



What’s in a name?

A lot in some cases. We must recognise that ‘Dalit’ is an expression of self-empowerment

The advisory from the Union Information and Broadcasting Ministry to the media saying they “may” refrain from using the term ‘Dalit’ while referring to members of Scheduled Castes is unnecessary, intrusive and issued with little application of the mind. On the face of it, this has been done in compliance with a direction from the Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court. But a reading of the court’s June 6 order shows it only wanted the Centre “to consider the question of issuing such direction to the media and take a suitable decision upon it”. The court did not go into the merits of using the term. After it was brought to its notice that the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment had issued a directive to use only the term ‘Scheduled Castes’ in all official matters, the court merely noted that since media institutions were not a party before it, the I&B Ministry could consider the question of issuing a similar direction to the media. The I&B Ministry’s advisory is confusing as it uses the words “for all official transactions, matters”, though the media’s references to the community are usually beyond official contexts. The advisory must be withdrawn as there is no reason to tell the media how to do their job, even if it is couched in the form of gratuitous advice.

Of course, the debate over the appropriateness of using the term ‘Dalit’ to refer to members of the Scheduled Castes is far from new. A decade ago, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes disfavoured the use of ‘Dalit’, which it felt was unconstitutional. This is because belonging to a ‘Scheduled Caste’ is a legal status conferred on members of castes named in a list notified by the President under Article 341 of the Constitution. Therefore, arguably, ‘Scheduled Caste’ is the appropriate way to refer to this class of people in official communications and documents. However, it is inexplicable to oppose the use of the term ‘Dalit’ in the media and in non-official contexts – a nomenclature chosen and used by the community itself. Doing so lends itself to the charge that there is an attempt to deny the powerful and emotive meaning of the word Dalit. The term has evolved over a period of time and has come to symbolise different things in different contexts – self-respect, assertion, solidarity and opposition to caste oppression. In the past, Dalits were referred to as ‘untouchables’, but the official term during British rule was ‘depressed classes’. Mahatma Gandhi sought to remove the stigma of ‘pollution’ by using the term ‘Harijans’, or ‘children of god’. In course of time, the community rejected this appellation as patronising and sanctimonious. It was only some decades ago that they began to refer to themselves as Dalits. ‘Dalit’ literally means ‘downtrodden’ or ‘broken’, but it is a word pregnant with meaning, reflecting the struggle of a community to reassert its identity and lay claim to the rights that were denied to them for centuries.

Home and away

India needs to work on its batting to end the string of defeats in Tests played abroad

The Indian cricket team under Virat Kohli has ambitions of being the best travelling side in the world, but it clearly has some way to go before this is realised. The defeat in the fourth Test against England in Southampton condemned India to a 1-3 series loss, the latest in a long line of disappointments away from home. Of its last nine Test series outside Asia, India has won only one – against a less-than-impressive West Indies. India arrived in England this summer as the world’s No.1 Test team, and believed it had the mettle to upstage the hosts. The batting, however, let the side down, struggling against swing and seam, with an experienced English attack ruthlessly exploiting the batsmen’s deficiencies. India started poorly, losing the first two Tests, and it was not until the third one in Nottingham that the batting unit collectively showed the application required to survive in tough conditions. Preparation, as several former batting greats have observed, is the key. Leading into the series, India played only one tour game, a three-day match against Essex, although a few players had turned out for India-A in a first-class fixture in Worcester earlier. It was clearly not adequate. Modern-day schedules do not give international teams adequate time for preparation; this is the principal reason that travelling sides tend to start on the back-foot, and often perform poorly.

Kohli, though, was an exception. Four years ago, he was in dreadful form on India’s tour of England, managing only 134 runs from 10 innings. This time around, he has been outstanding, having accumulated 544 runs in four Test matches. Kohli has shown patience and a resolve to go with his skill, proving beyond doubt that currently he is the finest batsman in the world. India is, however, over-reliant on him. His captaincy, too, can improve. Last week was the first time Kohli had fielded the same eleven in successive Tests – although injuries and pitches have played a part in such decisions, the constant tinkering cannot be of any help. In South Africa earlier this year, he made selection decisions that can best be described as curious, dropping the likes of Ajinkya Rahane and Bhuvneshwar Kumar. On this tour, he omitted Cheteshwar Pujara at Edgbaston in Birmingham; it is not ideal for players to feel that their place is perennially under threat. A captain can only be as good as his team, and Kohli’s legacy as a leader will be judged by the squad’s performance on tough tours. There are encouraging signs for the future, not least India’s superb pace attack. But it is not over yet, and with the fifth and final Test commencing at the Oval in London on Friday, India gets a last shot at salvaging its pride.

All for one, one for all?

Each service of the military extolling its own importance is not helping India to study the changing character of war



D.S. HOODA

There has been much discussion in the media recently on the integrated military theatre commands. Most of the opposition to such a restructuring has been led by Air Force officers, including former Chief of Air Staff S. Krishnaswamy, who have voiced the view that the creation of integrated commands would seriously hamper the effective application of air power, particularly because of the limited resources available with the Air Force.

Initial steps

The views of respected Air Force officers, particularly a former chief, need to be taken seriously. There is justification in the argument that moving ahead towards integrated commands without any meaningful restructuring in the higher defence organisation is premature. The initial steps should have been an integration of the Ministry of Defence and the appointment of a Chief of the Defence Staff. This would have put in place structures and practices that would encourage a jointness among the three services and perhaps pave the way in future towards integrated organisations.

What is more debatable is their somewhat simplistic view on the character of future wars. Wars would “be swift and the objectives... met in days or weeks,” wrote Air Chief Marshal (retd.) Krishnaswamy in *The Indian Express* on August 16 (“Why theatre commands is an unnecessary idea”). On the same day, in *The Hindu* (“The roadmap to military reform”) Arjun Subramaniam, a

former Air Force officer, wrote that the Air Force would be the decisive arm because: “Capturing ground beyond a few kilometres or taking physical control of vast maritime spaces for prolonged durations are no longer sustainable operations of war as they arguably result in avoidable depletion of combat potential... It is in this context that air power would offer a viable alternative by shaping ‘battle spaces’ adequately before the other services enter combat.”

The Army and the Navy challenge this assertion with their opinions on the importance of land and sea power. The real problem lies in the fact that all three services have their own vision of how future conflicts could unfold and the primacy of their own arm in winning wars. The start point is therefore a common understanding between the services on the nature and character of wars that India could fight in the future.

According to Carl von Clausewitz, the nature of war does not change, it is the character of war that undergoes transformation. The enduring elements of the nature of war are its violent character, a clash of wills between two opponents, and political primacy. There is no war without these elements. The character of war, on the other hand, is related to how a war will be fought. This depends on our military capabilities, economy, technology, political considerations, civil-military relations, and the opponent’s aim and strategy.

Political purpose will decide the start and termination of wars, and the manner in which they will be fought. The services have made their operational plans based on a proactive (cold start) strategy, with the assumption that the war will be short and swift. Maximum combat power is to be harnessed and applied across the border in a se-



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ries of strikes that will rapidly degrade the military potential of the enemy. The weakness with this strategy is that it seldom takes political objectives into consideration.

Three examples

Let us take a few examples of the recent past where military force was used or contemplated to be used by the Indian state. The Kargil conflict broke out in 1999. The Pakistan Army had clearly committed an act of war by occupying territory on the Indian side of the Line of Control (LoC). While the complete military was poised to strike Pakistan by land, sea and air, the political leadership decided to restrict the conflict to only the Kargil sector and to our own side of the LoC. Only a small fraction of the Indian Army was applied while the Air Force was restricted to bombing posts that had been occupied by Pakistan Army soldiers. Despite this, Kargil was a resounding political, diplomatic and military victory.

The next crisis emerged from the attack on the Indian Parliament in December 2001. Operation Parakram was launched and the Indian Army mobilised for an impending war against Pakistan. The Army remained deployed along the borders for almost one year. Even the Kaluchak attack in

Jammu and Kashmir in May 2002, in which 34, including soldiers, women and children, were killed, did not trigger an all-out conflict. As the Army returned to its barracks in December 2002, questions were raised whether the military had mobilised without the political leadership having clearly spelled out its objectives and whether this attempted show of force had actually proved counter-productive.

The Mumbai attack in November 2008 was the biggest terror strike launched from Pakistan. There was outrage in the country and calls for retaliation against Pakistan. I was posted in the Military Operations Directorate at that time and am aware that military options were discussed. However, the use of force was ruled out. As the former National Security Adviser, Shivshankar Menon, explains in his book, *Choices: Inside the Making of India’s Foreign Policy*, “The simple answer to why India did not immediately attack Pakistan is that after examining the options at the highest levels of government, the decision-makers concluded that more was to be gained from not attacking Pakistan than from attacking it.”

Apart from emphasising the need to synergise political and military objectives, another major lesson from these examples is that the importance of a military force lies in its utility to achieve the national aims, and not in the numbers of divisions, ships and aircraft squadrons. The dominance of America’s military power has not resulted in the achievement of its political objectives in Afghanistan.

Imagining the future

We must also debate the character of future wars. A number of questions need to be answered. What will be the contours of a war between nuclear armed adversaries,

and how will victory be defined if we want to remain below the nuclear threshold? As our offensive columns enter the Punjab province of Pakistan, what is the sort of conflict that they will face? Will it merely be a pitting of two armies against each other or a hybrid conflict also involving the local population, Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorists, and criminal elements?

How will China achieve its political objectives through armed conflict? Will it be by a massive application of force across the Himalayan watershed or by exploiting its advantages in information warfare, technology and ballistic missile capability? What will be the psychological impact of long-range missiles slamming into population centres and killing people who would never have imagined themselves to be a part of the conflict? Will this be the real clash of wills rather than actions along the border?

It is necessary for the three services to sit together and find realistic answers. We must be prepared for a whole range of options from non-contact warfare to a full-scale war. Our ability to generate 11,000 sorties in an exercise or launch three strike corps into Pakistan are visible displays of our combat potential but may not translate into the best utilisation of force for all contingencies.

It is only after these discussions crystallise that we will be able to arrive at a common understanding of how future wars could possibly play out and the kind of joint structures that are required to best fight this conflict. We may not get everything right but each service extolling its own importance is not helping our ability to prepare for the future.

Lieutenant General (retired) D.S. Hooda is a former Northern Army Commander

Steps to stop the rot

The government must stop storing millions of tonnes of foodgrains in the open under tarpaulins



PETER SMETACEK

In India, the height of the rainy season is a time that one prays will pass – flooded roads, wet clothes, masses of insects and mould. No place is safe from the growth of fungi that spring up overnight. With the humidity in the air and the warmth of summer, all that fungi need is something to feed on. To prevent fungal attack, we store food items at home in airtight containers with well-fitting lids or in sealed plastic bags.

If I were to suggest that instead of all the airtight containers and waterproof bags, you build a cement plinth on the roof of your house or in your yard and pile up your flour, bread, biscuits, rice and other cereals and pulses there in bags and then cover all this with a tarpaulin, assuring you that it would be perfectly safe through the rainy season, you would probably lose all faith in me and my suggestions. This would be based on your practical experience.

Most grain in India, which is

procured from farmers by the government, is stored using the CAP, or cover and plinth method. Very cheap and easy to make, it is described in the preceding paragraph. India stores about 30.52 million tonnes of rice, wheat, maize, gram and sorghum in such structures at Food Corporation of India godowns and hired spaces.

A comparison

In other parts of the world, grain is stored in silos. Here, stored grain is kept dry and aired so as to prevent fungal and insect attacks. When the North American mid-west came under the plough during the 19th and 20th centuries, the first thing that was done was to build large grain silos and a railway system to export the grain. Today, the U.S. has a permanent storage capacity nearly equivalent to its annual grain production. But in India, the government has considered only four silos to be sufficient for the nation’s needs – one each in Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai and Hapur-Ghaziabad. The last one, in Uttar Pradesh, is the most modern with a storage capacity of 500 tonnes, according to a recent paper.

The remainder of government-procured grain is stored in conditions so shoddy that it is estimated



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that there is a 10% loss of harvested grain, of which 6% (around 1,800,000 tonnes) is lost in storage. This means that the grain is so damp and fungus-ridden that it cannot be ground and passed on to the public for consumption.

In order to export basmati rice, Punjab has, in a public-private partnership, built modern, temperature-controlled grain silos with a storage capacity of 50,000 tonnes – but this is not for the Indian market.

Invitation to illness

Eating mouldy grain causes a variety of illnesses. According to a World Health Organisation paper, titled “Mycotoxins”, mycotoxins, which are found in mouldy grain/foods, are associated with human disease and produce aflatoxins (cancer-causing), trichothecenes, ochratoxins, citrinin and other toxins. The paper says: “Aflatoxi-

cosis causes abdominal pain, vomiting, hepatitis and (sometimes) death after acute exposure to high concentrations in food. Chronic low dose exposure to aflatoxin can result in impaired growth in children.”

This is why traditional wisdom ensured that mouldy food was discarded. Today, our grain, especially wheat and paddy, is stored outdoors under tarpaulins through the rainy season. After this, grain is converted to flour or flour-based products or de-husked, which we store in airtight containers and bins to prevent mould. However, this is shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted. The mycotoxins which we seek to prevent by keeping food dry are already present from the time the flour was stored in the form of grain.

The government is aware of the deadly consequences of grain with mycotoxins. Although there are regulations in place to prevent the purchase of mouldy grain from farmers, there do not seem to be any published studies on the extent of mould infection in grain stored using the CAP method. However, one does not need these studies. All one has to do is purchase flour from the market, make rotis, bread or biscuits and compare the taste with similar pro-

ducts from developed countries. The “nutty taste” of wheat is missing in what is available in the Indian market. If you get wheat from farmers and get it ground, you will find the “nutty taste”.

Questions for planners

One needs to ask a pertinent question. When there is an abundance of steel, cement and other building materials, money and the technological know-how, why is the government not moving on a war footing to store food grains in the proper manner?

Given the weather conditions during the monsoon months, how is it acceptable that our foodgrains, which the public pays to procure, are stored in the open under tarpaulins?

How can we gloat about a growing economy when 30 million tonnes of foodgrain is stored outside under tarpaulins? Even though foodgrain production has been encouraged and increased, why is there no effort being made to ensure that grain being procured annually is stored properly? Are our planners unaware of what is going on even in their own kitchens?

Peter Smetacek runs the Butterfly Research Centre at Bhimtal, Uttarakhand

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Patient pain

The article, “Drugs are not sweets” (Editorial page, September 5), reflects the sentiments of millions in India – that multinationals have never really cared about the ailing masses and only think about their bottom lines. Why is the government in India silent even after the horrifying details of medical negligence? There should be greater concern, stringent statutory provisions and deterrent action. Separately, and as it has often been highlighted in the sections of the media, many drugs are being promoted in irrational combinations. The way clinical trials are being conducted, with many used as guinea pigs, is another area that needs regulation. The new health policy should help the poor and ailing masses.

A.G. RAJMOHAN,
Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh

Kerala floods

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan’s claim that there was nothing wrong in “our” dam management is strange (OpEd page, “The Wednesday Interview”, September 5). The fact is that everyone knows the low accuracy of weather forecasts. His argument that some of the rivers do not have dams is not the full fact. If Mr. Vijayan plans to “build a new Kerala”, taking into consideration “ecological issues”, he should be willing to accept what V.S. Achuthanandan said in the Assembly – “flawed policies, formulated under pressure from vested interest groups”, which have led to piecemeal development and not sustainable growth.

P.R.V. RAJA,
Pandalam, Kerala

Readers speak

As a long-time reader, I am proud that *The Hindu* will soon be reaching another

milestone. Its objectivity and neutrality are beyond question as one cannot fault its remarkable adherence to journalistic ethics and fair reportage. In an age of sensationalism, vilification and false reporting, the daily is one of the few to be standing tall (Page 1, “Let us know you better”, September 1).

J. ANANTHA PADMANABHAN,
Tiruchi

I remember with gratitude Raphael Vaiz – the headmaster of my school, at Manapad, Tamil Nadu – who introduced me to the daily when I was 12. My association with the ‘daily of the nation’ has continued since then – for more than six decades. It was also what helped me in my career as a teacher and, later, banker. Calling a spade a spade and publishing only verified news are the hallmarks of the paper.

THARCIUS S. FERNANDO,
Chennai

I have been a subscriber and reader since December 1965 when its cover price was ₹4.65. I was the only buyer of the daily on our street, and it was an honour to share it with other households whose family members made a beeline to my house to read important reports and also scan job advertisements. Many have thanked me for helping them get them employment this way!

It is no myth that in the past, children were exhorted to read the daily to improve their English language skills. A suggestion: please try to reintroduce printing the day and date of the edition in every report, just above the editorial and below the masthead for future and easy reference. This helps many readers who preserve reports.

S. NALLASIVAN,
Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu

As a keen reader for the last 55 years, since 1963, my

association with the daily in a part of its long history has been interesting. My first letter, on the Fourth Five-Year Plan, was published in April 1969. Subsequently, this encouraged me to write on various subjects, including law and politics, which were published. This has also helped me, as a lawyer, to appreciate the insightful articles on the Editorial and Op-Ed pages by some of the new set of regular contributors. I offer some suggestions – there should be more space for “Letters to the Editor” to encourage younger readers. The Readers’ Editor’s office should also address reader grievances in a better manner.

B.M. BALIGA,
Bengaluru

Like many letter writers, I too have been an ardent reader (for the past 30 years), drawn by the features of accurate news presentation and language. I

appreciate the appointment of the Readers’ Editor, who has played an important role in guiding the paper.

S.V.N. VIJAYENDRA,
Mysuru

It has been very interesting to read the anecdotes of the many older, loyal and long-time readers. I am 21 and the paper became a part of my life in the last four years. In fact, my day begins only after reading the paper.

VIDHYA B. RAGUNATH,
Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu

As a “job aspirant” and also a regular reader, I can vouch for the daily’s popularity among those who seek employment. It is also very popular with those who are preparing for various competitive examinations within India. The “Letters to the Editor” section is a major draw, which presents views.

VIMAL VASUDEVAN,
Alathur, Palakkad, Kerala

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