

Palavi

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**National Academy of Defence Financial Management
Golibar Maidan, Pune**



IoFS and IDAS Probationers with Mr. Vishwakarma at NADP, Ambajhari October 2019

Editor's letter

Kavya Tangirala



Another edition of Palavi is here, albeit late.

This is a backdated edition of the month of November, 2019 covering our previous month of October, that was spent in National Academy of Defence Production, Ambajhari (Nagpur). We had begun our TD with a 5-week training here along with our Indian Ordnance Factory Services colleagues. A long sojourn on factory workings and accounting along with esprit de corps awaited us!

5 weeks of learning and staying put in the Academy which is deep inside the OF Ambajhari complex (away from the hustle bustle of Nagpur), lined by the highway, it seems a lot of us had lots to write about. So you'll find, in this edition, longer articles on topics selected by the authors themselves, including one on a vexing issue of the 21st century: one of (mis)information.

As our batchmates who took the Mains Examination 2019 returned after their 3 month long strenuous leave, there is now a sizeable crowd to fill up the classroom, a crowd to create noise in our hostel corridors and to play doubles badminton with! I am sure that with their attention now diverted from matters of examinations, they are increasingly willing to give their talents a chance, especially in sharing them with us.

As the editor of Palavi, I must sincerely apologise for this delay in publishing the editions. This exercise was a lesson on time management and delivering on promises that have consequences, which are of utmost importance to one's work ethic and professionalism. A team will now be handling various aspects of this magazine and this emphasises another crucial principle that we have learnt across our one and a half years of training: one of teamwork. While the ultimate aim of this is to give ourselves a platform, we must therefore work towards ensuring its continuity and consistency.

With that said, I hope you enjoy this issue and happy reading!

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OUR TIME IN NADP, NAGPUR

Badime Krishna S.

After three long months of classroom training at NADFM Pune, we were all excited to embark on attachments (aka Bharat Darshan) to different client organizations and our own offices across the country.



We begin with the Joint Training Program (JTP) at National Academy of Defence Production (NADP), Nagpur.

As I have the responsibility of being the Team Leader here, I had already touched base with the authorities at NADP to ensure the process of arrival and checking in, along with classroom sessions happen smoothly.

Nagpur is just an hour's journey by flight from Pune. The sight from the plane above was soothing – a good monsoon was visible in the lush green and dense forest growth below. Nagpur itself is a city of lakes. A place of interest for us was the Ambazari Lake in the city. As we arrived and checked into NADP, we settled in for the next three weeks.

The course started as scheduled, on 7 October.

This JTP is meant to build synergy between two sister services Indian Defence Accounts Service (IDAS) and Indian Ordnance Factory Service (IOFS).

IOFS officers are responsible for the management of the Indian Ordnance Factories (OFs), which contribute to India's defence production capabilities. These factories are treated as the fourth arm of defence.

A cohesive structure is present in OFs – where the finance function is integrated with the management function from the factory level, upwards to the level of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB), Kolkata. Here, IDAS officers as Controllers of Finance and

Accounts (CFAs), look after finance and related issues. They play an important role in the disbursement of pay, cost accounting, internal audit and financial advice. Hence, the necessity of synergy is felt to improve management of OFs and to fulfill the mandate given to the sister services.

The course has been carefully designed to make IDAS officers familiar with OFs (their structure and finance issues) and IOFS officers. It is a mix of class room teaching (of 3 weeks) and ordnance factory attachment (of 1 week).

At this juncture, we have completed almost three weeks of classroom teaching, with one field visit.

In the classroom, we are exposed to various aspects of factory accounting, defence technologies, procurement etc. The emphasis is on synergy with the underlying aim of 'Collaboration, Coordination, Cooperation



and Integration' of finance and operations.

The visit to Ordnance Factory, Ambajhari (OFAJ) was a unique learning experience. It is one of the best state-of-the-art forging facilities in India. The factory manufactures Ammunition Hardware viz shells, cartridge cases, fuzes, rockets & primers, castings, alloys etc. All of us, including IOFS officers visited the shop floor and learnt various technical features alongside inclusive discussions amongst ourselves. We did the same when visiting the Accounts Office in OFAJ.

Outside the class rooms, we have developed a good rapport with IOFS officers here. In the evenings, we enjoy playing badminton and snooker in the fitness club with and

against our fellow officers. This has further strengthened the bond.

The culmination of our esprit de corps was a trip to the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, a few hours away from Nagpur.

In the last phase of the course, we will be attached with OFs where projects will be undertaken by us together with fellow IOFS officers.

I am sure this will be a great leap towards jointness in services. This will conclude with presentations of our learnings so far at PCA (Factories) Kolkata.

So far, this has been an enjoyable experience. A good start to our Bharat Darshan!



Outside Tadoba Tiger Sanctuary



TRAINING OUTSIDE THE CLASS ROOM

Prem Kumar

According to me, the success of training especially for civil servants, depends mostly on what we learn outside the classroom.



In that sense, NADFM, our training academy apart from imparting us domain specific knowledge, has done justice to its role in shaping us. The work culture of the academy has imbibed a robust value-system in us which will definitely help in moulding us as good officers and also as good human beings.

Let me start right from the first day of our training – we had birthday celebrations in the conference hall. How does birthday celebrations imbibe values in us? We learnt the management principles of esprit de corps, participative leadership and how to build the morale of employees.

The perception about the hierarchy ridden, monotonous government institution completely changed to a lively and egalitarian work environment which was reflected in our academy. Recent DAD celebrations portrayed fun-filled environments and how such functions can bring a synergy in the working of different departments.

Cultural programmes brought to light the hidden talents of not only probationers but also many serving officers. It has created many singers like Sonal, poets like Krishna, dancers and actors and script writers. Mihir Sir's avatar as a full pack entertainer

showed us that the head of the institution need not always be serious and strict and can express their lighter side too.

Official dinners always bridges the gap between seniors and juniors. It opens doors, allowing for freer talks to clarify any doubts about the service and postings and also to engage in socialization.

The one impressive act that struck me and would wish to emulate wherever I work is, Mihir sir's open door policy. We never have a second thought in entering his room for any doubt, help or advice. The comfort in his cabin is not a gesture which many such seniors can give! He has made himself available for 24*7 and made us top priority. We hope in future we also treat our juniors and staffs with the same warmth and open doors.

The next aspect which I would like to highlight is the organisational improvement. Our stay in December 2018 and then in July 2019 (in Pune) are different in many ways. Right from the renovation of rooms, to giving us single occupancy, to the home theatre with Amazon and Netflix subscriptions, all our feedback were implemented. Also, recently during DAD Day celebrations, the hostel team was motivated further to provide better services, bringing out the art of motivation.

Our Organisation as a whole, right from the Director to the staff, hostel team, to driver bhaiya, Ashok bhaiya, all spread a contagious smile, calmness and an invisible bond of love.

NADFM has inculcated in each and every member of it a perfect value set essential for a healthy work environment. Our training will

definitely fulfil its objectives with the inculcation of such cherished qualities.



We are all singers at official dinners!



Book review

Kavya Tangirala

GUNS, GERMS AND STEEL : THE FATES OF HUMAN SOCIETIES by Jared Diamond, 1997



Originally published in 1997, the book carries a timeless insight into the evolution of humans. For our evolution is not just biological; limited to gene mutations and DNA decoding. It is also largely influenced by geography, the environment and technology. This is the central premise of Prof Diamond's engrossing and stimulating account of human history.

The colonial era and eugenics have promoted the idea that the West or the Global North was "blessed" with superior genes along with higher capabilities thus cementing their hegemony in the history of world. However, Diamond's book challenges precisely this assumption – in an objective fashion, he simply says the world evolved the way it did because environmental conditions (temperate versus tropical), geography (north-south axis versus east-west) and technology diffusion (domesticating plants and animals) were conducive to the rise of the West.

Illustrative to this is Yali's question. Yali was a local politician in Papua New Guinea, who asks the author, "why is it that white people

created and brought so many goods to Guinea but we black people did not create much of our own?"

Prof Diamond thus charts out the chain of causation that allowed for this lopsided progression of world history. Thus, when the

Spaniards arrived in Latin America, led by Pizarro, they had the advantage of guns, germs and steel. This advantage was not because they were smarter but because of certain factors: relatively earlier developments in farming in prehistoric Eurasia allowed for food surplus that catered for creation of governments and classes – certain classes were free to do other activities such as exploration and innovation, at the expense of the farmer folk. This ultimately snowballed into the moment

when Pizarro landed on Latin American shores. He was carrying with him cumulative years of development.

Germes are also considered equally potent and find central place in the book because of their sheer force in affecting the future of a society. In the case of Spaniards and their conquest, the germs of the Old World caused havoc on the populations of the New

JARED DIAMOND **GUNS GERMS & STEEL**

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afterword by
the author

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World. Diseases like influenza and smallpox took root in the towns and settlements of the European mainland. We see this because – firstly, European settlements were more densely packed as opposed to the more fragmented settlements of the Incas and Aztecs; secondly, many more animals (especially mammals) were available for domestication in Europe and thus people always lived in proximity to animals that would ultimately breed pathogens (such as cows, pigs, goats et al). Pizarro thus wiped out large swathes of people within matters of weeks without having to do anything – his crew and army carrying germs were potent enough.

There are certain interesting analysis and cause-effect exercises carried out by Prof Diamond throughout the course of the book. Firstly, his explanation for diffusion of technology in one continent and not the other is extremely insightful. He asks us to observe the geographical axis of the Old World (Eurasia) and the New World (Americas). Eurasia is spread on the east-west axis and thus any spread of technology, like that of domesticated crops, would be faster. The Levant and China were early developers of such wild crops which then spread elsewhere. Further, an east-west axis allows for similar temperatures and climate thereby perpetuating this practice elsewhere in Eurasia. However, in the Americas, the north-south axis prevails. Thus, any crops developed in regions of North America

never spread down south to Mexico or the jungles because of the Isthmus of Panama being too narrow and climates being extremely different.

Second, the emergence of the Bronze Age and tools happened only in the Old World and only locally in the New World. The continent of Australia and surrounding islands did not see bronze at all (till the arrival of the Europeans). This is a major theme across the book – previous historians tend to paint this as historical accident only. For Prof Diamond, while accident is a large

part of human evolution, innovation and inventiveness in bronze technology was nurtured more carefully in the Old World – he says all people are equally innovative given the correct circumstances. These right circumstances were

present in the form of complex hierarchies, military conquests, economic changes et al in the Old World, that are in turn linked to the east-west axis argument.

In this way, Prof Diamond conducts a multi-layered analysis of our history. However, certain cultural factors also play a role in the way society is shaped. This caveat is necessary because to simply base the entire progression on deterministic factors like technology and environment does injustice to the values created by societies throughout their evolution.

Another issue in the arguments of the book is

Most of the determining factors of our history were already in place long before anything actually happened

the Eurocentrism prevalent throughout. The book visibly does not address the issue of accompanying racial and civilization superiority attached to all events of history addressed herein. For example, the British conquest of India was not just because of superiority in guns or in germs, it was also facilitated to a large degree by the dogma of “otherness” or barbarianism accorded to Asiatic societies. Colonisation of Africa and Asia has been self-fulfilled by the cultural superiority assumed by Europe.

Regardless, the book is an enthralling read and one of my favourites, in the way it provides a deeper interpretation of our history. This rich body of work encompasses various fields – archaeology, biology, genetics and anthropology, amongst many. Prof Diamond has donned many hats and is immediately visible as one reads the book.

He essentially says that most determining factors of our history were already in place

long before anything actually happened – environmental conditions and technology diffusion were already in operation way before the AD era began. Thus, to advocate the view that European descent means smarter genes because they took over the world is ignorant.

The book was published in 1997 and reflects the context of the time. By 2018, there has been a general recognition of the fact that the future lies in Asia. This has led to a general trend in revisiting and celebrating alternative histories. A huge shift away from Eurocentrism is already in place. This is a welcome move – more than half the population lives in the so-called Global South and subaltern perspectives must thus be cemented. The book has contributed to a scientific understanding of our history – breaking many stereotypes and questioning biases.



British imperialism was symbolic of its development



GANAPATI BAPPA MORYA!

Sanol



Ganesh Chaturthi, also known as Vinayaka Chaturthi, is a Hindu festival celebrating the arrival of Ganesha on Earth from 'Kailash Parvat' with his mother goddess Parvati/Gauri. The festival is marked with the installation of Ganesha clay idols privately in homes, or publicly in elaborate pandals (temporary stages). It is celebrated across the country, but more enthusiastically in Maharashtra and other parts of western India.

Ganesha is considered the God of Wisdom, and has been worshipped for centuries. However, the practice of celebrating the Ganesha festival, as it is done today is not very old.

The festival became a major social and public event with the initiative of Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj during the Mughal-Maratha wars. He used it to lift the morale of the soldiers fighting the war.

Later in 19th century, Lokmanya Tilak popularised the event and championed it as a means to circumvent the colonial British government ban on Hindu gatherings through its anti-public assembly legislation

of 1893. The festival has since been celebrated with much joy and devotion across the country.

One of the integral parts of the festival is the procession and the accompanying orchestra that precedes the arrival of Ganesha. It consists of artists playing 'Dhol Tasha', a traditional drum, in a rhythmic pattern. The

Dhol Tasha which reverberate through the city streets during the festival have a history of more than 4 decades. From being merely a leisure activity in villages to today's organised pathaks across the nation, the art has come a long way and has an interesting story.

In 1965, there was a riot in the country as a result of which, the police banned the playing of

musical instruments in religious processions. To protest against the move, folk artists from rural areas played Dhol Tasha collectively. Once considered to be played only by rural and folk artists, the art thus assumed symbolic importance. Since then, it has been an inseparable part of the Ganesh festival celebrations. These days, a lot of women can also be seen playing the Dhol with equal energy and enthusiasm as men do, sometimes even leading the troupe.



Seemingly, the festival has always been associated with some kind of a larger social objective. Even today, it is a great occasion for promoting social bonding among people with all the festivities and of course the delicious offerings particularly Ganesha's

favourite 'Modak'.

So, next time you are in Pune, or Mumbai during the festival, please make it a point to attend the celebrations. It is an experience you will not forget.



BUREAUCRACY: NOW AND THEN

Manjeet Singh



It is aptly said that in modern times, a person's life right from his birth, nay, even before birth, till his death is controlled and regulated by the State. This regulation can be effective only when the instruments and tools of regulating are not only sharp but according to the needs of the times.

Bureaucracy with its overarching and all-encompassing presence is one instrument that can make or break not only the nation but also the dreams and aspirations of its people.

HISTORICAL JOURNEY

The genesis of the modern day Indian bureaucracy harks back to the British Raj. The likes of Warren Hastings and Lord Cornwallis laid its foundations, upon which the superstructure was built and moulded by the Lords Curzon, Morley, Mountbatten (etc.) according to their individual inclinations and necessities of their times. Nevertheless, a common denominator during the entire British rule was that the bureaucracy and the official set up was used for the benefit of the mother country and not India.

The basic nature of the bureaucracy, which up till 1947, was exploitative and restrictive; was transformed into an instrument of welfare and advancement of the common people.

However, people's perception of this bureaucracy; especially the "face" they

deal with daily, such as the police, district administration, the revenue department et al hasn't been the story of celebration for most.

For instance, in far flung and remote parts of the country, the District Collector continues to be the *maai-baap* for people. The frequent exposures of corruption, abuse of power, politically biased actions of a few have only blemished the image of the bureaucracy.

Despite all its flaws, it was this Steel Frame that not only kept the country united despite its vast diversity but also ensured the vision of our Constituent Assembly, notably *equality, liberty, fraternity* et al found its mark on the ground.

Many say that this Frame has rusted and is on the verge of falling apart, if not rescued and repaired. The culture of opacity and exercise of unbridled power with impunity is not in the sync with the age of Twitter and Facebook, where information is easily available. Also, the 21st century Indian is cognisant of their rights and claims upon the State.

THE PARADOX

Paradox seems to be ingrained in our societal milieu. What we wish and what we want, at times, are two polar opposites. Nothing fits this better than the current bureaucratic set up. And, the public perception of bureaucracy is a perfect case in point.

The paradox of the public psyche is nowhere clearer than among the youth. They are the

engine that drive the growth of our country; so how they look upon the civil services is important.

Words like inefficiency and red-tapism are attached to bureaucracy; however, people still hold the civil services in high regard. Despite lucrative and hefty remuneration provided by the private sector; every year, more than 10 lakh apply for the Civil Services Examination. This sustained attraction towards the civil services is complex to understand.

The present day model of governance is based on cooperation and collaboration between the State and various stakeholders. People can express their views, provide their input in the law making exercise, become part of implementing government programmes.

In this situation, the bureaucracy can't afford to remain a disinterested and unwelcoming host and must evolve to meet the needs and aspirations of the people. And the bureaucracy has changed.

Gone are the days when entering the bureaucracy was the sole prerogative of the urban and upper class – there has been increasing diversity in the new recruits: people from various parts of the country, including rural backgrounds are present in large numbers. Also, the number of women is on the rise and will eventually provide a gender-balanced narrative in the bureaucracy.

With the advancement in technology and its integration with governance, new vistas have opened. The use of ICT in different walks of governance, ranging from filling taxes, implementation of government schemes, to monitoring through CPGRAMS, etc. has changed the interface between public and the State – the two have come closer.

However, there are certain issues that still plague the bureaucracy – lack of specialisation in a world that is increasingly becoming technical, too much insistence on procedures often at the expense of productivity, risk aversion, corruption, poor public perception and so on.

Bureaucracy was earlier the sole prerogative of the urban and upper class but now there is an increasing diversity

In the foreseeable future, it can safely be assumed that the bureaucracy will continue to play a crucial role in the progress of the country. It has the potential and capability to transform India into a New India.

For this to materialise, there are certain changes that the bureaucracy must go through:

firstly, to shed their colonial mentality where a sense of superiority over the people prevails.

They must realise that they are public servants.

secondly, to becoming accessible to people, which will not only smoothen the administrative process but also develop trust and confidence on both sides.

thirdly, primacy of merit and competence, so

that factors like seniority and service does not lead to monopolizing of the higher echelons of power.

fourthly, to move towards specialisation and developing core competency in choice areas of the civil servant.

To summarise, an industry works smoothly only when its different units work in unison and in line with the industry's goal and vision. To ensure this happens, the responsibility lies on the managers.

A similar role is played by the bureaucracy to an extent, for on them depends not only the present but also the future of the country.

How will that future turn out to be? Will it be a dark cloudy day when the sun fails to reach the surface? Or will it be a clear sunny

day when one can completely see the horizon? All depends on those that chair leading positions. Our predecessors did their duty with determination, courage and complete dedication. Was it the best? It's hard to tell. Could it have been done differently?

Such questions have answers that are uncertain and ambiguous. One thing, however, is certain that it was their untiring efforts that led us here.

The mantle is now passed onto us. This is a burden too heavy to carry, but is also a great opportunity to perform and create a future for us.

From here on, however we fare, we have no one but ourselves to hold responsible.



OUR BEAUTIFUL DAYS IN THE US

C. Aarthi



The most awaited part of training for any probationer is the international attachment.

That too when it is across the Atlantic Ocean and it is the United States of America, you can imagine the height of enthusiasm!



A view from above

Our journey started on 9th June, 2019 at 01:50am and we reached Dulles airport at 13:40 hours on the same day. [Yes! We gained a day due to the time zone and most of us experienced it for the first time]. The fact that we were travelling as government officials holding the White Passport and as the face of 130 crore people made us feel all the more proud!

The flight journey itself was so exciting. Flying past the Arab peninsula, the Caspian Sea, the tri-combination of greenish-whitish-bluish Nordic countries, snow covered peaks of Iceland with breathtaking views of icy mountains, fjords, glaciers, crystal clear

waterbodies, the never ending vast oceans has been such a visual treat – it will be etched in the travel memories forever!! The picturesque locations really made the long journey seamless and without hassle!

Our stay was arranged at the Marriott in College Park, Maryland which ensured an extremely comfortable and cosy stay. As we reached on a Sunday afternoon, we took a stroll around the serene and magnificent campus of the University of Maryland.

When you are in an entirely new place, can your day be complete without trying the local cuisine?! So we roamed around and faced the many choices of burgers, sandwiches, pizzas, donuts, pastries but we finally zeroed in on Buffalo Wings with Ranch Sauce (forced decision of me on others) which was thankfully decent enough. But since many of us had a jet lag the same day, most part of Sunday was spent in deep slumber!



Delicious chicken wings

The five day course in 'International Immersion Program in Public Management and Policy' started on 10th June. A few takeaways from the entire course were: the enthusiasm of the professors irrespective of their age along with their vast knowledge, overall gender equality, work culture, application oriented teaching, classes centred around interaction. These were apart from the classroom knowledge; that are worthy of being highlighted and emulated in our country as well.

I would like to quote three instances to express the quality of the lecturers

1. A lecture on Performance Budgeting was handled by an expert who had first-hand experience in researching on this area in real-time, in different countries like US, Chile, China etc.
2. A session on comparison of MODICARE and OBAMACARE was dealt by a professor who worked in India studying MODICARE.
3. We were taken to the University of Washington (in Washington D.C.) where we were welcomed by a very senior professor with a lot of enthusiasm, who delivered a lecture on 'Super Regulators'.

Despite such vast knowledge, she was very

humble. We found out later that she was the head of the Super Regulator in the US, which is a very

powerful body and that she directly reports to the President of USA. Her humility despite holding such a powerful post and her interest in imparting knowledge was truly impressive.

On the lighter side, the snacks spread during class hours ensured that the

class had full attendance. Everyday, in every session, a feast with varieties of mouth-watering delicacies was laid out – melting chocolate, cream, jam and butter donuts, crispy coconut, gems cookies, colourful fruits with blueberries, strawberry, apples, tasty cupcakes, beverages and the list goes on and on!

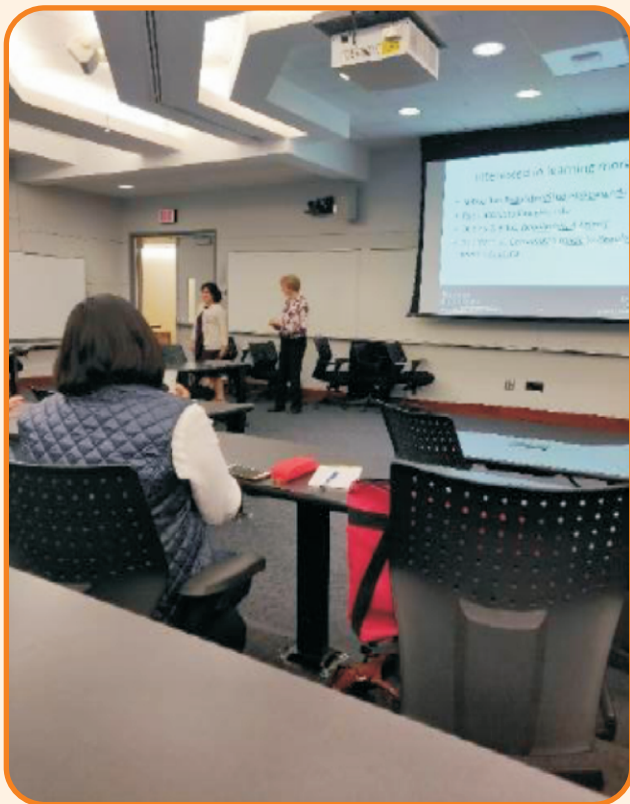
Our lunch for every day of the week was arranged by the University. In their way of making us feel at home, an Indian lunch was organized. This food was so Indian, it was like having a North Indian Thali from a restaurant in Delhi! Not only did we relish the Indian meals but many people working at the University came into the lunch hall attracted by the aroma and enjoyed the food.

Our first day ended with a campus tour of the University. It was no less than a heritage



walk with many interesting stories shared by the students.

Stay tuned for those interesting stories In the next month issue



A class in session



American cupcakes



DAWN OF A DISINFORMATION AGE: NAVIGATING THE POST TRUTH ERA OF 21ST CENTURY

"If we don't know what is true , we can be told anything and it won't be a lie"

Dhanasekhar Rathinam



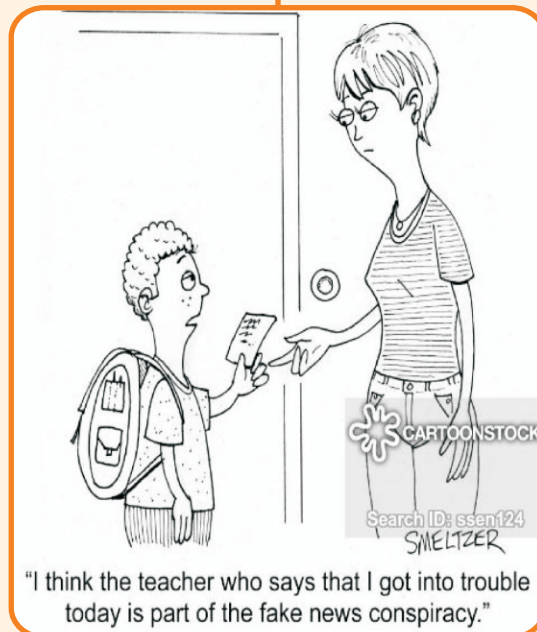
Since time immemorial, man has traded and dealt in everything, literally everything – be it goods, natural resources, land, products, including himself. This list is ever growing. A remarkable latest addition to this is Information and Data of our everyday lives.

This is especially true of the 21st century, where the digital, commercial and online revolution, has made it, undisputedly, an era of information/data/knowledge.

Every aspect of our lives is turned into data and this is the material beginning of countless myriad things. From shaping public opinion and mobilization to gathering clothing preferences, profiling patterns and behavior, political targeting, analyzing eating choices, etc. All of these are, obviously, of interest to modern day corporations, banks, political parties, societal institutions, and ultimately nations.

Evidently, the impact of data is expansive and wide. It is an understatement to say that the availability or the lack of Information can make or break any activity. Many enterprises thus actively thrive on

information/data – the mere existence and reach of information becomes their very soul. They are helped in this endeavor by the age of the Internet – the Digital Revolution and an ever growing cyber world with access and reach to millions makes information ubiquitous and abundant.



Having said this, it is important for us to confront the big question: is this 'information', which has the power to define and re-define our lives, true? Can it be "true"? How far is it from the truth? Is most of it outright false? And more importantly, who decides if it's true or not? This article is my attempt at answering these questions.

In contemporary times, we are all witnesses to multiple falsehoods, lies, rumours (information we believe not to be true) spreading in various traditional media (print/broadcast) as well as online and on social media. The veracity of this information increasingly being questioned. Such falsehoods/questionable claims are called by various terms – Disinformation, Fake News, Hoax etc.

Disinformation can be defined as *the deliberate spreading of false information with an intention to deceive the public*. Fake news/Hoax is the *deliberate use of*

falsehoods to present them as truth to the audience. Factual rebuttals to these falsehoods are routinely ignored and discarded. Beyond this, there is an altogether new phenomenon: one of Post Truth. The 2016 Word of the Year by Oxford Dictionary, it relates to circumstances where “*objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to Emotions and personal beliefs*”. Such appeals relegate hard and objective facts to the background and can have a decelerating effect on rational discourse and logical thinking.

It would be pertinent here to understand the enabling factors for these falsehoods to enter mainstream discourse in the first place. They include

(1) A hyperbolic, intense 24 hour media cycle – a tabloid phenomenon with a proliferation of competition among news agencies.

This translates into *sensationalism*. A culture of dire necessity to keep the audience engaged on by whatever means, thus presenting unverified information while ignoring sound journalistic principles of fact checking, source verification and so on.

(2) Omnipresent social media/online interaction platforms

These provide a parallel living space,

alternate to traditional media. There is a thorough lack of checkpoints and falsehood filters here.

(3) Ever growing fault lines amongst humanity on the lines of nationality, race, religion, sex, etc. and the exploitation of these fault lines by those with vested interests

(4) Polarized political culture and ideological extremes. This includes extremism perpetrated in the name of religion, driven by propaganda.

(5) Unhindered commercialism and consumerism to influence gullible people.

These factors are not exhaustive, but merely highlights prominent ones.

Whatever be their initiating factors, the effects of disinformation/fake news are disastrous for society and the nation as a whole, as we shall see.



To begin with, contemporary polarized politics has provided a fertile ground for disinformation to spread, risking the very idea of democracy and its important experiment, *elections*. According to David Roberts, *post truth politics is a political culture in which politics has become almost entirely disconnected from policy*. Political campaigns are often done through professional public relations agencies by engaging in micro

targeting of voters, negative information overload, swaying fence sitters with grandiose claims and appeals to emotions, and using inflammatory language etc.

To improve their reach, internet trolls and bots are actively deployed. There were multiple allegations of these practices in the Brexit referendum and 2016 U.S Presidential elections.

Similarly, anti-vaccination campaigns are deliberate dis-informative campaigns carried out to cause vaccine reluctance, hesitancy and ultimately avoidance. Despite voluminous and overwhelming scientific evidence that vaccination has saved millions of lives from infectious diseases like Polio, small pox, Hepatitis, etc, it continues. The problem is very serious – the WHO declared it to be a Top Global Health Threat that is completely man made.

Even climate change denial is similar where the consensus of the scientific community on Anthropogenic Climate Change is refuted. To compound this, there is an active lobbying by oil magnates and nations to promote this disinformation. This undermines efforts aimed at treating the impending climate issue, including climate treaties (See US pull out of Paris Agreement 2015).

Post truth politics is one in which politics has become almost entirely disconnected from policy

Closer home, we see the spread of hate ideologies, falsehoods and inflammatory content leading to communal clashes and violence. Rumours of theft and child abduction have led to mob lynchings. Rumours about scarcity of goods have led to panic buying and artificial inflation of prices. Ponzi schemes have led to entrapment of the masses and loss of their life savings.

Having said all these, the next question is how to counter this disinformation/fake news?

The fight against disinformation should be multifaceted with multi-agency and community involvement.



On the side of the State and enforcement agencies, a prominent step would be to use tools to remove fake news online and establish fact-checking and monitoring which is

consistent with the freedom of information. An era of transparency, with dissemination of authentic information and policies with certainty and clarity needs to be ushered in.

Most importantly, elections should be fought with necessary changes being made to the Model Code of Conduct, to contain and prevent the effects of disinformation. Political parties must inculcate a culture of ethical principles and responsibilities in their

conduct and campaigns so as to combat post truth politics.

For the press, unethical journalistic practices should be curbed. A culture of source checking, establishing authenticity, assessment of claims and counter claims etc. should be adhered to with discipline. The Press Council would be better placed to monitor this.

Social media companies should also contribute by filtering out deliberate falsehoods, coordinated bot activity, trolls and inflammatory content.

Most importantly, as people, a culture of critical thinking and logical questioning needs to be cultivated. To raise our scientific temper is as mandated in our Constitution and would effectively help counter campaigns of disinformation, like those of climate change deniers and anti-vaccination movements.

This fight against disinformation would be a long drawn one, but nevertheless, to be fought vigourously and arduously on multiple fronts.

The result would form the margin between a truthful world and a world of lies.





**Bonding
at
Sundarbans**



**With CFA & DCFA
(Fys) Ambajhari
in Nagpur**



**Shenanigans
in
NADP**