes this through various means. One of them is to be understood in the context of his inter-subjective technique analysed in the previous chapter. He does not utilise language in a whimsical fashion; instead it is utilised to articulate the subjectivity of a victim in the form of recording his testimony, documentation of a neutral perspective through providing an opinion of an intellectual or an activist and finally, his own understanding of the situation which emerges out of that consistency which is a consequence of living with these people, and experiencing their stories of undeserved misery; a situation where they are deprived of even their very basic fundamental rights. This is where Sainath rarely speaks in the first person or through a generalised perspective. What the reader gets is the perspective of a Ramdas Korwa (Sainath 10-14), a Majhi Dhuraa (Sainath 15-19) or a bewildered Sainath himself who keeps on wondering (with the reader), as to how can a road be built in the name of tribal development when their basic needs are not taken care of, or for that matter, how can an entire group of humans lose benefits accrued onto them just because of a spelling error in the government files. Furthermore, whenever Sainath provides a personal or a critical perspective or speaks in the first person to the reader, the language is tellingly agile, sarcastic and deliberately conclusive. This is, as Peter Desbarats also observes, Sainath's way of taking on the government by quoting their statistics.<sup>15</sup>

In this context, a significant qualification that needs to be made from whatsoever modest understanding that this researcher could gather about development journalism or writings in the allied spheres is the fact that although a representative name, Sainath is one among those many journalists, policy makers, activists and intellectuals who are constantly working in these areas on an everyday basis to make a difference to the lives of these people through their writings, actions or policies. Many of them unfortunately do not get heard or noticed due to their inability to effectively utilise tools of mainstream culture. Sainath's achievement lies in his ability of effectively utilise these tools of the mainstream culture while creating a body of powerful opinion in a creative and a unique manner, which, has established one affirmative truth in the recent history of Indian journalism-India does not give time to its villages and the poor; none of the popular middle-class newspapers have a full time labour correspondent or a rural affairs reporter.<sup>16</sup>It is this which has enabled him to modify language to report on some of the most inaccessible areas and lives within India's social structure. He utilises language on the same lines wherein reportage is done without any manipulation. Thus, one has a quote, an opinion and a testimony in the same paragraph in examples of this kind:

Urban India may have rediscovered yoga and indigenous medical systems. But here hakims, unanis, ayurveds, homeopaths-all have defected to the allopathic school. 'Some of them', says a police official, 'have been compounders or doctor's assistants for two or three years. All give injections which they have no right to do.' Besides, says a senior official, they 'are accountable to no one, can prescribe anything and get away with it'. (29)

Here, language becomes a powerful medium of social critique and this has been a tendency visible from Sainath's style of writings from the *Blitz* days. This is where the researcher also felt that a critique of development going on humanitarian grounds is at times at the risk of seeming like rhetoric with Sainath repeating some of the same set of observations across a range of works. However, as Peter Desbarats would remind the viewer, there is ultimately no propaganda in Sainath's writings. Thus all writing becomes a consequence of witnessing human suffering and what at times seems repetitive over a range of publications is ultimately a critical engagement with those issues whose basic nature refuses to change over a range of years. Also, another characteristic feature of Sainath's utilisation of language is that he does not let English seem as if it is not one of the Indian languages. His understanding of local milieu and people's problems is so grounded in their reality and he transforms a lot of these flavours for the reader into a fervent imagination through a homogenising force like English. This is the probable reason of the book providing a fertile ground for translations into various languages; an aspect that this study would look into just in a while. Also, this is Sainath's deep understanding of a certain legacy that was bequeathed upon Indian journalism as a consequence of its significant involvement in the freedom struggle. This is where Sainath's style of writing is aggressive, militant, investigative and refuses to follow any rules. A reader can experience a punctuation mark unexpectedly; a sentence can be as short as upto two words without at times qualifying for being a

sentence. Furthermore, there is often an unexpected change of pronouns where he switches on from the first to the third to shift tracks from a critical perspective to an aggressively militant zeal; this is to own a claim, that he has been there and witnessed it all. Sample this:

Our present level of funding in education is absurd. There is little chance of doing better without directing *at least* 6 per cent of GDP towards it. Talking about South Asian ‘Tigers’ as a model has a good deal of hypocrisy built into it anyway. The more so for a nation committed to democracy. In the field of education, it’s worse. India is not willing to commit anything like the funds those nations did for schooling. (53)

In Nunmatti village, near Godda town, which has a large colony of Kahars-poorest of the poor—a black goat proves to be the solitary scholar in the primary school building. Two others sit patiently on the window sills. Not a single Kahar child here goes to school though two of them are ‘registered’. (55)

As noticeable, there is no grammatical coherence to these sentences with gravity of situation and not language dominating Sainath’s writing. The flow of language is determined by the actuality of his experiences. There is no sensationalising through language. He informs the reader in a very gentle manner at one level through utilisation of a combination of photographs, personal connection and simple words. Yet, at another level his vision and perspective is always very clear and the nature of his critique is uncompromising as well as urgent. In the example above, the seriousness of the situation of goat being a “solitary school”, is complimented with a picture reflecting the same situation which reveals the pathetic nature and absurdity of it all. The switch from a first person pronoun to being a neutral observer takes one back to an analysis of Sainath’s inter-subjective technique supplemented by inputs provided by him to this researcher. Here, his aim is to resist any form of affirmation himself and not paint victimhood; but instead to leave things to the reader’s imagination through utilising an investigator’s lens, a humanistic perspective, aggressive streak as well as reformist zeal.

Furthermore, Sainath has a style where he is making the reader constantly shift from one perspective to the other. He writes in a brief manner but at no point does the reader get an opportunity to take it easy. There is a national perspective, a regional outlook in tune with the local flavours of the region that he covers and then there is a sudden change to a global vision. The language is utilised to fit the needs of the same which has enabled both Sainath’s writing as well as his book to transcend national frontiers so as to set standards in global developments vis-a-vis journalism. This is also observed by the Ramon Magsaysay citation on Sainath.<sup>17</sup> This is evident at various places in the book. In the sections on health, education, dams and displacement as well as the concluding section titled “Poverty, Development and the Press”, the focus is on global developments in the decolonised context leading to entry of multinational institutions and their



interference in crucial sectors of the Indian economy as well as social life. This has largely happened without understanding the basic problems of a majority of those lives who constitute the 'real' India. A lot of these instances were observed in the first chapter; from the perspective of language, the critical and journalistic points of insight that he provides at the beginning of most of the sections has a correct mixture of reflection and incisiveness which brings together his observations of years as a journalist, reformist zeal insistent on the necessity of change and those occasional philosophical digressions reflective of youthful idealism as well as a hope for change.<sup>18</sup> He writes on national issues in terms of critiquing the failures of the post-colonial state but engages with global debates, and by then creating an amalgamation of the two, provides powerful and effective conclusions.

This effectiveness is an integral feature of the book and language has a rather significant role to play in the same. In sections of the nature of "And the Meek Shall Inherit the Earth-The problems of forced displacement", "Beyond the Margin-Survival strategies of the poor" or "With their Own Weapons-When the poor fight back", there is a focus on language being utilised to accurately cover the angst of what is it these communities have to go through on an everyday basis. Some of the examples are:

Badhwa and Birsa Asur lie trembling on the jungle's edge as the sky belches fire and the earth beneath rumbles. The terrified Asur tribals of Sekuapani stay grouped in circles with their children, cattle, goats and pigs. They just hope their village, which they evacuated hours earlier, survives . . . Displacement is the key word across the Chhotanagpur region. Major projects affect millions of people here adversely . . . Their capacity to resist is the least. (78-9)

Then there is an extremely personalised point of entry into the problems of these people with Sainath's tone becoming one of the countryside in a analysis of typicality of countryside and its various 'characters' in a section of the nature of "Despots, Distillers, Poets & Artists-Characters of the countryside" or one of an investigative journalist examining the infrastructural lacunae as well as disastrous consequences of a host of issues in a section of the nature of "Everybody loves a good drought-Water problems, real and rigged".

Furthermore, this effectiveness operates at another level altogether when the reader is provided with a whole round of post-scripts on subsequent developments arising as a consequence of Sainath's second round of visits to these places after reporting them once. These post-scripts record the changes that happened due to his reporting in terms of immediate action. While some of them are about an improvement that people are making to their daily lives through possession of cattle, there are the ones about stories on health in rural areas, along with reports on anomalies in the public healthcare system inviting official reactions from people in the Parliament with teams being dispatched to these regions and people in public health care centres getting hauled up followed by positive results of the nature of medicines and doctors following up. Other instances are the ones in the section on displacement wherein, an army firing range project in spite of all its

effort gets dismantled because of local resistance and effective writing by people like Sainath, villagers of Neema win a part of their battle after being compensated and shifted with dignity and questions coming up in the Parliament about Met Chem's project in Bihar or sacking of the entire district administration due to a personal round of visits made by Digvijay Singh after reading Sainath's reports on Surguja in the *Times of India* (Sainath 9, 43-44, 124, 269-70, 365-66).

Another aspect of Sainath's writing and his use of language is his innovative defiance of all conventional forms in every respect. While one has already analysed it in reference to the internal contents of the book, there is a usage of emotionally rendered titles as well as sub-titles and hence, the focus of the reader is not so much on issues and the stories behind them, but predominantly, the human suffering which ties them together; so there is the *Still Crazy After All These Years* or *This is the Way We Go to School* or *And the Meek Shall Inherit the Earth*. Each of these titles more than being a specific reference to the stories contained within them is ultimately about a nation failing on humanitarian grounds to provide basic amenities to its people. It is here that language now enables one to analyse the question of representative machinery and aspects of circulation surrounding the book which ultimately is the central aim of this chapter. As already analysed above, some excerpts from this book have already been published in an array of publications as chapters within that context (as the case with the Dom Moraes book titled *The Penguin Book of Indian Journeys*). An interesting aspect to begin with; while analysing the issue of representation and aspect of circulation surrounding the text is the issue of translations.

The book, though originally written in English, has been translated into a number of regional as well as foreign languages. These are-Hindi, Marathi, Malayalam, Bengali, Oriya, Kannada, Finnish and Swedish.<sup>19</sup> The translations have not only ensured wider accessibility for the book but were made possible because the book had already become a phenomenon after its release; being on the list of Penguin non-fiction bestseller for a considerable point of time. This book, as he mentions to this researcher in an interview, was turned down by many publishing houses. The book was published with a Shobha De book and did neither get any advertisement at that point of time; nor one till date. Yet it created its own ethic and history and qualified for its writer himself expressing to this researcher: "The book mystifies me to date".<sup>20</sup> As a matter of fact, "the book has been utilised in distinct contexts ranging from NGO's, administration academies in India or, departments of political science, journalism, economics, sociology or development studies of universities in India or overseas. In one university, we found it being used by the Engineering Department".<sup>21</sup> Also, as Sainath mentioned to this researcher during the interview, the royalty from the book has largely been channelized towards the sponsoring of Counter Media awards, benefitting workers, activists and journalists rooted in India of these villages.

The purpose of providing this information is not to romanticise the idea of either this book or its writer. It is just done so that one is brought in a position of looking at the entire issue of representation within a globalised context. Thus, in order to understand this issue of representation and circulation in detail, a few observations need to be made. The book was published in 1996 by Penguin books which has been an elite and reputed publishing house operating in a credible manner, nationally as well as globally, and is currently in its 32<sup>nd</sup> print.<sup>22</sup> The book went on to win thirteen major awards “including the prestigious European Commission’s journalism award, the Lorenzo Natali Prize”.<sup>23</sup> Though the book did not get any advertising and discovered its own journey and success because of being a rather unique literary innovation in the field of non-fiction writing in the post-1991 Indian context, yet this fact cannot be discounted that the book came to the forefront at a time when the Indian economy had sufficiently opened up. This was to have a significant impact on the publishing scenario in the country, reading habits of the people, greater awareness pertaining to global rules determining circulation such as access to both foreign universities and publishing houses, an ability to market oneself in a language like English which has global outreach as well as the advent of newer tools within popular culture, such as the internet, providing a certain mode of transmission of the text to the reader/consumer. None of these points have been raised to question the greatness of the book or the writer. These two aspects are the very ethical basis to this study.

These questions become relevant as they not only will provide a comprehensive understanding of the literary phenomenon that this book became in the post-1991 context, but would also complete the story of transmission of this text to this researcher as well. Before proceeding further though, it is necessary to bring up a project so as to make some observations pertaining to Indian Writing in English and contemporary market for the same.<sup>24</sup> This Ferguson Centre project was a consequence of collaboration between Indian researchers and this Centre located at U.K. It assumes significance from the point of view of this study and has been done in a unique manner as a combined effort of intellectual acumen of these researchers of research with regard to some significant questions related to reading habits within popular culture through detailed questionnaires as well as surveys; detailed interviews of people managing some significant aspects related to book publishing and circulation as well as an analysis of reading habits around the issues of language, translation and so on. A lot of these issues are central to the complete understanding of *Everybody loves a good drought* as a literary phenomenon in recent years which is the central aim of this chapter. One would then make a mention of some of these observations as they would tie up with the needs of this study.

These papers have been transformed from workshops and research oriented studies into a set of coherent observations. A beginning can be made with Dr Tapan Basu’s paper titled “Contemporary Indian Writing in English: Is there a market in India for this text?”.<sup>25</sup> His paper is titled in the interrogative mode and raises some significant questions from the academic point of view. This is all the more interesting as these questions have hardly been raised before. The basic argument tying his various set of observations is that

from mid-1980's onwards, "a market has indeed developed in India for Indian Writing in English on a dimension and proportion in which such a market never existed in our country . . .". Also, this growing market can be explained from "an ambience of material prosperity deriving from unprecedented economic growth over the last one and a half decades, increase in both national and per capita incomes, a rise in consumer confidence, and an expansion of the middle class constituency of likely customers for books". The post-liberalisation scenario has witnessed some interesting developments on not just the front of consumer habits but those on language and publishing as well; an aspect central to one's understanding of Sainath's book. Also; as per Dr. Basu's observations; coupled with this are developments of the nature of Indians winning international literary prizes (more so, in the post-1980's context with a beginning made through Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*) and English assuming a different form of viability in terms of communication and articulation in a globalised context and entry of foreign publishing houses as collaborators so as to take full advantage of this transformed situation.

As he further observes, "first of these publishers was Penguin India, a joint venture between Penguin Books and Anand Bazar Patrika inaugurated in 1986". Thus, the scenario differs from those times when there was regulation to a certain level as far as investment in publishing was concerned in the pre-1980's and 1980's zone and also, while the English reading population might work out to be miniscule in terms of both proportion and number, it is a fairly large number as far as literacy levels in the country are concerned and a growth in the consumer demands for English language books is proportionate to a growth in income levels and spending capacity of the middle class consumer since the 1980's. All of these observations are necessary as they bring one back to the analysis of *Everybody loves a good drought* as a literary phenomenon and the representative machinery surrounding the book. This book was published by Penguin Books India in 1996 in English. Though, the book was published without much hype or advertisement; an elite publishing house did ensure the book aesthetic appendages of the nature of an attractive front and back cover; an introductory note carrying both the illustrious biography of its author and fascinating history of how the book came about as well as a decent reception within the circuit of book reviews. Both the association with this publishing house and an extraordinary merit of the work itself; along with a possibility of its mobility across global channels of circulation and distribution; ensured that the book could create a certain kind of ethic for the readers.

From thereon, the book carved its journey as well as spectacular success story wherein it transformed the way literary and journalistic representation was done; provided an ethical frontier to many who wanted to tell similar kind of stories; ironically enough; became a part of distinct disciplinary frameworks nationally as well as internationally; got popular reviews as well as critical acclaim along with winning national and international awards as well as being translated into a host of languages. This researcher however felt that a book which is premised on the critique of the development project in India is; to some extent; a consequence of productivity of these globalising forces which have created the possibility of an enabling influence like Sainath to travel across the globe and set journalistic standards at an international level which also enabled

him to get the Magsaysay. No one can dispute the fact that Sainath is known more for his unique style of reportage and his newspaper stories rather than the book, but the book and its global success did ensure that more people, organisations and components of society got up and took notice of its writer. The book is not very reasonably priced (its price ranges somewhere between rupees three-four hundred and keep on varying within this range from time to time), yet it is affordable enough for a middle class consumer who would be conscientious enough to read a newspaper like *The Hindu* and hence be in a position to understand why Sainath and *Everybody loves a good drought* matter so much.

Also, as the Ferguson study demonstrates; somewhere, opening up the economy in the 1990's created that kind of publishing and literary scenario which partly demystifies some of the contextual reasons of this book remaining on the non-fiction bestseller list for Penguin books for years. However, this is only one miniscule aspect of literary and artistic phenomenon that *Everybody loves a good drought* is. This entire study was devoted towards understanding its greatness for the other reasons which have been the major criteria ensuring its success as well as it becoming a benchmark in the ethical and representative standards both nationally and internationally. However, aspects such as Sainath's access to a certain level of mobility across the globe through his association with prestigious newspapers all his life; international awards led by the Magsaysay; Sainath's own visits and lectures at international universities and collaboration with them thereby enhancing the kind of receptivity that this book has got; enable one to conclude this study with a significant observation. While globalisation and liberalisation led to many disastrous aspects as far as an understanding of development stories of some of the poorest countries and its people was concerned, it has certainly put those tools of circulation, representation and mobility in place which have connected the world like never before; a world which now understands together as to why "everybody loves a good drought".



## *Notes*

### *Chapter 3:*

1. This study has stayed loyal to the bibliography of *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* till this point. However, for this chapter it makes a slight compromise on the same. The point that one is trying to make is that a whole round of personal interaction with the writer consisting of mails, telephonic exchanges and one-to-one interview has equipped this researcher with certain documentary films on his life as well as a host of other writings. This material was both unexpected as well as not within the bounds of both the original plan and the synopsis of this dissertation.  
 However, since this chapter aims to analyse the representative machinery and contextual realities of globalisation and decolonisation leading to this text becoming the kind of literary phenomenon that it did, it is significant to include his other recommended works, as these books, films, newspaper articles etc form an integral part of his work and would contribute to an analysis of aspects of representation as well as circulation of the book.  
 A significant point that needs to be mentioned in this regard is that none of the researcher's neutrality and a distanced critical engagement gets diluted in the process. Thus, the conclusions and thesis statement of this chapter remains similar to the one worked out in the synopsis around August, 2010. The only difference is that instead of a philosophical perspective derived out of the readings of this bibliography, it relies more on common sense and actual experiences of the researcher
2. This becomes necessary in terms of logic explained in the first note. Also, there was an attempt made by the concerned writer/journalist to go out of his way to provide the researcher with the details concerning the same.
3. This set of observations emerges out of a select set of special issues of this erstwhile tabloid published from Mumbai (which is not currently in circulation) handed by the writer to the researcher during the personal interview.
4. For further details on this, see an attachment towards the end of this study which is a copy of what Sainath handed over to this researcher in terms of possibly the most authentic account of his life and career. As reported in a mail exchange to this researcher by Sainath himself, this is the most authentic account on his life and corrects many factual errors of the *Wikipedia*. It was done by Professor Ananya Mukherjee of York University, Canada while Sainath was doing a talk there. The details of the mail are provided towards the end of this study.

5. A copy of this newspaper is tagged with the dissertation towards the end. This is because it is difficult to get access to these copies in the present day and this could be only read as it was handed by the writer to the researcher.
6. These select publications either contain his articles, reports, opinions or excerpts from his contributions to *The Hindu* or portions of *Everybody loves a good drought*. They have been utilised for the reasons mentioned in the study.  
Here, what needs to be acknowledged is the fact that it would have been very difficult for this researcher to gain access to any of these publications without Sainath's aid.
7. This information was provided to the researcher through a mail exchange by the writer. See the complete details in the list of works cited.
8. All of this information is necessary as it is crucial so as to understand the representative machinery which the late twentieth century context has put into service. This would further tie up with an elaboration on the literary phenomenon that *Everybody loves a good drought* became after its publication.
9. This is Sainath quoting the pain of an earnest journalist reporting from rural areas. See Sainath 81.
10. This is a paraphrase and a summation of Sainath's excellent talk on paid news stories and media chaired by Romila Thapar. This talk was held at the Constitutional Club of India, New Delhi on September 24, 2010, and was attended by this researcher in person.
11. This has been extracted from the account of his life and writings provided by Sainath to the reader tagged at the end of this study.
12. This information has been again extracted from the information given by the writer to the researcher on his life as well as works.
13. Here, a concession needs to be made. These documentaries were both expensive as well as difficult to access. In all means, they were beyond the reach of this researcher. It was Sainath's collaboration and his last moment help in the form of generously handing over the copies of these works, during the interview to this researcher, which enabled the possibility of the thoughts and observations in the last chapter.
14. This was shared by the writer in a telephonic exchange with this researcher.
15. This observation was made by Desbarats in Moulins' film *A Tribe of his Own*. The perspective utilised in this study is a paraphrase of Desbarats' observations.
16. This has been affirmed at more than one place by Sainath including this book and its last section, "Poverty, Development and the Press". In this context, Sainath has time and again pointedly observed that *The Hindu* is the only newspaper with a full time rural reporter, a post that he himself has been holding, since almost a decade devoting his considerable time to reporting from India's rural areas and villages.



17. This citation has been tagged towards the end of this study.
18. This, for example, is a trait not visible in some of his later or more recent writings for *The Hindu* on issues like agricultural crisis, farmers' suicides or some rather serious notes of elaboration on issues of rural India in turn having an effect on the entire policy making scenario of the country such as his articles on anomalies plaguing the public distribution system, food security, BPL criteria etc.
19. This was reported by the writer to the researcher in a mail exchange. See works cited list for complete information.
20. This was expressed by Sainath in a telephonic conversation to this researcher and has been included in the transcripts of the interview reproduced at the end of this study.
21. See the transcripts published at the end of this study.
22. This information was again provided by the writer to the researcher and has been reproduced at the end of this study.
23. This information has been culled from the introductory note provided by the Penguin Books to *Everybody loves a good drought*.
24. There is a mention made of this project in the introductory section to this study. This is an unpublished archive project analysing the relationship between contemporary market and Indian Writing in English; the first of its own kind from an academic point of view done at the Ferguson Centre of African and Asian Studies, OU, UK, by a team of researchers led by Dr. Tapan Basu and Suman Gupta. This project is available online. For more details on the same, see the works cited list.
25. This paper was presented at a workshop at Open University, London, 25-27 June, 2007. The project was titled "Contemporary Indian Literature in English for Indian Markets" and all the proceedings of the papers presented can be accessed through the website of the university, [www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk).



## *Conclusion*

This study has explored a host of issues with regard to P.Sainath's *Everybody loves a good drought*. However, a significant aspect of this study has been to provide these observations in a cohesive manner through focussing on the aspects of both text as well as context. The study begun with an all round analysis of both global and national context which led to the necessity of a text of the nature of that of Sainath. Here, the focus was on the decolonised context of the post- World War II decades where new norms governing international relations and politics came to determine how resources were to be distributed on a global scale. This meant that the newly independent/developing countries were deprived of not just a say in issues at their own home front but a lot of decisions concerning their lives were and continue to be taken without any genuine understanding of the real nature of their problems. In the specific context of India, the economic reforms led by the Narasihma Rao government in 1991 meant that the national front was now to entertain the realities of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. This meant expanding the role of private sector in the country cutting off on the responsibilities of the public sector and entertaining the entry of foreign players as well as multinationals in some of the crucial sectors of the Indian economy such as health, education and so on. Though these reforms were largely celebrated by the mainstream media, Sainath's book provided an alternative perspective as to why these reforms have been a failure as far as all round development and qualitative indices of the nature of human development index is concerned.

It is here that a major aspect of this study has been also to focus on the uniqueness of this project. It was not envisaged as a book and began as a journalism project. The writer in question, Sainath himself, was a popular journalist working with a Mumbai publication *Blitz* along with a host of other activities on the global as well as national scale. He earned a fellowship with a prestigious newspaper like the *Times of India* and dedicated himself to work outside the mode of convention during the years of 1993-95. This meant travelling across the interiors of the country, living with communities, and documenting their problems in that major part of the year which comprises the non agricultural season capturing the gravity of their situations through images and finally creating a narrative out of the same. The second chapter of this study is devoted to an understanding of the technique utilised by the writer and its relation to the theme of the book. This study based its second chapter as a means of continuation to the first chapter. Here, the focus first was on an extension to the philosophical basis of the preceding chapter. This meant utilising arguments by philosophers such as David Hume, Hannah Arendt, Heidegger, Ponty (etc) so as to analyse the significance of why a narrative technique like that of Sainath is required in the context of twentieth century modernity. In an age, when events such as colonialism and what ensued after it gave a blow to all forms of rationality that Western civilisation was premised on, it became

necessary to find a new language as well as technique to narrate the story of human suffering in the developing world.

Sainath follows a similar kind of discursive strategy in *Everybody loves a good drought*, as also analysed in the second chapter. Here, the focus is both on documentation of every subjectivity, testimony and perspective so as to resist generalising tendencies which often bracket human emotions and suffering in the form of statistics which can be conveniently quoted in the mainstream media and utilised by policy makers only to be shrugged by those who hold power. One traced this discursive strategy to a set philosophical tradition by quoting some relevant studies on perception, consciousness and intentionality. The later part of the second chapter followed a detailed analysis of book, its narrative strategy and contents so as to focus on that post colonial/modern context through an analysis of an array of workers as well as thinkers. The focus was on providing a relevant theoretical base so as to understand why language, perception as well as subjectivity need to be modified in suitable ways so as to create both a relevant and required critique on the failures of the post colonial state. This chapter was an attempt at understanding as to how ultimately Sainath's critique is not premised on simplistic grounds and is a genuine representation of a host of issues related to governance and administration, where policy makers have been taken, for their lack of connect with what goes on in real India.

The third chapter as well as the last part of this study makes a departure from the philosophical and theoretical modes of analysis of the first two chapters. Here, the focus is on certain grounding in context so as to have an understanding of the text in the light of inputs provided by the writer to the researcher. Since, this was not within the original plan and bounds of this study, some last moment changes had to be made so as to accommodate the same within this chapter. This meant a slight change in methodology through utilisation of a set of documentaries, publications, inputs provided through an interview as well as mail exchanges and telephonic conversations by the writer to the researcher. This led to an overall idea and better understanding of both the theme as well as contents of *Everybody loves a good drought*, as this analysis traced the same to Sainath's mode of functioning to his *Blitz* days. The analysis was then extended to an examination of this book as a literary phenomenon. This meant the focus now shifted from an analysis of its generation, technique and contents to its aftermath. This implied delving into the translations of the book, awards won by the same, its fascinating history of publication and print, its unique status of being a national bestseller as well as global phenomenon and its effectiveness as a text in terms of its utilisation across an array of disciplinary boundaries and distinct frameworks.

For this purpose, an unpublished study analysing the relation between contemporary market and Indian Writing in English was utilised. This unique study, the first of its own kind, from an academic point of view was conducted at Ferguson Centre, U.K, through a team of researchers led by Dr Tapan Basu and Suman Gupta. Some significant points of insight from this study were utilised so as to create an understanding of how

both the Indian market and reading habits have changed in the post-1980's context with liberalisation as well as globalisation changing all the rules with regard to acceptance of English as a language and entry of foreign players within the field of publication in India. This transformed scenario of increased acceptability of Indian works published in English language from India about Indian problems on a global scale was connected to an understanding of some aspects of why and how *Everybody loves a good drought* became the kind of literary phenomenon that it did. Here, the focus was on aspects such as circulation and distribution and contribution of the same towards the mainstream culture.

This conclusion ultimately got tied up with some of the issues raised in the first chapter. While this study then began with a critique of what globalisation and liberalisation had done to a majority of lives in the developing world, it concludes on a note of optimism as well as hope wherein an acknowledgement is made of the productive as well as enabling influences of globalisation and opening of the world. Thus, while the former explains the necessity of a book like that of Sainath, the latter explains its success in the light of possibility of enhanced mobility for both its writer as well as his book. All of these are connected to the humanistic and ethical premise of this study which ultimately keeps itself above any politics enshrined within writing or the sensibility of its writer to create an enhanced understanding of the uniqueness of his working style and the greatness of his work. The research methodology for this study accomplishes the same through an understanding of philosophical perspectives and sociological insights characterising the domain of culture studies as well as utilisation of an array of documentaries, publications, interviews as well as other newspaper articles of this writer to ground this study in an authentic understanding of its context. This is the privilege that this study takes where it has a whole round of actual interaction between the writer and the researcher as its base, which in turn, enables one to conclude on an affirmative note about an understanding of text and context through the centrality of Sainath's *Everybody loves a good drought*.



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(Note of Caution: These excerpts are certainly not the exact quotes by the concerned journalist. It is, in most of the cases; a paraphrase. The attempt has largely been to capture the essence of his argument without diluting their intensity. This is largely due to absence of notes taken at the time as they were hindering the flow of the conversation)

P.Sainath:

(The usage of the first person pronoun is incidental and should not make one forget the fact that the below reproduced sentences are paraphrases and not exact quotes by the journalist)

- The book (*Everybody loves a good drought*) has been translated into a number of regional and foreign languages . . . Among other awards; the University of Alberta is conferring a DLitt on me . . . in part due to this book.
- The book mystifies me to date . . . It's being used in over a hundred universities, often in unlikely departments. Its appeal across very different kinds of people mystifies me. It's in its 32<sup>nd</sup> print now-in 13 years.
- Photography has been an integral part of my journalism since the 1980's . . . in most of the cases; I was completely dependent on my old Nikon film camera for decades. Now, of course, I have to shoot more on digital.
- Whenever I give descriptive details of the people that I meet, I take care not to sensationalise their misery and to not paint victimhood . . . I deliberately avoid physical descriptions of people. You will not find them in the book. In this regard, I wanted the reader to imagine the character and leave space for reader's imagination.

- My book has been utilised in distinct contexts ranging from NGO's, administration academies in India or, departments of political science, journalism, economics, sociology or development studies of universities in India or overseas. In one university, we found it being used by the Engineering Department!
- I owe a lot to Times of India fellowship enabling the possibility of the book; even more than to the Magsaysay Award Foundation. The latter gave me greater recognition than almost any other award that I have received. The Times Fellowship gave me the opening, the start.
- I continued to freelance for many years even after the publication of my book as, since *Blitz* years, I valued my freedom as a journalist.
- Notice my writings in the special issues of *Blitz* . . . (he shows the interviewer some copies of his 1980's paper) . . . they don't have a carryover to the next page . . . Also, notice them for their focus on a single issue and their brevity . . .
- Many of the young journalists like to do the kind of work that I am doing . . . but they are rarely allowed to do so by their newspapers or channels which have been transformed by hyper-commercialisation into entities with no interest in these subjects and issues.
- Some of the landless that I write about were originally landed farmers.
- This book has been effective in different ways at different points of time.
- The book was turned down by publishing houses many times before I won the Times Fellowship . . . Also, had difficulties in getting it published with the Penguin people . . . the book, published as it was with a Shobha De book hardly got any advertisement . . . to date, there has not been a single advertisement for this book, not one . . . yet it is in its 32<sup>nd</sup> print and selling . . . it incidentally went onto become their non-fiction bestseller . . .
- All the royalty from the book goes into the training of rural journalists . . . along with, sponsoring of the Counter Media awards.

(With inputs from some telephonic conversations and mail exchanges between the interviewer and the interviewee. Also, a final proof reading done by Sainath himself.)

## **The 2007 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Journalism, Literature and Creative Communication Arts**

### **CITATION for Palagummi Sainath**

Ramon Magsaysay Award Presentation Ceremonies

31 August 2007, Manila, Philippines

In the early twentieth century, the press was at the heart of India's freedom struggle. During those formative years, says Indian reporter Palagummi Sainath, journalism contributed to "the liberation of the human being." In contrast, he says, India's press today merely performs "stenography" for big business and the governing elite. As the economy surges, matters that call for the urgent attention of the public and government are ignored in favor of film starlets and beauty queens, the stock market, and India's famed IT boom. As a free-lance journalist and rural affairs editor of *The Hindu*, Sainath has taken a different path. Believing that "journalism is for people, not for shareholders," he has doggedly covered the lives of those who have been left behind.

Born in Chennai in 1957, Sainath completed a master's degree in history before turning to a life of journalism. At *Blitz*, a Mumbai tabloid, he rose to be deputy chief editor and became a popular columnist. In 1993, he changed course.

For the next few years, under a fellowship from the Times of India, Sainath painstakingly investigated life in India's ten poorest districts. In *Everybody Loves a Good Drought*, his bestselling book of 1997, and in hundreds of subsequent articles, Sainath presented his readers with a world that belied the giddy accounts of India's economic miracle. In this India, the harsh life of the rural poor was, in fact, growing harsher.

Sainath discovered that the acute misery of India's poorest districts was not caused by drought, as the government said. It was rooted in India's enduring structural inequalities— in poverty, illiteracy, and caste discrimination—and exacerbated by recent economic reforms favoring foreign investment and privatization. Indeed, these sweeping changes combined with endemic corruption had led small farmers and landless laborers into evermore crippling debt—with devastating consequences.

Sainath provided the evidence. He reported, for example, that the number of migrant-swollen buses leaving a single poor district for Mumbai each week had increased from one to thirty-four in less than ten years. He exposed the shocking rise in suicides among India's debt-pressed farmers, revealing that in just six hard-hit districts in 2006 alone, the number of suicides had soared to well over a thousand. He revealed that at a time when officials boasted of a national grain surplus, 250 million Indians were suffering from endemic hunger, and that in districts where government storehouses were "stacked to the roof with food grain," tribal children were starving to death.

Sainath's authoritative reporting led Indian authorities to address certain discrete abuses and to enhance relief efforts in states such as Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra. But his deeper message also struck home. In 2000, nearly thirty of his articles were submitted as evidence at a national hearing on anti-dalit (untouchable) atrocities. In such ways, he has touched the conscience of the nation.

India's press today, Sainath says, is "creating audiences that have no interest in other human beings." He is training a new breed of rural reporters with a different point of view. His journalism workshops occur directly in the villages, where he teaches young protégés to identify and write good stories and to be agents of change.

Sainath finds hope in these young reporters and in the resilience and courage of the people he writes about—such as the legions of poor rural women in Tamil Nadu who have overcome taboos and learned to ride a bicycle. To advance freedom, even small freedoms such as this, is the most significant legacy of the early giants of Indian journalism to today's reporters, he says. "I'm not ready to give up on my legacy yet."

In electing Palagummi Sainath to receive the 2007 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Journalism, Literature, and Creative Communication Arts, the board of trustees recognizes his passionate commitment as a journalist to restore the rural poor to India's consciousness, moving the nation to action.



PROFILE

**PALAGUMMI SAINATH**  
Rural Affairs Editor, *The Hindu*, India

P. Sainath, Rural Affairs Editor of *The Hindu*, is the 2007 winner of the **Ramon Magsaysay Award**, Asia's most prestigious prize (and often referred to as the 'Asian Nobel'), for Journalism Literature and Creative Communications Arts. He was given the award for his "passionate commitment as a journalist to restore the rural poor to India's national consciousness." He was the first Indian to win the Magsaysay in that category in nearly 25 years. He was also the first reporter in the world to win Amnesty International's *Global Human Rights Journalism Prize* in its inaugural year in 2000. His other awards include: the United Nation's Food & Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) Boerma Prize (the foremost award for development journalism) in 2000; the *Harry Chapin Media Award* in New York, 2006; and was the first and only print media journalist until now to win the *Inspiration Award* at the Global Visions Film Festival in Edmonton, Canada in 2002. He was also the first Indian reporter to win the *European Commission's Lorenzo Natali Prize* for journalism in 1995.

In a 30-year career as a journalist, Sainath has won close to 40 global and national awards for his reporting (though he has turned down several, including one of India's highest civilian awards, which he declined because, in his view, journalists should not be receiving awards from governments they cover and critique). These include the 2009 'Journalist of the Year' (Ramnath Goenka Prize for Excellence in Journalism). Almost the entire amount from his awards goes towards prizes for other journalists or to support his other projects (see below).

Sainath's book *Everybody Loves a Good Drought* (Penguin India, 1996) has remained a non-fiction bestseller by an Indian author for years. Working on this book involved covering 100,000-km across India. Sainath used 16 forms of transport for this, and walked over 5,000 km on foot. It has been published in multiple editions and in several languages. The book is in its 31st printing and is presently being used in over 100 universities in India and overseas. In the late nineties, Nikhil Chakravarty, India's then senior-most editor, described Sainath's work as "the conscience of the Indian nation." In 2000, the leading Scandinavian publishing house, Ordfront, included one of Sainath's reports in its volume: *Best Reporting of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. In doing so, Ordfront chose to feature his work alongside that of giants like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Studs Terkel and John Reed. All royalties from the book go towards funding two to three prizes for rural journalists in India each year.

Sainath then undertook a nation-wide project on *dalits* (those historically subjected to Untouchability under the caste system) for *The Hindu*. Working on this project saw him cover another 150,000 km across the country. The 40 plus reports he filed were used as major evidence in the National Public Hearings on atrocities against Dalits. His favourite ongoing project is on the nation's last living Freedom Fighters, mainly little recognised ones from rural India, who fought the British Empire in India's struggle for Independence. They are dying quickly and the few who remain are in their late 80s and 90s. Sainath has been interviewing them and recording

their testimonies and hopes to develop an online archive for those he calls *The Foot Soldiers of Freedom*.

Sainath's current work involves a series on the devastation of Indian agriculture by anti-farmer policies this past decade, which runs in *The Hindu*. Consisting of detailed reports from the households of landless labourers and marginal farmers across the country, the series has set the agenda for investigative rural reporting. It was of this work on India's agrarian crisis that the jury of the Prem Bhatia prize said: "Rarely has an individual journalist gone so determinedly against the current of entrenched official orthodoxy, bureaucratic apathy and intellectual smugness." Sainath's work on the agrarian crisis has produced the largest journalistic body of work ever on the Indian countryside in terms of the problems faced by farming communities. It is also a body of work that goes far beyond the realm of journalism, capturing issues and complexities that academia and policy makers have failed to.

Sainath has spent an average of 270 days a year in the poorest villages of India since 1993 (that figure crossing 300 days in some years). He also takes his own photographs for all his reports. Since November 2001, an exhibition of Sainath's photographs has toured India, seen by well over half a million people to date. The exhibit, **Visible Work, Invisible Women: Women & Work in Rural India** mixes text with visuals and brings home the astonishing but unacknowledged contribution that poor rural women make to the national economy. Typically, his exhibition was inaugurated by the women who feature in the photos: landless, poor and 'Untouchable.' Most of the exhibition venues have also been typical of Sainath's thinking. Villages, factory gates, schools and colleges, cafeterias or corridors, entrances to mines and quarries, even railway stations. It is perhaps the first Indian photo exhibit to be seen by more rural than urban people. Yet the same exhibition has been sought out and hosted at the Asia Society, New York, the International House of Japan in Tokyo and several universities in Canada and the United States (more on the exhibition on p.7). In 2007, it drew viewers in both the villages of rural India as well as in South Africa, Ireland, Finland and The Netherlands. Since its launch, it has collected over 28 notebooks with thousands of comments in nine languages. Building on this work, Sainath is creating India's first and only archive of photographs of rural India, consisting of thousands of pictures he has shot in dramatically different parts of the country.

One of the most critical aspects of Sainath's work has been its impact on public policy, related in particular to the plight suffered by rural India since the nineties. No other phenomenon symbolised this situation as much as the tragic suicides of thousands of farmers in several states of the country. Through several years, Sainath kept at the issue unrelentingly. Today, if the farmers' suicides are a huge issue in India -- as they were in the 2004 elections which saw the defeat of the incumbent government -- it can be said that one journalist contributed to that more than any number of politicians did. It is widely believed that Sainath's reports on hunger, migrations, distress and suicides played a role in pushing the government to move towards programmes and policies like the farm loan waiver, the farm crisis packages -- all crucial developments of the past few years. His reporting has also contributed to perceptions of and policy directions in the development of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), considered to be a key development in public policy. During 2008-9, he served as Member of the Expert Group constituted by the Ministry of Rural Development to formulate a

methodology for conducting the next Below Poverty Line (BPL) census. The aim was to simplify the identification of BPL families in the rural areas. His work has also had a major influence on the worlds of activism and NGOs, where many use his *Everybody Loves A Good Drought* as an activist's handbook.

In just the past few years, Sainath has published over 150 investigative reports on the agrarian crisis in The Hindu alone, in addition to many other pieces elsewhere. In June 2004, after assuming office as the new prime minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh journeyed to rural India to meet the farmers Sainath had written about. In 2005, Sainath's reporting on the agrarian crisis in the state of Maharashtra instigated an investigation by the National Farmers' Commission. Less than a year later Prime Minister Manmohan Singh himself visited the crisis-ridden districts -- first speaking to Sainath about the issues. That August 15, the Prime Minister spoke of the agrarian crisis in his Independence Day Speech from the ramparts of the Red Fort. In March 2008, the Government of India, under siege on the agrarian crisis issue, and with election year approaching, announced a \$16 billion farm loan waiver to address the distress of indebted farmers. Several farm organisations and activists said they believed that the relentless pressure of one journalist had a major role in the government opting for the waiver. Some called on a bewildered Sainath to 'congratulate' him. Sainath's own reaction was to warn against the possibility that the waiver would benefit rich farmers on irrigated land more than subsistence peasants on dry lands.

Sainath is actively involved in the training of journalists in the poorest regions of India's countryside. Some of the finest reporters to emerge from rural and non-metro India proudly write of earning their spurs travelling with Sainath in some of India's poorest villages. He has also been teaching journalism at the Sophia Polytechnic in Mumbai for over 20 years and at the Asian College of Journalism, Chennai since 2001. Many of Sainath's students have themselves gone on to win major national and international awards. He has also lectured at many universities worldwide, including Columbia University, Harvard University, New School for Social Research (US); Monash University, La Trobe, the Australian National University (ANU), Canberra (Australia); Helsinki University and Tampere University (Finland), University of Western Ontario, Simon Fraser University, University of British Columbia, McGill University, University of Alberta (Canada).

Inspired by Sainath's work, Canadian documentary maker Joe Moulins has produced a documentary entitled **A Tribe of His Own: *The Journalism of P. Sainath***. Till date, it has won **14 international awards** including the top ones at the Columbus (Ohio) and the Global Visions (Edmonton, Canada) film festivals. The jury at the Edmonton Film Festival called this 'an award about inspiration', a thought that has been echoed several times by critics (more on the film on p.9). A new film by Deepa Bhatia titled '*Nero's Guests*' on the subject of inequality as seen through Sainath's work was screened (as an official selection) at the Amsterdam Documentary Film Festival in November 2009. At the Mumbai International Film Festival, February 2010, it won two awards. It has won others, too, including the first prize at the Cinestraat documentary film festival in Spain this year. It is also an official selection for the Trincontinental festival in South Africa this October. It has also won the Indian Documentary Producers Association's Gold Medal for best documentary this year.

SUMMARY CV

**PALAGUMMI SAINATH**  
Rural Affairs Editor, *The Hindu*, India

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**Current affiliation:**

Rural Affairs Editor, *The Hindu* (since June 2004), Mumbai

**Previous:**

Freelance 1993-2004

Deputy Chief Editor & Foreign Editor, Blitz group of Publications 1982-1993, Mumbai

Also Foreign Editor of *The Daily* 1982-86, Mumbai

Sub-editor, *United News of India*, New Delhi & Mumbai 1980-82

**Top international awards**

- The Ramon Magsaysay Prize 2007, Manila
- The Harry Chapin Media Award 2006, New York
- Global Visions Inspiration Award, Canada, 2002
- United Nations FAO's Boerma Prize, Rome 2001
- Amnesty International's Global Human Rights Journalism prize, London 2000
- European Commission's Lorenzo Natali Prize for Journalism, Brussels, 1995

**Top national prizes**

- Journalist of the Year, Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Award, 2009
- Prem Bhatia Memorial Prize, 2004
- BD Goenka Prize for Excellence in Journalism, 2000
- PUCL Journalism Award, 1995
- The Statesman Prize for Rural Reporting, 1994
- The Sri Raja-Lakshmi Award for Journalism 1993

**Firsts**

- First Indian Journalist to win the European Commission's Lorenzo Natali Prize

- First reporter in the world to win Amnesty International's journalism prize
- First Indian to win the Harry Chapin Media prize
- First Indian and print reporter to win the Global Visions Inspiration Award
- First to win awards from three major Indian newspapers he has never worked for: *The Times of India*, *The Statesman* and the *Indian Express*.
- Only Indian reporter whose work is included in Ordfront's *Best Reporting of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*
- (Detailed list of awards on p.11)

## Education

M.A. (History) 1979, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

B.A. (History) 1977, Loyola College, Madras

## Publications

(Note: This is a list of English-language publications only. It excludes the numerous publications in several Indian languages)

Book: **Everybody Loves a Good Drought.** *Stories from India's poorest districts* Penguin, India 1996. UK edition, Headline, 1998. Swedish edition, Tranan, 1999. Finnish edition, Like, 2001.

Chapter: *Why the United States got it wrong.* In Book: **Mumbai Post 26/11. An alternate perspective.** Eds: Ram Puniyani & Shabnam Hashmi. SAGE, New Delhi 2010

Chapter: *The Moral Universe of the Media.* In Book **The Indian Media: Illusion, Delusion, Reality.** Essays in Honour of Prem Bhatia Ed. AshaRani Mathur, Rupa, New Delhi 2006

Chapter: *The Age of Inequality. Life in the times of Market Fundamentalism.* In Book: **Unequal Worlds.** IHJ, Japan Foundation, Tokyo, 2004.

Chapter: *Headloads & Heartbreak.* In book: **Gender & Caste.** Ed. Anupama Rao, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 2003

Chapter: *The Hills of Hardship.* In book: **Greatest Reportage of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.** Ordfront, Sweden, 2001.

Chapter: *The Age of Inequality,* in book **India, Another Millennium.** Editor Romila Thapar. Penguin India 2000.

Chapter: *The Elephant Man,* in book **Elsewhere, Unusual Takes on India.** Editor Kai Friese. Penguin India 2000.

Chapter: *Reports from Orissa,* in book **The Penguin Book of Indian Journeys.** Editor Dom Moraes. Viking, India 2001.

Chapter: *Reporting Poverty*. In publication **Communication and the Globalisation of Poverty**, WACC UK 2000.

Chapter: *The Elephant Man*, in book **Elsewhere: Unusual Takes On India**. Editor Kai Friese, Penguin India 2000.

Chapter: *Fact and Fiction*. In **Exploring the Heartland: An Agenda for the Media**. Press Institute of India, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi 1998.

Chapter: **Communalism & The Media**. In book **Communalism in India: Challenge and Response**. Editors: Mehdi Arslan and Janaki Rajan. Manohar, Delhi, 1993.

Chapter: *The failure of development journalism*. In book: **ENCOUNTER '94. The Media & Development**. Editors: Peter Desbarats, Robert Henderson & Madeline Cote, University of Western Ontario, Canada 1993

Chapter: *The Media & Minorities in India*. In book: **ENCOUNTER '92. Dollars, Development & Human Rights – The New Media Challenge**. Editors: Peter Desbarats, Robert Henderson & Madeline Cote. Graduate School of Journalism, University of Western Ontario, Canada 1993

Chapter: *The New World Odour*. In book: **Triumph of the Image. The Media's War in The Persian Gulf – A Global Perspective**. Editors: Hamid Mowlana, George Gerbner & Herbert I. Schiller. Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, USA 1992

**Patent Folly, A Layperson's Reader on Intellectual Property Rights**. Indian School of Social Sciences, Bombay 1991

Chapter: *The Great Chemical Con*. In book: **Gulf War & Information Control**. Chapter written in English, translated & published in French. Editor: Michael Collon. Solidaire, Ans, Belgium 1991

**Why the Prasar Bharati Bill is Flawed**. Layperson's Reader on autonomy for the Indian electronic media. Indian School of Social Sciences, Bombay. 1990

Chapter (& study): *One-Way Traffic*. In book: **Traffic of Ideas Between India & America**. Editor. Robert M. Crunden, American Studies Research Centre, Hyderabad. Chanakya Publications, Delhi 1985

Chapter: *Information, Economics and Power, a Journalist's perspective*. In book: **Informatics-Development. Information, Economics & Power, The North-South Dimension**. Editors: Peter Desbarats & George McNair, Graduate School of Journalism, University of Western Ontario, Canada, 1984

#### **Memberships**

Member, Executive Council, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi

Member, Executive Council, Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar  
Member, Central Advisory Board of Education of India, New Delhi  
Member, Expert Group, Below Poverty Line (BPL) census, constituted by the Ministry of Rural Development

### Teaching & Training

- 1986-87- present: Sophia Polytechnic, Mumbai, India. Over 1,000 students from that institution alone presently in diverse branches of the media.
- 2000-present: Adjunct Faculty, Asian College of Journalism, Chennai, India.
- Since 1993, trained large numbers of rural journalists in very backward districts of India and continue to hold regular workshops for stringers and reporters in such regions. Focus in recent years has been on in-the-field training of rural journalists, for instance in Kalahandi, Bolangir and Nuapada (among many other places).
- Visiting assignments at
  - University of California at Berkeley, USA, 2008
  - Trinity College, Hartford Ct., USA, 2002
  - Iowa University, USA, 1998
  - Curtin University, Australia, 1996
  - University of Western Ontario, Canada, 1984

#### The photo exhibition:

### **Visible Work, Invisible Women**

#### *Women & Work in Rural India*

- **Mobile educational exhibition of 70 photos**
- **Text for photos in nine languages**
- **A non-gallery, public spaces exhibition**
- **But also shown at galleries like that at the Asia Society, New York**
- **Well over 500, 000 viewers in India so far**
- **As many rural as urban viewers**
- **Also shown at multiple venues in the US, Canada, Switzerland, Japan, South Africa Ireland, Finland and The Netherlands**

When close to 30,000 women, mostly landless labourers, queued up in Vizag city in India to see a photo exhibition a while ago, it was an unusual one on their own lives. Consisting of about 70 black and white photographs with text, the exhibition is on "Women & Work in Rural India." It is titled **Visible Work, Invisible Women**.

The pictures, shot in the poorest regions of ten states across the country by Sainath, show the astonishing labour that poor women put in every day of their lives and the gigantic -- yet unacknowledged -- contribution they make to the national economy. A contribution worth, literally, billions of dollars. Each of ten panels deals with different kinds of work that women do. The text details the scope, significance and centrality of that labour to the Indian economy, particularly to agriculture.

There are no clichéd hand-to-mouth, begging bowl photographs in this exhibition. Instead, these are pictures of enormous strength and dignity. They are far more representative of the overwhelming majority of the poor, seeking employment and opportunity rather than pity or charity. Shot during the first decade of India's economic reforms, the pictures place women's labour at the centre of the rural Indian family's survival strategies.

Despite being a non-gallery show, no exhibition in recent times has captured the attention of the media the way this one has. It is often also accompanied by seminars, panel discussions and talks around the theme of the exhibit. Bachi Karkaria, then *Times of India's* Resident Editor, Delhi, called it a "solar plexus-punching exhibition.....it had this amazing response because of its sheer honesty." *The Hindustan Times* wrote that "every photograph in it carries a potent message."

While the exhibit has a good amount of text (about 500 words a panel), the method followed is flexible. The text on the grid is in English, but an enlarged translation in the local language appears wherever the exhibition goes. Tamil in Tamil Nadu, Hindi in the north of India, Telugu in Andhra Pradesh (and even Japanese in Tokyo.)

It was inaugurated in Vizag city by four of the landless women agricultural labourers who figure in the photographs. They sang a song of working women from the fields and declared it open. At the main Vizag venue, close to 30,000 poor landless women from the villages saw the show at the Bulaya College grounds during a mass rally of landless women there. In Jaipur city, it was inaugurated by a landless dalit woman. In Chennai city, by a woman construction worker struggling to find more than 15 days work in a month and working like a slave when she does. In Pudukkottai district, Tamil Nadu state, it was inaugurated by Palaniamma, a leader of the women quarry workers of the region.

The exhibition has had a curious mix by way of audiences. The largest group of viewers has been from the class of women portrayed in the photographs themselves. At the same time, a number of young women have seen it at the city women's colleges where it has been shown (including Miranda House in New Delhi, Kanoria College in Jaipur and Stella Maris College in Chennai). The response from both these and other sections has been exhilarating. Some of the girls of Kanoria college actually wrote poetry in the comments book.

With non-literate agricultural labourers, their comments were taken down by volunteers. In Keelakuruchi, a home base of the literacy movement, the neo-literates wrote their comments themselves. With upper-middle class young women -- mostly college students -- the response was to come back with notebooks, sit on the floor and take notes from the text that goes with the photos. The Exhibit drew large numbers of viewers at the Asian Social Forum in Hyderabad. In Sholapur, over a thousand women workers of that city viewed the pictures on a single day.



One of Sainath's projects now is to convert the exhibit into same size posters that any individual or group can put up anywhere -- a concept of "exhibition-under-your-arm" to meet this demand. Another, more ambitious project of his is to create a Visual Archive of Rural India.

**The documentary**

**A Tribe of his Own**

***The Journalism of P. Sainath***

**Documentary by Joe Moulins, 50 minutes.**

- **Screenings at more than 20 film festivals**
- **Winner of 14 international awards**
- **“Inspiration” award at Global Visions Fest, Edmonton, Canada**
- **Now used extensively at journalism schools worldwide**
- **A different kind of journalism altogether**

“An introduction to one of the most admired and effective journalists of our time...a man whose life’s work is making the world a better place..” -- *The Toronto Star*.

It is a documentary that has won ten international awards including the top ones at the Columbus (Ohio) and GLOBAL VISIONS FILM FESTIVAL (Edmonton, Canada) film festivals. But it isn’t one made by P. Sainath. It is one about him, made by Canadian documentary film maker **Joe Moulins**. But the jury at the Edmonton Film Festival decided to include Sainath in the award along with the maker of the film because this was “an award about inspiration.” From 1995 onwards, Vancouver-based documentary maker **Joe Moulins** made two extended visits to India across several years, accompanying Sainath to some of the poorest villages of the country, where the Indian journalist often bases himself. This film is the outcome of the tracking of that work, which Moulins found inspiring -- at a time when he was tiring of journalism as a worthwhile profession. The 50-minute documentary proved a hit, picking up several awards including:

1. **The Chris Award, Columbus International Film & Video Festival**
2. **Silver Plaque, Chicago International Television Awards**
3. **Inspiration Award, Global Visions Film Festival**
4. **First Place in Category, Earthvision Film Festival**
5. **World Community Film Festival**
6. **Vermont International Film Festival**
7. **Hazel Wolf Environmental Film Festival**
8. **Conscientious Projector Film Festival**
9. **Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival**
10. **Guelph International Film Festival**
11. **East Lansing Film Festival**
12. **Amnesty International Film Festival (Stockholm)**
13. **Antigonish International Film Festival**
14. **Cape Breton Film Festival**

Leading critic Stephen Hume wrote of this film in the Vancouver Sun in 2002: "Mesmerizing...In less than 60 minutes, this little film about an Indian reporter delivers powerful insights into the enduring story of human suffering and its shining corollary, imperishable hope...challenges us to do more with the privilege of free expression bestowed upon us by democracy." Stephen Hume, *Vancouver Sun*

Lionel Lumb, Acting Director, Carleton University School of Journalism & Communication had this to say on the relevance to journalists of what he saw in the film: "**In the age of media convergence and indistinguishable pack coverage of staged events, news conferences and celebrity capers, Sainath's passionate pursuit of individual truth to illuminate society is a clarion call for more thoughtful journalism. All journalists, veterans or newcomers, would benefit enormously from learning his methods.**"

Another documentary woven around Sainath's work, *Nero's Guests*, by award-winning film maker Deepa Bhatia, was just screened at the IDFA section of the Amsterdam documentary film festival - and has been selected for major festivals in several countries. *Nero's Guests* looks at inequality, the farm crisis in India and other issues, through Sainath's travels, writings, speeches and photographs.

Awards list below:

**All Awards / Other (including Fellowships)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Name of Award (and criteria as stated in the official citations)</b>
2010	MIT Group, Pune	Bharat Asmita Award For outstanding contribution in the field of journalism
2009	The Ramnath Goenka Awards for Excellence in Journalism	Journalist of the Year For reporting on India's Agrarian Crisis
2009	Samaj Prabodhan Sanstha (Institute for Social Awakening)	<b>Krantiagrani Puraskar</b> For outstanding contribution in the field of journalism
2008	Graduate School of Journalism, Berkeley, California	The Nirupama Chatterjee Fellowship
2008	The Dada Undalkar Foundation	From Maharashtra's last living freedom fighters for "putting agrarian distress on the national agenda."
2007	Ramon Magsaysay Foundation. Manila Literature & the Creative Communication Arts	Ramon Magsaysay Prize for Journalism, Literature and Communication For "passionate commitment as a journalist to restore India's rural poor to national consciousness."
2006	Harry Chapin Media Award: Judge's Prize, New York, U.S.A.	For work "that focuses on the causes of hunger and poverty," including "work on economic inequality and insecurity, unemployment, homelessness, domestic and international policies and their reform..."
2004	Chattisgarh Labour Institute & Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha	Shaheed Niyogi Memorial Journalism Award for writings on Labour & Working People
2004	Prem Bhatia Memorial Trust	Prem Bhatia Journalism Prize for Excellence in Political Reporting & Analysis
2003	"Grassroots Story of the Month" prize from Press Institute of India	For reporting on migrant labourers
2003	Asian Leadership Programme of the International House of Japan and Japan Foundation Asia Centre	Asian Leadership Fellow
2002	Global Visions Film Festival. Edmonton, Canada	Global Vision's Inspiration Award (with filmmaker Joe Moulins)
2002	Trinity College, Hartford Ct. U.S.A.	Visiting McGill Professor Spring 2002
2001	Food & Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations	The A.H. Boerma Prize for "work of international importance in addressing the issues of hunger."
2000	Amnesty International	Global Human Rights Journalism Prize. First winner, inaugural year of the prize.
2000	B. D. Goenka Foundation (Indian Express Group of newspapers)	B. D. Goenka Prize for Excellence in Journalism
2000	Eisenhower Exchange Fellowships	Eisenhower Fellowship
1999	SAIS-Novartis Award	SAIS-Novartis award for Excellence in

		International Journalism (given to those in the top ten shortlist made by a panel at the SAIS, Johns Hopkins).
1998	Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund	Nehru Fellowship for work on Dalits
1998	University of Iowa	Distinguished Visiting Professional
1998	Human Rights Education Movement of India, Chennai	Human Rights Award: for Journalism strengthening Dalit Human Rights
1996	Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Australia	Senior Divisional Fellow. Division of Humanities. In recognition of work on rural India
1995	European Commission, Brussels	EC's Lorenzo Natali prize for journalism "that stands out for its defence of human rights and of democracy as vital elements of social and economic development"
1995	National Centre for South Asian Studies, Melbourne	National Media Fellow. In recognition of journalistic work on rural India
1995	People's Union for Civil Liberties, New Delhi	PUCL Journalism for Human Rights Award for work appearing in The Times of India in 1994. Awarded for stories on "ecological refugees"
1995	V.V.Giri Centenary Award, New Delhi	For "outstanding work on rural unorganised labour"
1995	Ashoka Foundation International	In recognition of work -- and to promote new ideas in journalism
1994	The Statesman, Calcutta	The Statesman Award for Rural Reporting. For work appearing in The Times of India in 1993
1994	Foundation for Humanization, Bombay (publishers of Humanscape magazine)	Humanscape Award for outstanding achievement in the field of journalism
1993	Sri Raja-Lakshmi Foundation, Madras (A four-award combination: one presented in India, three in the USA)	Raja-Lakshmi Award in recognition of "forceful contribution to the profession, versatility and for representing the finest values in Indian journalism, humanism, democracy and social justice"
1992	Times of India Fellowships Council	Times Fellowship Journalism Award for project on India's ten poorest districts
1991	All India Small & Medium Newspapers Federation, New Delhi	National Media Award for outstanding achievement in journalism
1991	L.V. Ramaiah Foundation, Madras	L.V.R. Award for professional excellence
1984	Graduate School of Journalism, University of W. Ontario, Canada	Distinguished International Visitor at the Graduate School of Journalism
1981	United News of India, New Delhi	Reporter of the month





P. SAKHATH

# Earning, not learning!

“ Her labour as an important contributor to the family income either as a domestic servant, as an agricultural hand, or in caring for her younger siblings, robs her not only of her childhood, but also of her innocence — offering her only ignorance and weakness ”



SAJU PHILIP



It hasn't changed much in a thousand years. The birth of a son is greeted as an occasion for celebration, the birth of a girl, with sorrow and silence. Right from birth, the girl child in India is breast-fed a shorter period, cared for less, given the least priority for nutritious foods.

The attitude towards the girl child is, of course, a reflection of Indian society's attitude towards women in general. Women are widely considered to be expendable, dependent and economically unproductive. The girl is thus born into an apathetic and hostile environment.

Born into a society strongly biased in favour of the male child, she faces a prejudice that cuts across all castes, classes and religions. Born to deliberate neglect and discrimination — often not even allowed to be born — the girl child faces every odd in her struggle for survival, caught in a maze of cultural practices and prejudices that strip her of her individuality and mould her into a submissive, self-sacrificing daughter and mother.

Her labour as an important contributor to the family income, either as a domestic servant, as an agricultural hand, or in caring for her younger siblings, robs her not only of her childhood, but also of her innocence — offering her only ignorance and weakness.

It's no use boasting of having had a woman Prime Minister for more than a decade (Pakistan has had one too, but it doesn't seem to have had a major impact on the status of women in that country). The facts on the situation of girls in our society are quite dismal. Here are some of them, compiled by official sources:

- Every year 12 million girls are born in India; 25% of this number do not live to see their fifteenth birthday.
- The larger number of female deaths in early childhood results in 105 boys per 100 girls by age four. The sex ratio (females per thousand males) at this stage falls to 957, a figure that keeps declining through the childhood years.
- In most countries, the sex ratio is more than parity, being favourable to women. But in India, the 1981 census returned an excess of 23 million males.
- Despite the improvement in the economy and provision of basic services in India, the sex ratio has been deteriorating by the decade: from 972 in 1901, it dropped to 933 in 1981.
- Approximately one-quarter of India's population of 800 million comprises girls up to the age 19.

Continued on Page 5



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# Always lesser than the male

“ Girls, as compared to boys, are at greater risk of dying during infancy in the states of Haryana, Bihar, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. It has been estimated that every sixth female death is due to gender discrimination

”

“ Only Kerala has a sex ratio favouring females (1,032); five states, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Orissa, Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh have sex ratios over 950; in all other states, males outnumber females by almost ten per cent. Despite being biologically stronger than boys, almost 3,00,000 more girls die annually in India

”



■ Continued from Page 3

years. Despite being biologically stronger than boys, almost 3,00,000 more girls die annually; it has been estimated that every sixth female death is specifically due to gender discrimination.

- Girls, as compared to boys, are at greater risk of dying during infancy in the states of Haryana, Bihar, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
- If it is not swiftly controlled, female foeticide could contribute significantly to demographic imbalances; of 40,000 female foetuses aborted in Bombay in 1984-85, nearly 16,000 were aborted at a single clinic!
- Only Kerala has a sex ratio favouring females (1,032); five states, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Orissa, Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh have sex ratios over 950; in all other states, males outnumber females by almost ten per cent.

Demographers have expressed serious concern over the declining male-female ratio in the South Asian countries, particularly in India and Bangladesh, pointing also to data showing the higher mortality rate among female children. Some have suggested that discriminatory support to the female child would allow her to survive in the context of general apathy and unconcern towards her.

Others have disagreed with this approach, believing it was not necessary to view the girl child as a separate entity and arguing that the struggle against male chauvinism and domination would automatically result in a better status for the girl child too.

Studies and discussions on the issue saw certain organisations like the UNICEF launching their own campaigns on the girl child. Soon, some governmental and semi-governmental organisations like NIP-CID in Delhi and CINI in West Bengal also joined in. Representatives of women's organisations in South Asia also discussed the issue but without arriving at any common agreement or consensus.

While on the one hand, there was a thrust towards administrative reforms and projects, there was, on the other, a call for people's action — mainly organisation and mobilisation of women. What was agreed upon, however, was the need to create a critical awareness on the situation of women and an atmosphere of concern in favour of women — even for the successful implementation of any programmes relating to these issues.

■ Continued on Page 7

“Our country  
is a very big country  
and thus a great deal  
to be done by all of us.

If each one of us  
does his or her little bit,  
then all this mounts up  
and the country prospers  
and goes ahead fast.”

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru



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# The bias that kills in the womb



Continued from Page 5

It was in this perspective that the countries comprising the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) — India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Pakistan and the Maldives — decided to observe 1990 as The Year of the Girl Child. The sheer size of India's girl child population makes its problems so much more daunting and challenging.

What's worse, this is a country where the discrimination begins right from the womb; and where the female child who makes it past that point has to face neglect and poor treatment at every subsequent stage. This is evident in virtually every aspect of her being beginning with the problems of her health and nutrition as an infant.

The average birth weight of boys and girls is more or less the same; however, girls between 1 and 5 years of age are much more prone to severe malnutrition than their male counterparts owing to the discrimination the female child suffers.

In several states, sex determination and sex pre-selection tests and practices have come in handy as a way of converting prejudices against girl child. In a single year, 1984, 40,000 female foetuses were aborted following amniocentesis tests in the city of Bombay alone.

The use of amniocentesis or sex-determination has been a topic of heated discussion for some years now. A survey conducted in Bombay showed that of the 8,000 cases of amniocentesis and abortion, 7,999 aborted foetuses were female. In June 1983, a newspaper reported that 78,000 female foetuses had been aborted after sex-determination tests.

Evidence also emerged suggesting that almost 100% of the 15,314 abortions conducted at a single centre in Bombay during 1984-85 were done after sex-determination tests.

The disclosure of these figures and the implications of these practices galvanised women's organisations into action. Pressure was brought to bear on the Government of Maharashtra which finally accepted the demand of these organisations to ban sex-determination and sex pre-selection tests by enactment of a law against it. Later, the Government of Goa, too, banned the practice of sex-linked abortions.

The struggle to get a similar law passed at the national level continues. Meanwhile, so does female infanticide, another element that has remained with us from the past — though banned in 1870. Female infanticide has been practised by certain communities in Rajasthan

Continued on Page 9

Talks urged...  
6999 out of 7000 female foetuses aborted alleges forum against sex determination  
Women appeal to medical ethics and Hippocratic Oath  
Doctors using amniocentesis for sex determination should be penalised  
Women demand ban on sex determination tests  
Maharashtra government bans sex determination tests  
Goa state assembly passes ban on amniocentesis

“  
In a single year, 1984, 40,000 female foetuses were reported to have been aborted following sex-determination tests in just the city of Bombay alone  
”



**A pledge to protect environment**

**It has taken roots with us.**

Long long before the advent of Man, the Earth nurtured lush vegetation, flora in primordial splendour, to maintain ecological balance which bred and sustained life. It is now Man's turn to pay the debt by keeping the earth lush and forests green so that we all live together and life sustains in an environment free from pollution. Coal has 4000 million years of affinity with trees. Coal India is, therefore, pledged to restore land denuded due to mining by means of afforestation and reclamation. Thousands of hectares of land have already been reclaimed by COAL INDIA to maintain ecological balance.

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**Coal India Ltd.**

(A Govt of India Enterprise)  
10, Netaji Subhas Road  
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RAJESH VORA



RAJESH VORA

“The four states of Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh account for about 50% of girls who are married off before the age of 16

”

# She's not 'a sound investment'



■ Continued from Page 7

traditionally. In Gujarat, the practice still has a hold in some parts, the favoured method being the infamous *doodh pethi* where the child is put inside a barrel containing milk to drown. Female infanticide also still occurs in parts of Tamil Nadu.

What happens to large numbers of those girls who survive the maladies of foeticide and infanticide? A girl is never seen as contributing to the family's income, but is considered, on the contrary, as a drain on it. Hence she does not deserve to be spent on as she does not represent, as one writer has remarked, "a sound investment". The result is that a big number of little girls become victims of malnutrition and disease.

More than two-thirds of India's children — girls — are malnourished, growing slower, smaller, and with more frequent illnesses than their fortunate male peers.

Census data shows that the mean age at marriage of "currently married women" in the country as a whole was 16.7 years. Child marriage affects both boys and girls. However, the scene for the girl is much more grim since marriage spells the premature domestic and child-care responsibilities. Often the high infant-mortality rate resulting from this provides the impulse for further pregnancies which result in even further physical depletion.

The national average age at marriage actually hides the fact that several girls are married at a very, very young age. For instance, in some districts of Rajasthan, over 45% of 10-14-year-olds are married. The four states of Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh account for about 50% of girls who are married off before the age of 16. A large proportion of rural Indian girls are pushed into early marriage which is consummated almost immediately after menarche (the first menstrual period of a girl) at about age 14.

The sudden increase in female deaths in the age group 15-19 years bears testimony to the high mortality rate of teenage mothers. The sex ratio drops from 944 in the 5-9 age group to 912 in the age 15-19 group.


Having children herself is like a child playing with a doll. She is too old for toys perhaps, but certainly too young for the responsibility of looking after children herself. The years when she should be playing with her friends, running about in a carefree way, playing the games children play — she actually spends coping with the trauma of pregnancy, the torment of giving birth with few or no facilities at all.

She endures all that pain and anguish all alone, often in the house of her mother. Her childlike body still too weak, too tender to bear such agonies.


■ Continued on Page 11

# Helping to build a better life for Parvati is one of our concerns



 Parvati has a dream... to have a roof over her head, one day.


Parvati's family is just one of the hundreds of homeless urban poor who come to the city in the hope of a brighter future. Estimates indicate that 65 million housing units have to be built by the turn of the century to meet India's current housing shortage.

 Building a better future for Parvati is one of our concerns at HMP.

The HMP Group of Companies is a diverse industrial group that

has built its success on the basis of a single corporate philosophy: building a lasting future for the nation.

 And the HMP Group has lived up to this belief by creating a record in reviving sick industrial units and bringing them back into the national mainstream. Earning a reputation for quality in every sphere of its activity from tea and sugar to cement.

Today, HMP  is pursuing its quest for excellence by upgrading four cement plants to produce a high-calibre cement. To build low-cost homes, offices, educational complexes, roads, highways, bridges, dams and canals... to build a better life for Parvati... and 800 million Indians.



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KHALARI, BIHAR, PORBANDAR, GUJARAT



Continued from Page 9

From the time she is born, she is viewed as a liability, both moral and economic. The sooner she becomes the responsibility of another family, the better — one mouth less to feed. After all, she is always considered as *paraya dhan* (other's property).

And yet, proper care of the girl is important not only for her own sake but for that of society's future. As Shanti Ghosh put it: "The health and nutrition of the girl today will affect the health and survival of the future generation, because she is the mother of tomorrow and no future can be built on an edifice that is not strong and healthy and which is corroded with discrimination and injustice at every level."

**T**HERE has been tremendous growth in educational facilities at all levels of education during the last 40 years of Independence. The growth in enrolment and schooling facilities at the primary and post-primary stages of education was the result of the concerted Government effort to implement the Directive Principles of the Constitution to provide free and compulsory education to all children upto the age of 14.

—Fifth All-India Educational Survey, NCERT, 1989

The benefits of that major expansion — even if we accept that it has been a major expansion, since the dropout rates suggest otherwise — do not seem to have reached the girl child in any really significant way. Today's girl, tomorrow's responsible citizen, needs to be empowered with information about health, nutrition, economics and public life. For this she needs to go to school, to learn, to socialise.

But where does she get the time for all these when, if she is not already out earning a living in the fields, she is most probably at home looking after and caring for a younger sibling? In our country, most girls can cook an entire meal by the age of 10, care for the cattle, and do the washing and other domestic chores for the family. Her mother shares in the domestic chores — and goes out to earn an income as well.

In spite of 43 years of Independence, despite the tom-tommed virtues of the educational system, the girl child has a very limited access, if that, to school. On occasion, during an enrolment drive, she may get enrolled and even attend school — only to drop out very soon, unable to cope with both school and her domestic responsibilities. This is usually further reinforced by her family who do not think that giving her an education is going to help

Continued on Page 13

# Education is free — but girls are not



“ How can she find time for school when, if she is not already out earning a living in the fields, she is most probably at home looking after a younger sibling? In our country, most girls can cook an entire meal by the age of 10, care for the cattle and do other domestic chores for the family

”



## Ambedkar Birth Centenary Year is for us “Scheduled Castes Housing Year”

Madhya Pradesh Government  
is celebrating Dr. Ambedkar  
Birth Centenary Year  
as the ‘Scheduled  
Castes Housing Year’.  
The Government would  
provide housing facility for  
at least one lakh poorest  
families of the Scheduled  
Castes in this year.



**A roof on the head  
of one lakh families  
of Scheduled  
Castes in one year.**

The Government dedicated  
to the last man in the  
last row

**Madhya Pradesh Government**



INDEP



■ Continued from Page 11

them in any way either. For, she is going to be away from them soon....

Theoretically, she has the right to equal education. Reality is quite another matter, however. Only 17.96% of rural women and 47.82% of their urban counterparts qualify as literate. The female literacy rate is still only little more than half that of the males — with the gender gap between males and females widening rather than narrowing.

About 80% of children between the ages of 5 and 8 are enrolled in school. The 20% who never go to school being mostly girls and children from the lowest social (mainly caste) and economic groups. While enrolment figures for all Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe children are generally low, the figure for girls tends to be much lower than that for boys in these communities.

The mid-term appraisal of the Sixth Plan (1980-85) estimates that the total enrolment in the age group 6-14, under both formal and non-formal systems, would be around 110 million as against the estimated child population of 140 million. This means that about 30 million children were not enrolled in 1984. This number consists mainly of girls from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, particularly in states that are backward in primary education.

In low-income families, education of girls is seen as the lowest priority. This does not end here, though; even in many middle-class families in urban areas, cultural norms do not permit girls to go in for higher education. Though primary education is free all over, the cost of uniforms, books and other learning materials is quite substantial for poor families.

A survey carried out by the Committee on the Status of Women in India revealed that 16.8% of respondents were against education for girls. Education for girls is seen to be most favoured by middle classes for economic reasons. Girls from lower middle classes are required to contribute to family income, while the affluent follow traditional customs.

The committee identified the following reasons behind social neglect and familial apathy to girls' education:

- Lack of time, as girls have to attend to domestic chores
- Poverty in families, which forces children to work
- Parents view girls' education as being without utility
- Absence of schools within walking distance, hostels, transport, and security measures which make it so much more difficult for girls

## Boy-girl literacy gap widening

“ The 20% of Indian children who never go to school are mostly girls and children from the lowest social (mainly caste) and economic groups. In low-income families, education of girls is seen as the lowest priority; even many urban middle-class families do not permit girls to go in for higher education

”



OVERLEAF



Continued from Page 13

- Inadequate number of women teachers.
- Absence of child-care facilities.

Thus, as many as a third of the girls in the age group of 6-11 years have never been enrolled, in spite of the fact that the overall enrolment of girls has increased. Regional variations are quite tremendous.

Kerala and West Bengal present the best picture, with 49 girls enrolled for every 51 boys in both states. In Bihar, on the other hand, just 33 girls are enrolled for every 67 boys. Non-formal education was pioneered in this country to take into consideration the special needs of vulnerable groups who cannot attend formal schools. Even then, the enrolment in rural areas for boys has been 19,48,193 whereas for girls it was only 14,46,477 (NCERT 1989).

Education through schools is only one side of the picture: one learns a lot about norms and values through other means. Textbooks, for instance, tend to reinforce cultural and gender norms, pushing women further into the background. Stories of kings and queens are quite common. Kings are powerful and always desire sons. Most stories accept the husband as the lord and master. Others end with a 'happily ever after', basically because the woman obeys the man and does his bidding.

**T**HE contribution of the girl child in looking after siblings and doing domestic chores has never been taken seriously. One study places it at Rs 40,000 per girl till the time she gets married (*The Times of India*, Sept. 28, 1988). A Report on the Status of Indian Women from birth till 20 years, produced for the National Institute for Public Cooperation and Child Development reveals the following:

- While the percentage of rural working girls in the age group 5-14 years shot up from 4.6% in 1971 to 7.5% in 1981, that of working boys declined from 11.37% to 10.05% in the same period.
- In the 15-19 age group, the number of girl workers has gone up by 17% while the figure for boys has decreased.
- Age-wise, girls enter the workforce earlier than boys. Eight per cent of female child workers in the study were below 14 years of age. For boys the percentage was just 4%. Overall, 20% of girls under 20 years are 'main' workers, while the figure for boys is just 14%. And these figures do not take into account domestic labour in the girl's own home — which boys are largely spared.

These statistics reveal that in the

Continued on Page 39

# Nourished last cherished least working first.



Whether it is the cleaning of vegetables, or cooking domestic farm animals or poultry, or collecting and fodder — these tasks of the girl

... she  
less  
more



### THE GIRL CHILD



SAJU PHILLIPS



Continued from Page 14

last ten years, a large number of girl children have started going to work. There is also a direct correspondence with the sharp increase in school enrolment figures for boys. Hence, more boys are being sent to school while more girls are being sent to work. Apparently, most of the programmes instituted during the International Children's Year in 1979 went towards alleviating the situation of the boy only!



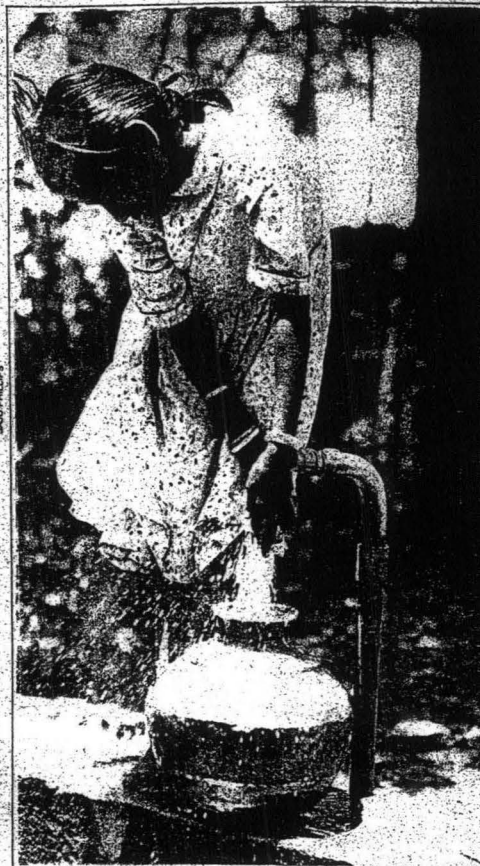
There is the additional burden of domestic work which the boys are largely spared. A survey done by the Child in Need Institute, Calcutta, showed that 55% of girls do household work whereas only 15% of boys do this. Outside work such as help in the business, shopping, marketing, is mostly done by boys. But 43.8% of boys do not work at all, whereas in the case of girls this is only 15%.

At home, whether it is the cleaning and cutting of vegetables, washing clothes, or actually cooking — and whether in a working-class family or middle class — these become the tasks of the girl. In poorer families she also has to look after her younger siblings, depriving her of the opportunity of going to school. In the rural areas, her tasks could also extend to looking after domestic farm animals such as cows, buffaloes or poultry. Her chores would also include collection of fuel, water and fodder, sometimes from far-off places. This work is completely unaccounted for when one computes in monetary terms the work done by the girl child before marriage.

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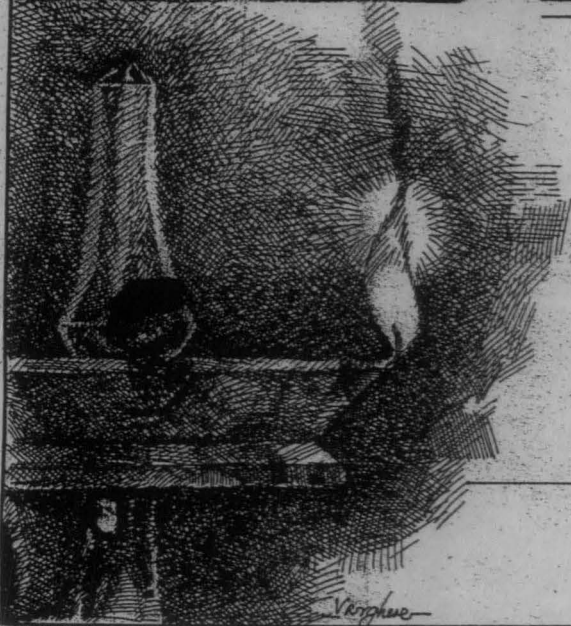
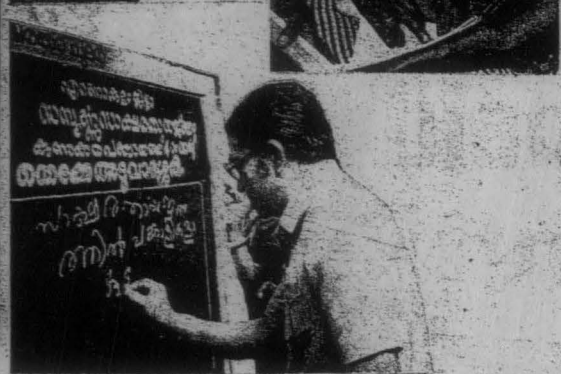
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SAJU PHILLIPS

# ABC OF KNOWLEDGE



A State-wide literacy campaign is on ...

To make every Keralite literate,  
To make Kerala the first Indian State  
to achieve cent percent literacy....

True, Kerala has often been called the most literate  
and the Malayalees the most educated....

And yet, about 10 per cent of the population  
is still far away from the world of alphabet,  
the world of words...

The Left Democratic Front Government of Kerala  
is committed to the eradication of illiteracy...

Progress and prosperity through literacy...

A long-cherished dream comes true.

Department of Public Relations Government of Kerala.



RAJESH VORA

# Piece-rate slavery

“ In a city, the girl child is mostly busy earning for her family, washing vessels as a domestic servant along with her mother. There are also millions of home-based piece-rate workers, not accounted for by the census. They may be rolling *agarbattis*, beedis, making pickles, or an *andhi*. Sometimes they may as Rs. 2 per



• Continued from Page 39

In a city, the girl child is mostly busy earning for her family, washing vessels as a domestic servant along with her mother. In some instances, particularly in metropolitan cities like Bombay, she somehow manages to go to school in spite of this and continues till at the 7th standard after which she attains puberty and then gets married.

Many others form the new but ever-increasing band of “home-based piece-rate workers”. They could be beedi workers in Madhya Pradesh, chikan workers in Lucknow, readymade garment workers in Ahmedabad, or rolling *paperas* and making other foodstuff in the slums of Bombay. Some of the conclusions from SEWA’s Ahmedabad project, co-organised by the I.L.O., reveal that:

- There are millions of home-based piece-rate workers, but they are not accounted for by the census. They are busy in different types of work, rolling *agarbattis*, beedis, making pickles, doing electronic assembly and numerous other jobs.
- The income is very low, rarely more than Rs. 5 or Rs. 6 per day, and sometimes as low as Rs. 2.
- The piece-rate basis could work out to Rs. 10 to Rs. 15 to roll 1,000 beedis or Rs. 8 to stitch a dozen petticoats.

Of course, in most of these cases, it is the woman of the house who is the main worker, with her daughter helping her in all these tasks. The garment workers and chikan workers are almost solely poor Muslims among whom education of girls is seldom encouraged. The beedi workers in Madhya Pradesh are solely Hindus. The garment workers earn Rs. 5 to Rs. 8 per day whereas the beedi workers Rs. 5 to Rs. 10 and the chikan workers earn Rs. 21 to Rs. 30 a month. Electricity is virtually unknown in their workplaces and poor light causes its own problems of vision and short-sightedness in addition to other occupational hazards.

Rag-picking, construction work and brick-making are also as common. A voluntary organisation in Pune working to educate the working children — mainly migrant construction workers — found that a large majority of them were girls.

According to the 1981 census, 8.35% of girls under 14 years of age were ‘main’ workers (involved in full-time economic activity) and 9.35% were marginal workers (part-time). Several studies show that the exploitation of the female child is directly a result of the exploitation of women.

“A Company that seeks the comfort of success must be ready to take the heat.”



# ESSAR

What the core sector is all about.

Challenge breeds challenge. And success begets success. But behind the comfortable exterior that success presents, is the steely determination to achieve; and a confidence that sincere hard work seldom goes unrewarded.

- That has been the Essar approach to its business, the approach that underlies the Group's successes in shipping, construction, energy and offshore engineering. Today Essar Group has a Gross Block of over Rs. 600 crores with expansion and diversification on hand to the tune of over Rs. 1800 crores. Essar is now all set to bring the best advanced technology into the steel industry, with a new giant steel complex of more than Rs. 2000 crores.

STEEL □ ENERGY □ OFFSHORE □ SHIPPING □ CONSTRUCTION



SAJU PHILLIPS



■ Continued from Page 41

A large number of girls in Marathwada graze cattle. The standard rate of payment is Rs. 10 per cow or buffalo per month. Mostly, these girls look after two or three heads of cattle at a time, leaving the village before dawn and returning at dusk — often covering up to 15 km. during the day in search of fodder. At times a girl may be pulled out of school just to look after one animal — which earns the family Rs. 10 per month! But even that meagre amount matters in a milieu of grinding poverty where it could mean earning the family its *meeth* and *mirchi* (salt and chilli), which they are forced to pay cash for.

The rural girl child, because she does not work in a factory, a workshop, or a hospital, is beyond the reach of the law; the basic premise of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986 is that "there must be an identifiable employer and an identifiable employee". How can the work situation of the rural girl child meet those stipulations?

The rural girl child is at the bottom of the ladder, just as the rural woman, particularly when she is a landless agricultural labourer. Besides doing all the household chores, she most likely works "in disguise" at an Employment Guarantee Scheme site, alongside her parents. She is thin, frail and is practically unrecognisable, as she has a sari "pallu" pulled across her face to hide it — because if the mukkadam or contractor sees that she is less than 14 he is not allowed to employ her there.

Of course, even if he does find out, this could be overlooked for a small favour in cash or kind. With the pressure of people seeking work at EGS sites, it becomes a "privilege" to be able to work at a back-breaking task of stone-breaking or carrying mud — to earn just Rs. 3 to Rs. 5 per day.

We have clearly little or nothing to give the female, yet we condemn her as a woman when she is steeped in superstition, ridicule her when she does not send her children to school, hold her in contempt when she does not practise birth control and criticise her when she does not come forward to take part in public, social and political life.

Health For All... Universal Primary Education... Literacy Year... these seem to become so many slogans in a situation where the girl child is not seen at all as a priority. Because of her special circumstance, she stays at the bottom of the social ladder, inarticulate, hidden in the background and often completely helpless. Yet, many aspects of society's

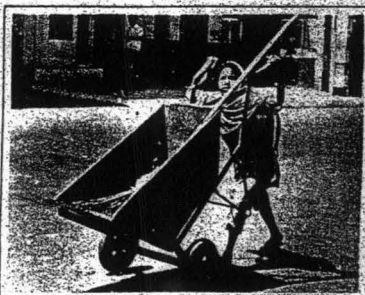
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## Beyond reach of the law

“

The basic premise of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986 is that 'there must be an identifiable employer and an identifiable employee'. How can the work situation of the rural girl meet those stipulations?

”



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Hinduja House  
Dr. Annie Besant Road  
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# Endless cycle of sexual abuse



■ Continued from Page 43

progress could hinge on the improvement of her status and condition.

The worst form of work that she becomes part of is the process of getting bonded, along with the rest of her family. As a result, she is often exposed to sexual exploitation as well.

**T**HOUGH accurate estimates on the correct number of prostitutes in India is hard to come by, it is calculated that 20% of the prostitutes in this country are children. It has been estimated that in Bombay alone there are 20,000 child prostitutes. Sexual exploitation of the girl child takes place both within and outside the family. While figures for within the family are lacking one often finds enough cases of girls coming into the flesh trade because they have been assaulted by a father, an uncle or a brother.

If this were not enough, religion lends the process its own impetus, as with the devadasi system. The devadasi, having been "given up to God", often have no other means of earning a living but prostitution. They are first used by the temple priests, then become prostitutes. A devadasi from Orissa is quoted in *India Today* (April 15, 1990) as saying that the sole ambition of her life was to surrender to Lord Jagannath. What follows is, of course, more than that.

The situation of the devadasi in Nipani, Karnataka, who also work in the tobacco industry is no different. Near Pune, in a small town called Jejuri, young girls from the age of 12 upwards are given up to the prestigious deity of Lord Khandoba in fulfillment of a promise made by their parents to the god.

These girls are called "muralis". They are given to the older "muralis" for training and slowly, along with the older ones, they become prostitutes, having been reduced to abject poverty.

On the one hand, there are all kinds of controls over the sexuality of girls, but on the other, there is sexual abuse within and outside the home. Babies, little girls and young women are sexually violated. The strict norms of family discipline prevent such instances of abuse within the family from becoming public knowledge.

It is common knowledge that the daughters of prostitutes go into the same trade in order to pay back loans that their mothers had taken, or to pay back the sum that their mother was bought for... a different kind of bondedness.

■ Continued on Page 47



“The daughters of prostitutes often go into the same trade in order to pay back loans that their mothers had taken.”

# HARYANA

## Scales New Heights of Economic Development



Haryana promises happiness, prosperity, a new social security and economic health to its people.

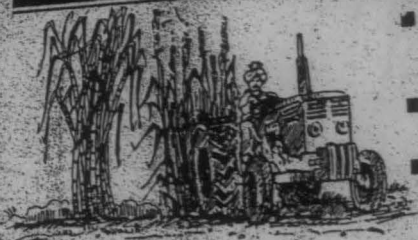
Three years ago when the Janata Dal Government assumed office, a fresh wind of change started blowing which gave pride of place to the tiny but dynamic State of Haryana on the map of India. Action-oriented, multifarious policies and programmes like old-age pension, unemployment allowance, waiving of loans were enunciated by Ch. Devi Lal, former Deputy Prime Minister of India during his period as Chief Minister. The successful implementation of these revolutionary schemes of rural and social development created a new awareness among the people heralding political changes resulting in the formation of the National Front Government in the Centre. During his tenure, Ch. Om Prakash Chautala, Former Chief Minister, Haryana gave a new dynamic and decisive impetus to the development and welfare schemes in the State.

The facts mentioned hereunder present a vivid picture of all-round development of the State during the last 3 years :-

- Haryana harvested record foodgrains production of 94.61 lakh tonnes during 1988-89, against the target of 84.50 lakh tonnes.
- By procuring 25.26 lakh tonnes of wheat on 30th May, 1990, Haryana has beaten its previous highest record of 23.39 lakh tonnes in 1986-87.
- Haryana is the first State to pay Rs. 40 per quintal to sugarcane growers.
- During the last three years 50 large and 17,500 small scale units were set up and over one lakh people got employment.



■ All the 6,745 villages of the State will be provided drinking water by 15 September, 1990.



- Ours is the only State to Supply 55 per cent power to agriculture sector on an average, against an all India average of about 19-20 per cent during 1989-90.
- Power generation in the State is 250 lakh units per day compared to 136 lakh units in 1986-87.
- District Level Mukht Dvar Prashasan Camps are held monthly in one village of every district to redress public grievances on the spot. Block Level Mukht Dvar Prashasan Camps will take justice and services to every rural doorstep.
- To mitigate the procedural hardships of our trading community, limit annual turnover for summary assessment has been raised from lakh to Rs. 5 lakh, and 33 new industrial units have been exempted or deferred from sales tax alongwith other concessions and facilities.
- The rate of Sales Tax on about 65 items has been reduced to favour the traders. In addition, several other facilities have also been provided to run their business smoothly.

Let us join hands with the Government in maintaining the present tempo of spectacular progress in all shades of life to the people of Haryana to work together so as to bring prosperity in every field and factory and self-confidence in every citizen.

Government and the people are partners in progress.

— Hukan  
Chief Minister,

# Faceless in the media



Continued from Page 46

In a tradition-bound conservative society, where women are relegated to the background, the girl child is not a priority.



As many as 1.5 million girls will never be the media's concern since they will die before their first birthday.

As Arun Bhattacharjee of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* put it: "Slow death whether due to illness or malnutrition does not make good copy unless it has political overtones."

The media tend to reinforce cultural and traditional stereotypes that push women into the background. There are many stories of success. Men and women in traditional roles. Advertisements of various products keep emphasising the close relation between women and pressure cookers, Maggi noodles, etc. But ads show men as going out, driving vehicles, taking decisions, holding important work positions. Most television programmes that a girl could be exposed to also generally consign women to inferior roles and positions.

Arun Bhattacharjee's analysis of the print media's coverage of the girl child covering seven newspapers from different centres and in different languages is quite revealing. He chose two newspapers published from Delhi, one from Bombay, one from Lucknow, one from Indore and two newspapers from Calcutta. Of these seven, the one from Indore was published in Hindi while the two Calcutta publications were both in Bengali. The rest were English publications.

Studying these newspapers between June 22 and July 7, 1989, Bhattacharjee found that there were only four stories regarding the girl child. These were

- A story of a criminal assault on a female child
- A story of how a female child saved the life of a boy
- A study report on the status of women, commented upon in the editorial of a Bengali newspaper from Calcutta

Continued on Page 49

“ As many as 1.5 million girls will never be the media's concern since they will die before their first birthday. By and large the female child is a non-being for them until she is 15 or 16 when she becomes ready for advertisements or dies an unnatural death ”

Hukam  
Minister

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THE GIRL CHILD

# This year could matter



Continued from Page 47

- A study on the plight of women in the hill regions that also touched upon the girl child

Though the media in our country, particularly perhaps the visual media, could play a vital role in helping better the status of the girl child, it has not done so — with a few, very few, notable exceptions. Perhaps with the declaration of 1990 as The SAARC Year of the Girl Child, this situation might improve and the girl child might come into focus more.

THE Year of the Girl Child is our unique opportunity to focus on the issues discussed in this essay, to try and rectify some part of the damage, to venture out with new ideas and programmes. The right to life of the female child is the very first that demands our attention. We have to find a way to save her from the match factories at Sivakasi (where girls account for 90% of the 45,000 working children), or from the gem polishing industry in Jaipur, from the lock-making industry in Allahabad, or the zari embroidery workshops in Banaras.

We have to try to break the stereotypical notion that girls are weak or that girls are inferior to their male counterparts, that her ultimate goal is marriage and the greatest possible achievement giving birth to a son.

The SAARC Year of the Girl Child can be useful in sorting out social priorities, particularly for activists struggling for women's rights and against gender discrimination. We have to understand these problems, however, in the overall context of social change, in the context of our commitment to the next generation.

We have to link this up with the struggle against exploitation, against corruption, against poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. This requires us to be alert at all times to counter the government and media output that constantly reinforces gender biases in various ways.

These linkages and questions are more important than they seem at first. What can the famous *anganwadi* workers, of the Integrated Child Development Scheme, do for the girl child when they are paid so poorly, are temporary workers, and lack even health benefits themselves? What steps can be taken towards removing the gender bias in the educational system of a country where the constitutional Directive Principle of free and compulsory education for all up to 14 years of age cannot be met even for the male child?

Continued on Page 51



“ The SAARC Year of the Girl Child can be useful in sorting out social priorities, particularly for activists struggling for women's rights and against gender discrimination. We have to understand these problems, however, in the overall context of social change, in the context of our commitment to the next generation

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