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The Republic of Reasons

by
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The Republic of Reasons*

The intellectual and moral foundations of our republic seem insecure from time to time—for reasons both trivial and, alas, grave. The trivial threat is exemplified, for me—by the advertisers’ fascination with the princeling culture of yesteryear. The bewhiskered twits who figure in the ads that wish to signal gracious, old-world aristocracy—and look for all the world like the grand *durbans* in five-star hotels—are an anomaly in a democratic republic. But there are unfortunately more serious reasons to make one wonder about the depth of our republican culture.

At its simplest, a republic is a freely constituted community of equals. This is distinguished from communities that make archaic and often fanciful claims for their existence, involving both hierarchy and even, God help us, God. But a republic is a voluntary, freely-constituted community of equals—and the necessary foundation of this freely-constituted community is, naturally, the Constitution—which has even been endorsed as our ‘only sacred book’ by the Hon’ble Prime Minister Modi. This ‘coming together’ of diverse peoples is not a ‘natural’ or easy process—as will be evident from the laborious wranglings in our own Constituent Assembly. The Constitution is a heroic achievement, and it is only appropriate that the people who are associated with its making—notably, Dr. Ambedkar—are honoured by a grateful nation. By the same token, the repeatedly signalled desire of certain political elements to open up the Constitution to fundamental reconsideration is—and should be recognised to be—an attempt to tamper with the very foundations of our republic. Mercifully, good sense has prevailed—so far. But my primary concern here is with another threat that, while it is not quite foundational, is still extremely serious.

This is the threat from the sudden and alarming salience of ‘hurt sentiments’ in our public life. Indeed, a recent book has characterised our state as a ‘state of hurt’—(*Ramdev et al.*, 2016). In the words of one of the contributors to this

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volume: 'when sentiment is used as a means to dominate the speech of others by way of force, then this mobilization of sentiment symbolizes tyranny, not democracy. It is also the enforcement of public deceit, because what is being stated is not that such-and-such persons are offended ... but that they propose to be violent and destructive unless their demands are accepted. The so-called hurt sentiment has now become the cutting edge of a campaign to replace democracy with mob rule' (ibid.:34-35). It is against this 'state of hurt' that I wish to counterpose the 'republic of reasons'. I realise that my 'republic of reasons'—in effect, a sort of perpetual seminar—is something of a utopian idea. (And perhaps even something of a nightmare! I am reminded of Oscar

There are, alas, many serious and even tragic examples of the manifestation of 'hurt sentiments' in our social life — the murdered Akhlaq of Dadri village has become iconic, but he is not by any means the only one. But perhaps it would be better if we approach this subject via a somewhat ludicrous instance of 'hurt sentiments'. I refer to the 'Bovine Divine' incident from the art festival held in Jaipur in November 2015.

Wilde who said that the trouble with socialism was that it took up too many evenings!) And my academics' delight in the contestation of argument and evidence may well lack mass appeal—but before I turn to the difficulty but also, to my mind, the inescapability of the idea of reasons in our public space, I would like to spend a little more time with the state of 'hurt sentiments'.

There are, alas, many serious and even tragic examples of the manifestation of 'hurt sentiments' in our social life—the murdered Akhlaq of Dadri village has become iconic, but he is not by any means the only one. But perhaps it would be better if we approach this subject via a somewhat ludicrous instance of 'hurt sentiments'. I refer to the 'Bovine Divine' incident from the art festival held in Jaipur in November 2015. In the words of one of the organisers of the festival: '...Bovine Divine

consisted of a styrofoam cow tied to an air balloon with a string, elevated to a height of about 50 metres.' The local constabulary came to intervene with their usual delicacy, claiming that they were 'responding to a complaint by a "common person" whose sentiments had been hurt at seeing a cow hanging

mid-air.' The artist, wished to express his—'sentiments', perhaps?—regarding the way in which neglected cows roam our streets, and may be seen consuming plastic waste and often suffering gastric blockage etc as a consequence. This is an entirely legitimate response, and it is certainly not open to anyone to decree whether or not this is a suitable subject for 'art'? However, the artist's plastic cow, floating in the festival sky—hurt the sentiments of some pious and passing Hindu. Again, entirely legitimate—there is no accounting for flying mothers! But it is what followed that is both ludicrous and heartbreaking. This is best described in the words of the artist... so, a few snapshots of our farcical descent into fascism. So, the cop-turned-art-critic advises: '...remove the installation and instead make a painting and write whatever message you want on the painting.' A little later, after the bewildered organisers had been 'pushed and dragged' to the police station, another cop asks: 'So you hung a cow upside down?' We remained silent. He repeated. 'So was it a dead cow or a living cow?' We said it was a plastic sculpture of a cow. Unsatisfied, the head constable persisted: "That's ok, but was the cow sculpture dead or alive?" 'We tried to explain to him that it was beyond dead or alive because it was plastic.' Meanwhile, while this fascinating aesthetic dialogue was going on, some 'dozen Hindutva activists... had already taken over the sculpture, performed a puja, and garlanded it.' (*Indian Express*, 27 November 2015)

There are two concepts that are frequently invoked in the context of such grotesque acts of violence—which must cover both the murder of Akhlaq and the policeman-as-art-critic at Jaipur. These are the concepts of 'provocation' and 'spontaneity'. Thus, the floating cow was deemed to be, in clear misunderstanding of the artist's intention, a provocation. Of course, one cannot have provocation without intention—and even provocative intention must be entitled to some free speech defence. However, it is what happens next that really determines the outcomes of such incidents. Because what happens next is 'spontaneous'—a mob of 'provoked' persons wreaks violence—breaks into homes, institutions—but what they do is removed from the domain of reason by the fact that it is 'spontaneous'—merely 'hurt sentiment', now free to inflict

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hurt on others. (And, be it stated with no ambiguity, the hurt that they cause goes well beyond 'sentiment'.)

The law that covers this—that entitles the inflictors of private, i.e. non-state violence, to spontaneous immunity, and enables the police, in connivance with such people, to throttle free speech—has rightly been subjected to criticism. (In fact, I suggest that in line with contemporary practice, this kind of violence may well be designated as PPP violence—i.e. violence that is the sinister product of Public-Private-Partnership.) It is possible that the law regarding the business of hurt sentiments—Section 295A of the Indian Penal Code—was introduced by the colonial authorities who wished to avoid the inconvenience of civil conflict without being overly concerned about its impact on public discourse. However, even a minimal acquaintance with the emergent culture of our public spaces shows that the law regarding hurt sentiments is increasingly being used to silence public discourse—primarily but not only under Hindu-majoritarian pressure.

Interestingly, it appears that the law was introduced to protect Muslims from Hindu provocations—the famous Rangeela Rasool incident, insults to the prophet, etc. The publication of Rangeela Rasool was, so it was claimed, a response by the Arya Samaj to an attack on Dayanand Saraswati, not quite a god, but certainly holier than many. The original intention seemed to have been to remove one of the axes of Hindu-Muslim conflict. However, it will immediately be apparent that the social function of this law has undergone a significant change. Thus, now Hindus may freely say offensive—intentionally offensive—things about Christians and Muslims, without getting a response. When Christians and Muslims do get offended—and *they do*—it is generally—BUT NOT ONLY—by *co-religionists* who are alleged to be attacking their fundamental pieties. But with some 640 million gods and goddesses to go around, there is plenty of possibility of the Hindu being offended, yet the Hindu is primarily offended by—by what? Plastic cows? Thirty year old paintings? Whatever. And once the Hindu is offended, the legal apparatus proceeds to do the rest. Even if there are very few convictions under the law, the very process of the law—the tender

ministrations of the police, the widely-dispersed cases—is quite enough punishment to act as a serious deterrent. But my point here is *not* about adjudicating between the rights and wrongs of particular religious communities, about asserting that Hindus are better or worse than Muslims or Christians—banning Rushdie and Taslima Nasrin—under Muslim pressure—is just as unforgivable as hounding Husain into exile—under Hindu pressure. Rather, it is about the chilling effect that this climate of hair-trigger offence has on public discourse—a strange minimalistic neutering of public discourse, where only trivial and inoffensive things might be said—because to say anything that is even mildly thought-provoking is likely to offend someone, particularly those who are easily provoked, and uncomfortable with thinking anyway. And if those least capable of thought are going to have a veto on public discourse—by definition, since they react with ‘hurt sentiments’ rather than arguments—the consequences can be imagined easily enough. If I might adapt something by one of my patron saints, George Orwell—if the freedom of speech is to mean anything at all, it must mean the right to say something that someone may not want to hear, that someone may disapprove of and even find offensive—perhaps even ‘anti-national’. After all, a right to ‘freedom of inoffensive expression’ sounds rather tame.

And where the state is unable to find even a small legal foothold, it outsources the enforcement of the ‘inoffensive only’ doctrine to lumpens within, and without, uniforms. These lumpens are quick to take offence. And take the offensive. The pattern is clearly discernible now—between the conveniently ambiguous reach of key provisions of the law—Sections 153A, 295A, 124A; and short-order armies of louts who come under different disguises and designations, and can produce, on call, the ‘disorder’ envisaged in key legal statutes; and, finally, a compliant administration, it is already becoming practically impossible, under threat of physical violence, for anyone merely to raise their heads above the parapet, and say anything unpalatable to the ruling dispensation. Do not be deceived by the apparent freedom of stereotyped celebrities to shout in TV studios—that merely enables the charade of democratic engagement under

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which camouflage the real and bloody 'democratic fascism' of the streets is being operationalised. The violence perpetrated by the 'lawyers' at the Patiala House courts brought this 'pattern' uncomfortably close to the narrow zone of metropolitan attention—but it is happening everyday in the desolate and teeming hinterlands. This pattern of outsourced violence has been seen before—

in Mussolini's Italy, in Hitler's Germany. The parallels are not reassuring.

It is entirely natural that there will be differences of opinion in any large collectivity—indeed, often it will be seen that even a family is a large enough collectivity for significant differences! And therefore it is the case that collectivities evolve methods for dealing with differences. One of the 'solutions' that is often advanced in such cases, particularly when the differences arise in the context of religions, is that of some kind of essentialised religion, some triple-distilled essence which advertises itself on the grounds that it contains the core substance of all religions—which turns out to be, miraculously, the same!

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to protocols of knowledge, not susceptible to evidence and argument. That is

to say, in the context of 'differences' that derive their supposed conflicting legitimacies from religion, the hope of resolving the differences by resorting to some super-religion is futile. *The solution is the problem.*

This super-religion is sometimes presented in the name of the Religion of Man. However, to me this is a misleading, and perhaps even malign, form of humanism. The sense in which humanism can be useful and relevant for us today would be one that takes the imperfect humanness of human beings as given, foundational—i.e. goodness of course, but along with our propensities to evil, and violence—but, minimally, to difference.

Another false 'solution' to the inescapable fact of differences that emerges, particularly in the context of democracies, is the majoritarian shortcut. This has to do with a simplistic understanding of democracy—in the counting of numbers. Majority prevails, more is more than less. Thus it is asserted that any opinion that has the backing of larger numbers will, and should, prevail. This is nonsense, both pragmatically—tyrannical, non-reasoned suppression of alternative opinions doesn't work, even in families—and philosophically. *The necessary ground on which the counting of numbers makes sense is, if what is being counted is, axiomatically, equal.* Thus, the democratic formula of one person, one vote—and, more is more than less—only makes sense if all the persons that are being counted are, equally, *full persons—with all the rights and freedoms that they are entitled to under the constitution*—and these include the right and the freedom to be different. Any majoritarian shortcut that seeks to curb or limit these rights is, both philosophically and pragmatically, undermining our democracy. (Consider the example of the Sri Lanka Tamils: the myopic denial of Tamil rights by the Sinhala majority produced, right at our doorstep, a generation and more of heartbreaking, irredeemable tragedy. It is an example we cannot afford to ignore.)

Beyond these crude nostrums—essentialised religion and majoritarianism—there is a rather more sophisticated difficulty that has emerged in the last few decades. This is the difficulty that is indexed by the pluralisation of 'reasons' in

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my title. There was a time—probably mythical in more ways than one—when our intellectual lives were ruled by a Universal Reason—with a capital R. And those of us who could not enter that favoured realm were forced to resort to myths and fairy tales as vehicles for our sense of the world—and declared irrational and removed from the *pangat* of the Rational. This is again not the place to go into the processes whereby this simple, and convenient, state of affairs was disturbed: whether it was primarily philosophical, or historical, is fascinating but here, irrelevant. But it is certainly the case that that former Universal Reason, stripped of its defences, has been revealed to be primarily white, male and western, and in appropriate contexts, capitalist as well. (And, as always and everywhere in India, caste—*savarna*, Brahminical—is a necessary part of this story too.) This is intellectual history as caricature but it must, for the moment, suffice. One consequence of this is that ‘difference’—as embodied in alternative histories, multiple perspectives—has now acquired a kind of intellectual legitimacy which was previously, under the regime of the much missed-Universal, unthinkable.

Amid the rubble of the former Universal Reason, one sees the emergence of all kinds of ‘identities’, including religious ‘identities’ which are often associated with groups that feel excluded from—or otherwise disempowered by—the exercise of the would-be Universal public reason. And, excluded, they turn away from there into sulking and worse, into violence. But it is important to assert, precisely in this context, that one cannot afford to reject the exercise of public reason. One must seek rather to extend its scope, and to find ways of including groups that feel excluded, while, and it is important to say this in today’s world, including in India, coming down hard against non-rational, non-reasoned, unlawful and violent means of negotiating difference. Further, it is important to recognise that even state violence is also and only a worse form of violence unless it comes as a last resort after sincere effort at the exercise of public reason—as, for instance, on the matter of tribals’ rights, or on the larger question of the alternative paths of development.

The discipline of history has emerged as a major site where this intellectual struggle has been playing out. Henry Ford's famously illiterate dictum about history—history is bunk—is repeated gratefully by every schoolboy. How can it matter what happened several years or centuries or even millennia ago—and yet, people are willing to die, and kill, over their version of events historical, or even mythical. The 'sack' of Somnath is sufficient cause for contemporary violence, poisoned 'memory' produces dead babies. It is hardly surprising that the historical implication of contemporary communal violence is a potent factor shaping the discipline of history itself. Conscientious historians have to negotiate a delicate passage between the twin alternatives of either airbrushing the past or, as in the mode favoured by the Right, of seeking, somewhat farcically, to avenge it.

However, this fascinating historians' debate is not to our present purpose—although Dipesh Chakrabarty's recent work on *Jadunath Sarkar and the Empire of Truth* would be a good place to start. Sufficient for us to note that in place of the splendidly solid histories of the past, resting on firm foundations of 'fact', we now have 'versions', perspectively-inflected histories—your version, my version.... The pluralisation of histories—and the antecedent and consequent pluralisation of the 'reasons' that are adduced in defence of a singular, shared but differently experienced present—is an irreversible process. There is no going back to some earlier harmony, before the current cacophony burst upon us. But when we see the frequent and violent contestations over alternative histories in our public space, we may also notice a simultaneous and paradoxical hankering for an authoritative and unplural status for one's *own* version of that common, and plural, history.

History, our common understanding of our common world, has been ejected from its positivist fortress—and forced to take up habitation in the shifting tents of narrative, an academic refugee. To put it in slightly different words, history has fractured, irretrievably, into stories—history, *her*story... And, as we have seen so clearly in our public life over the last few decades, disputes about competing narratives cannot be resolved by a resort to 'facts'. Of course, and

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this is still worth saying in the current climate of postmodern laissez-faire—in the words of that famous historian Ella Fitzgerald, ‘anything goes’—that despite the inescapable pluralisation of truth, falsity is still falsity, untruth is still untruth, lies are still lies. Indeed, it is a little puzzling that even though ‘truth’ has become notoriously difficult to pin down, lies can still be identified easily.

The fracturing of the foundational certainties—whether metaphysical, or historical, the ‘death’ of God, or Clío’s suicide—has had a profound impact on the nature of our social arrangements. Irrespective of whether the origins of our present intellectual crisis are philosophical or historical, the fact is that we are in a mess—and if we hear the words of the poet in late-19th century Britain, we have been here a long time –

...we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.
And, I fear, by day too.

Of course, the crisis that Arnold was writing about is mere childish stuff compared with where we find ourselves today—our intellectual fractures are deeper, our armies are better armed, and the guerrillas of the apocalypse carry Kalashnikovs. The crucial question before us today is—can we devise/evolve/dream up strategies for living together on our darkling plain?

Actually, and this was pointed out to me by a young friend, a careful observer of contemporary trends—the guerrillas of the coming apocalypse carry something far more dangerous than Kalashnikovs, they carry smartphones. The ubiquity of this satanic invention, and the dependent evolution of the ecosystems of instant misinformation and lies—the troll factories—has meant that the conditions of engagement, of discourse, have changed radically. It is possible for people to be seduced, at least temporarily, mid-argument, into parallel universes founded on instantly generated lies, morphed images, troll-generated ‘realities’.

The impulse to resolve and reconcile differences—in the always-provisional present in which we are constrained to live—can derive from some prior commitment to a sense of connectedness, of unity. Every trivial, and even non-trivial, squabble over a family dinner-table, does not end up in a divorce court or a partition. But what is so easily accessible in the context of a family becomes rather more problematic when we think of the play of differences in our public spaces, in the context of the nation. The problem may be described, in academic shorthand, as the problem of creating solidarities in ‘post-metaphysical’ polities—polities and, indeed, nations like ours—voluntary, freely-constituted polities which do not harbour the illusion of divine, transcendental descent, and therefore must needs *invent a necessary solidarity between individuals and collectivities which have significant differences*—must rest, willy-nilly, on that prime exemplar of consensus, a Constitution.

Addressing a similar but not identical problem—establishing a foundation for the idea of justice in societies in which there are different communities of belief and practice, the philosopher John Rawls developed the deeply influential idea of the ‘overlapping consensus’. This is an area of vigorous philosophical debate, and I invoke the concept with some trepidation. Broadly speaking, the idea of the ‘overlapping consensus’ suggests that one may identify paths from a prior diversity that converge and produce the famous ‘overlapping consensus’. Predictably, this has been criticised for being parochially Western, and so shackled to a relatively tame, domesticated diversity, ultimately reliant on some watered-down version of the late-lamented ‘universal’. That is not a debate that I am either competent or, mercifully, required to enter here.

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As the repeated recourse to essentialised religion shows, there is a longing for a radical solution to the problem of living with differences—eliminating differences by resolving them—or, more accurately, by *dissolving* them in some powerfully solvent religious quintessence, way more potent than mere alcohol. (I have suggested that this cannot work—that the social work that religions do is to mark difference—the ‘other’ is essential—and also that religions are, by definition, not amenable to reason, and can always retreat into the fortress of ‘belief’.) My own, relatively modest quest is for a strategy of negotiating differences, of living with difference.

It is here that the idea—or perhaps only the phrase—of the ‘overlapping consensus’ presents itself—a minimal (and legal) consensus on addressing differences by argument and persuasion, by giving reasons to each other, and so evolving, over time, a culture of reasons. However, there are several difficulties with this—so, how do you reason with a rampaging mob, or an assassin with a gun or, nearer our everyday reality, a lynch-mob that identifies anyone who thinks differently from it as being ‘anti-national’ ? The answer is—you don’t. That is why we pay for an enormously expensive apparatus of legal enforcement, and if the Basis that man it frequently appear to have forgotten their *raison d’être*, a minimally civilised society must find ways to remind them of it.

But there are other difficulties even prior to the rampaging mob, irrespective of whether they are real louts with real weapons, or anonymous anti-socials on the so-called social media. This has to do not with the pluralisation of a singular Reason into reasons—a theme to which I shall return—but rather with the dwindling of reasons into ‘opinions’ and often, into ‘mere opinions’. This is a puzzling development, because whereas the pluralisation of reasons is a democratic, inclusive development, and implies a *shared* commitment to the activity of reasoning, the dwindling of reasons into opinions is profoundly conservative. It implies no shared commitment to anything, and its characteristic gesture is the shrug with which people say—“That’s your opinion”—which, for me, carries the disturbing implication that one could, so to speak, harbour someone else’s opinion! (In response to one such remark, the philosopher Ronald Dworkin replied tartly— ‘Of course it is my opinion. Why would I be asserting

it otherwise?') But for all its apparent tolerance—and this shrug is still infinitely preferable to the behaviour we have seen over the last one year—but it is, basically, a refusal to engage. Yet in so far as one's 'opinions' have a bearing on the ineluctably shared public space, these opinions must either present themselves as reasons, or they must remain private.

I referred above, breezily, to the 'refusal' to engage in reasoned argument. But there is a related problem that must at least be noticed in this context. This has to do with the failure of the education system—high and low, urban and rural, public and private, elite and not—to inculcate a culture of reasoning, of analysis. The emergence of the cult of information translates naturally into the narrowing of education into mere rote learning—and this is cemented into place by the further trivialisation of education into 'skilling'. Again, having 'skills'—relevant skills—is very important, but it is not the same as education. We seem to have forgotten that. But the apparent 'refusal' to engage in argument—the resort to slogans, and shouting—might well signal an *inability* to engage in argument.

Finally, to return to the problem of building solidarities in post-metaphysical societies: even shared myths are dangerous—as in the case of the 'Aryan' myth in Nazi Germany. But when shared myths aren't available—it is here, in the context of the problem of building solidarities in post-metaphysical societies, that the activity of reasoning presents itself, yet again, as the ground of a possible solution. We did blunder along with the myth of the 'national struggle' until all kinds of people began to complicate it—and then this history too got pluralised, and so became problematic. Even though, it should be said in the context of some of the most vociferous 'nationalists' that we see around us—lies are still lies. No matter how tall the statue of Sardar Patel, or how high the flagpole, the role of the Hindu Right under its various names, in the anti-colonial struggle, does not bear examination—or, alternatively, would reward it. There is a sense in which Rawls' overlapping consensus suggests a prior consensus on the rules of engagement—that we will manage our differences through reason, and not by hitting each other over the head. There is also, lurking somewhere in there, though not necessarily in Rawls, the idea—which can appear either as a utopia in which harmony rules, or a

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dystopia, in which all difference has been transcended—of a final consensus, a sort of horizon. However, in between these, there is also the notion of an intermedial ‘consensus’ that emerges merely through reaching out to the other, as one must when one reasons with another to persuade, with arguments which appeal to the other, and are motivated by the pragmatic desire to persuade the other, and are not merely an ‘expression’ of oneself or, alas, only too frequently, merely an attempt to ‘hurt’ the other. This intermedial consensus then presents itself as the possible ground of a viable solidarity. And, appropriately in this context, our common humanity presents itself in a dual guise, as both the ground of our citizenship in the republic of reasons, but also as the goal thereof.

After my somewhat reckless foray into quasi-philosophical discourse, I wish to return to a territory in which I feel relatively more comfortable—that of language. There is a sense in which philosophers—and mathematicians—are embarrassed by the intrinsic slipperiness of language. Mathematicians escape into their world of rigorous and disciplined symbols—but philosophers, condemned to language, seek to tame its flickering, evasive, living quality. But no matter how difficult it is for lay people to take this fact on board, the fact is that language is a living thing. (In fact, it is not even a thing, is merely living—it is also, for people like me, *a living!*) Reared on dictionaries, and indeed, things, we seek to scale language down to our own limitations. However, there is something to be said for thinking *with* language, with the grain of language, rather than against it—for submitting to the genius of language itself. This is a large subject—and I can hardly expect to initiate it now—but, for instance, there is a distinction to be made between ‘having reasons’ and ‘giving reasons’. Thus, one may ‘have’ a reason for doing something—but that will quite likely not be a ‘reason’ that one can be expected to ‘give’. My conception of ‘the republic of reasons’ rests upon reasons that one may ‘give’ rather than upon ‘reasons’ that one ‘has’ but which, by their very nature, demand that they be kept hidden, secret or, as we have seen, masked as sentiment. But ambiguity and inexactitude is part of the intrinsic nature of language, and so, inevitably, our acts of communication are necessarily, inescapably and ineluctably, a complex and

shifting compound of understanding and misunderstanding—the only prior requirement is a desire or, failing even that, a *recognition* of the need to communicate. Language is needed *because* we have differences—thus, ideally, lovers need no language. But the rest of us do.

And irrespective of whether our acts of communication succeed, or fail—or succeed on the basis of some happily diplomatic misunderstanding: *jaane kya toone kahi, jaane kya maine suni // baat kuchh ban hi gayi*—or fail because of some extra-lingual understanding of each other's intentions, the mere attempt to communicate with reasons creates and affirms those filiations, of meaning, of meaning-together—the roots that clutch, the branches that grow—and produce, even in the rubble of post-metaphysical polities, human connection. Discourse within a constitutional framework—and the search for a possible and *future* consensus therefrom, rather than an *anterior* consensus, except on the need to evolve one without violence—alone can be the foundation for a possible solidarity in societies which are vibrant with real diversities and differences. 'The process of discourse itself draws us out of ourselves and brings us into a process of justification before others in order to explain ourselves, our positions, our reasons and our rationality' (Rodriguez, 2005). With like-minded people, it is sufficient to voice opinions—and lovers don't need even that—but with others, *different* others, one must needs have, *and give*, reasons. Having a flag, even a very big flag, is good—but it is neither necessary, nor sufficient.

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Biodata:

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