

## Budget and the aam admi

The 'aam admi' is weary of galloping inflation. That is the lesson from the fulsome praise Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee has received for her benign Railway Budget, even though it is impractical; its totally unrealistic revenue estimates are clearly unachievable.

And what is the 'aam admi' to expect from the union budget today? The Economic Survey released on Friday alongside Ms Banerjee's exercise in wishful spending tries to justify inflation as a 'natural' phenomenon. After a highly selective analysis of international data, it postulates that in developing countries, periods of high growth are almost always accompanied by high inflation. Without second-guessing the accuracy of the information on which its analysis is based, this pathetic little game of justifying the unjustifiable is much like changing the definition of the poverty line to deprive large sections of the people of 'below poverty line' (BPL) benefits...!

No one is trying to say that the government has an easy job on its hands. It has to try and rein in inflation while simultaneously not hobbling growth and, at the same time, tame the fiscal deficit. But then, whoever said governance was easy? The pundits say rapidly rising prices and the string of colossal corruption scandals during a year in which the ruling Congress faces elections in five states, makes it unlikely that the government will unveil any major reforms in today's budget.

So we can expect that the government will withdraw some more of the stimulus measures it had put into place to help the country ride out the global economic downturn. It may re-impose taxes on products that were earlier given relief. But one hopes reforms are not totally sacrificed at the altar of the polls. India is on track to grow at 8.6 per cent in the current fiscal year, even though the Economic Survey has rather more optimistically raised the growth forecast to 9 per cent.

The main task before the government is one of innovation. Since food inflation is endemic, it should realise by now, after seven interest rate increases since March last year, that straightforward monetarist measures – the main tool of advanced economies – do not work in India. It has to find more practical and hands-on ways of fighting food inflation, which has been averaging around 17 per cent for three years now. It needs to directly take on the manipulative big trader mafia, which manages to cheat both farmer and consumer, and makes a huge killing in the bargain. Here is a task for Rahul Gandhi's fabled 'aam admi ke sipahi' brigade.

Last week's mammoth anti-inflation rally by trade unions in the national capital should be a wake-up call for both the government and the ruling Congress. The opposition BJP may be clueless and too torn by internecine squabbling to mount an effective challenge, but the public is angry and resentful.

## Not enough

On 23 February, the Union Law Ministry quietly increased spending limits by candidates standing for elections by 60 per cent. In large states, the limit has gone up from Rs25 lakh to Rs40 lakh for Lok Sabha constituencies, and from Rs10 lakh to Rs16 lakh for state assembly constituencies.

In Goa, the limit for parliamentary polls is up from Rs14 lakh to Rs22 lakh, and from Rs5 lakh to Rs8 lakh for assembly elections. It is not enough. The government and the Election Commission must be more realistic. As it stands, this increase will do little or nothing to curb illegal spending, paid news and other election ills.

# Machiavelli, European avatar of Kautilya

It is interesting to note the modern appropriations of Machiavelli and India's Kautilya, says TEOTÓNIO R DE SOUZA

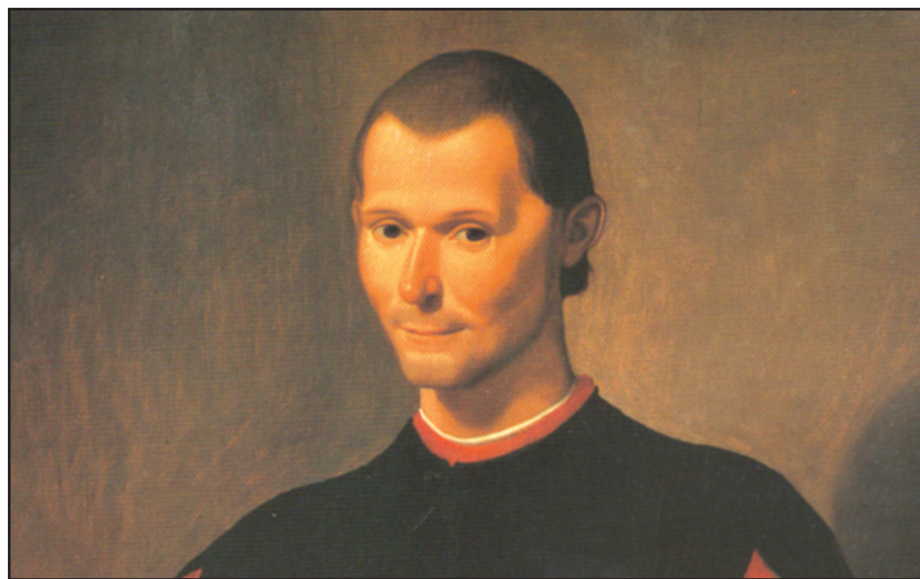
A quick search in the internet throws up a spate of references to Kautilya as 'Machiavelli of India' despite 19 centuries of distance between them! It is just one more illustration of the eurocentrism of the colonial education that taught the world to seek models in Europe, even for persons and events that anticipated Europe and Europeans by centuries and millennia. In his *The Idea of Justice* (Penguin Books, 2009) the Indian Nobel Amartya Sen points to this aberration and laments the one-sidedness in Western approach to knowledge.

Here we have an instance where India could rightfully boast of an Indian precursor of Machiavelli. Kautilya was a contemporary of Aristotle, and helped putting into power the Mauryan dynasty. He served as counselor and produced *Arthashastra* as a treatise on strategy and political economy. The proof of its success can be calculated from the expansion and power that a native Indian empire in the subcontinent ever achieved in the pre-colonial times.

By the fact that *Arthashastra* remained unknown till 20th century, it failed to contribute to the world thought, while it contained for instance, all the modern principles of political economy, including whatever concerns internal revenues, international trade and value of labour and just price, which Hume, Smith, Ricardo and JS Mill sought to define around mid-18th century.

*Arthashastra* refers to its author as Kautilya, and once as Vishnugupta. But there is an outside contemporary reference to *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, and that is in *Panchatantra*. This classic Indian contribution to world literature has a long saga of transmission through oral and regional translations, much before the sanskrit version was published for the first time in Bombay by MR Kale in 1912. The original version is presumed to belong to an unknown Jain scribe of 9th or 10th century. That was translated into French in 1871 by E Lancereau, and reedited by L Renou in 1965. An earlier version of L'Abbé Dubois in 1826 was based upon south Indian versions in Telegu, Kannada and Tamil. The Fables of La Fontaine have their deep source in India, having travelled through Kashmir, Persia and the Middle East, along the silk route.

It is not very different from the Indian contri-



HISTORICAL EXPLORATIONS

bution to mathematics, which through the mediation of Arabs permitted Europe to move into modernity and continues to be known erroneously as Arabic numbers. More significant and crucial for the Europeans to leap into modernity and its modern forms of capitalism was the pre-existence of the rich markets of China and India, as Andre Gunder Frank insisted in recent times to much annoyance of the Western sociologists and politicians defending the Iberian Discoveries as the beginning of the world modernity.

For Andre Gunder Frank, the Europeans of the Age of Discoveries bought the ticket to the Asian train by plundering African gold and Latin American silver, but very soon revealed their true genius by high-jacking the train with the brute force gained from the Industrial Revolution. What had been a trade among partners, following the Industrial Revolution it became an unequal trade, in favour of Imperial Europe. Without such loot the European modernity was hardly likely, or at least at the pace it happened.

Andre Gunder Frank was a distinguished western economist, a rare Chicago-boy who did not

hold candle to the Chicago school of neoliberals and paid dearly for his advice to the Chilean president. His dire predictions about the ephemeral nature of European modernity and the need to 're-orient' the global economy are coming true.

We wish to emphasise in this brief essay that not unlike its contemporary *Panchatantra*, also *Arthashastra* may have entered the world thought and lost its original moorings. I praise this feature as a true hallmark of any thought, namely its universal reception. It then ceases to belong to any individual or group patent. The contemporary Chinese legalist school that sought a centralised Qin empire of the Han dynasty could also belong to the same trend of thought as promoted by *Arthashastra* in Mauryan India. The Roman law was a western equivalent, and Machiavelli sought to recover it during the European Renaissance.

I wish there would be more interest among European scholars to trace the linkage of the *Arthashastra* teachings in the western thought, through the mediation of the satrapies that Alexander the Great left behind in north-western India. Seleucus and Menander were prominent

among them and had close dealings with the Indian empire of Chandragupta Maurya, and presumably with his Indian minister Vishnugupta, author of *Arthashastra*, through diplomatic agents like Meghasthenes (302 a.C-288 a.C.), who could have taken home the Indian manual of strategic thought. It is known that his chronicle "Indica" served Flavius Lucius Arrianus as a source of documentation for his classic history of the campaigns of Alexander of Macedonia. Could there be more than just a Roman inspiration for Machiavelli's *Prince*?

It is interesting to note the modern appropriations of Machiavelli in the west and of Kautilya in India for training in management, and promotion of executive's guides, on the basis of their teachings in psychology and politics of power. Kautilya (name derived from *katu*, meaning astute) had no doubts that beneath all sanctimonious rhetoric and pretense lay the basic struggle of life and instinct of man for survival at all cost.

Our reflections could have some interest in the context of the project entitled 'Machiavellism and Machiavellisms in the Western Political Tradition (16th-20th Centuries)' [www.hypermachavellism.net] under the direction of Professor Enzo Baldini (Università di Torino). A connected exercise is proposed to be held in Lisbon in the form of a seminar on '*Maquiavelo Dissimulado: Religião, império e herança romana no mundo português*', analyzing the linkage of religion, empire and roman heritage in the context of the Portuguese imperial experiences.

The organisers of the Portuguese seminar have announced their interest in discussing the issues raised by the Florentine author, and the reception and reinvention of his ideas in the Portuguese context. The privileged point of discussion will be the theories and political praxis of acquisition and conservation of territories in the Portuguese empire as related to Machiavelli's suggestions, paying special attention to the articulation between religion and politics, and how far the Roman inspiration influenced the process. I think that the discussion could be widened to understand how the Indian precursor of Machiavelli could have influenced the same experiences, and also a cultural (and subsequently political and military) resistance to the Machiavellian/Roman inspired Portuguese imperial politics and praxis.

Wise Counsel

## Egoistic attitude and missed blessings

By Arlette Azavedo

This is a very beautiful story that will surely touch your heart, it did touch my heart. It is, indeed, an incredible story and goes like this: A young man was getting ready to graduate in college. For many months, he had admired a beautiful sports car in a dealer's showroom, and knowing his father could well afford it, he told him that was all he wanted.

As graduation day approached, the young man awaited the signs that his father had purchased the car. Finally, on the morning of his graduation, his father called him into his private study. His father told him how proud he was to have such a fine son, and told him how much he loved him. He handed his son a beautiful wrapped gift box. Curious, but somewhat disappointed, the young man opened the box and found a lovely, leather-bound Bible. Angriely, he raised his voice at his father and said, "With all your money you give me a Bible?" and stormed out of the house, leaving the holy book.

Many years passed and the young man was very successful in his business. He had a beautiful home and wonderful family, but realised his father was very old, and thought of visiting him. He had not met him since graduation day. Before he could make

arrangements, he received a telegram telling him his father had passed away, and willed all of his possessions to his son. He needed to come home immediately and take care of the things. When he arrived at his father's house, sudden sadness and regret filled his heart. He began to search his father's important papers and saw the still new Bible, just as he had left it years ago. With tears, he opened the Bible and began to turn the pages. As he read those words, a car key dropped from an envelope taped behind the Bible. It had a tag with the dealer's name, the same dealer who had the sports car he had desired. On the tag was the date of his graduation, and the words...PAID IN FULL.

Can we imagine the sorrow and regret that we went through at that particular time when he opened the Bible and got the envelope with the car key? It must have been an extremely poignant and a touching feeling as though he was hit hard by sharp weapon. How many times do we miss God's blessings because they are not packaged as we expected? We take things or others for granted. A lot of times we do miss the blessing the Lord wants to give us, because of our egos. Also, to remember that we are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ and nothing is impossible with Him. How

often we forget to see the beauty of every little thing happening in our lives, bad or good, then? Everything happens for a reason.

In my experience, I have learned not to expect miracles to happen right away, but to wait for God's answers with patience and humility. We are sometimes so busy fulfilling our earthly dreams in life that we forgot and ignore many things and often hurting others very much. However, we got to understand that all of these are temporary and sometimes we tend to jump in an impatient manner that we forgot that things happen for a reason and it might be way better than what we just anticipate. Since we expect too much we don't recognize the little miracles, because we focus on what we don't have and ignore what we already have. The fact that I woke up this morning is already a blessing and everything else today is a bonus. Not all that glitters is gold, isn't? We can get caught up in the materialistic things of the world and the hustle and bustle of life. Finally, it is a lesson learnt by the above story to try to notice more and accept certain things.

Let me end with an apt quote by Maltbie D. Babcock - "Better to lose count while naming your blessings than to lose your blessings by counting your troubles."

### Outbursts of a Minister

B V S Priolkar, Margao

It has been reported in the press and shown on media the outbursts of a minister in this State casting apprehensions of government departments especially on CBI. This is highly objectionable and unbecoming on the part of a minister. He should have done all types of allegations after resigning from the cabinet. This is not the first such instance. Other ministers have, in the past, accused/blamed the government which they represent. It is unfortunate the credibility of the government is eroded by such outbursts.

### Issue is still alive

Fr Conceicao D'Silva, Campal

This is in response to the letter 'Only at 'Sammelan' time' (*Herald*, 24 Feb) wherein Jerson D'Silva implicates me and says that every year in the name of 'Sammelan' I exhume the Roman Script issue. The issue of Konknni in Roman Script is still alive. It is time for him to exhume the misconceptions, because the lovers of Konknni in Roman script are still demanding equal sta-

tus for last 23 years through Dalgado Konknni Akademi.

I would like to mention that I have not only contributed to Konknni in Roman script monetarily, but also in deeds. May I know Jerson's contribution to Konknni, his mother tongue? I would like to state that till Konknni in Roman script gets justice of equal status in Language Act of Goa, the issue will be alive.

### Awake from slumber

Paul Menezes, Chinchinim

On Tue 22 February, *Herald* brought to everybody's notice of the pathetic condition of the flood lights on the football ground at the Nehru Stadium grounds.

The GFA needs to correct this anomaly on an urgent basis so that the lovers of football can enjoy the games in Goa.

### Meaningful census

Jonas Correia, Aldona

The census exercise has begun and the enumerators are visiting the houses. It is surprising to note that the government was neither interested in knowing how many people of each household are em-

## Letter of the Day

### Why penalise mining truck owners?

Krishna Gaokar, Usgao

Overloading of mining trucks is done by the mine owners' employees in their mines. Why should the truck owners be penalised for this? Government spoke of making provision to penalise mine owners and even cancellation of their lease. But they have not made any legislation.

We reminded the RTO of the affidavit by the Chief Secretary to the Hon High Court in January 2010, which says that the fine shall be recovered from the mine owner. RTO officials replied that the government has not made any legislation to the effect of its affidavit. So why make truck owners suffer? Mine owners must compensate them. Two years ago, the RTO has made weighbridge compulsory at the loading point of every mine. RTO should raid all mines and temporarily close them for disobeying the rule.

ployed in government service or even employed elsewhere, for that matter.

Citizens who had temporarily gone abroad or to other Indian states were not counted. The government should make the census meaningful and use the information for the welfare of the families, and not as a publicity stunt.

### A sincere request

Ashlon A Fernandes, Nuvem

I was greatly shocked when the local MLA of Navelim organised a grand ceremony to celebrate the completion of a local bridge. Thousands of people went on the roads with the main purpose of displaying the flags and jerseys of his football club. Later on, a concert in Konkani was organised. No doubt people 'benefit' from it, it would be a good gesture if the money was spent, on improvisation of our roads, which are in a very bad condition. Through this letter, I am also requesting all other MLAs to stop doing 'tamashas'. The people of Goa today want real development, and I am one of the thousands of Goan youth, who is fed up of corruption.

### Lifeguards don new garb

John, England

I thought lifeguards were meant to save

lives, not attempt to end them? However, that doesn't seem to be the case here in Goa (25 February 2011) on Palolem beach, I saw a shocking incident where at least half a dozen lifeguards plus some locals gave a severe beating to a single drunk Indian tourist in front of us foreign tourists. The lifeguards even chased off foreigners who tried to take pictures. It was a disgraceful scene and puts me off returning to Goa in the future. Will the lifeguards face any disciplinary action over this - I doubt it! They should be sacked!

### Disgraceful coach

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

It was reported on the internet news that South Africa bowling coach Vincent Barnes has named his dog back home as Sachin. This is a most disgraceful and derogatory act on his part. Sachin is revered almost as a God in India. He is a batting icon and probably the greatest cricketing batsman. How could anyone name a dog after him? This has hurt the sentiments of Indians, as is seen by the several blogs that have appeared from all over the country, condemning the South African coach.

### Brutal lathi charge

Nelson Lopes, Chinchinim

The visuals of lathi charge on unarmed

cricket fans in Bangalore was a brutality par excellence. Was there a need for such brutal action? There are other ways and means of dispersing crowds. The crowd was definitely not unruly. The force with which the police used their batons looked like they were taming wild animals.

The Indians, for whom the cricket is almost a religion and Bangalore being a cricket capital of India, the tickets that were made available, is a sham.

What ever might have been the compelling reasons; there was no justification for the senseless attack. A magisterial inquiry must be held for disproportionate use of brute force.

### Water crisis

Justin Fernandes, Panjim

In Goa, there will be shortage of water due to rampant mining. Environmentalist Ramesh Gauns has drawn the attention of the political class to pay attention to the water requirement of the common people.

The Goan politicians are only worried about their personal interest. They are busy finding ways and means to loot Goans.

They are filthy rich and can purchase mineral water from neighbouring states and, in the process, leave the aam admi voters to die of thirst.

The corrupt Goa government is in hand in glove with mine owners, drug peddlers, real state agents and land mafia.

Nothing will be done to save Goa and Goans.

### Disaster averted

Shane Dias Sapeco, Panjim

Friday, 18 February 2011, will be remembered by a few witnesses and good Samaritans in averting a major disaster which occurred when a gas cylinder fire in the kitchen of a famous lunch hotspot, that took hungry office-goers, neighbours and other customers by surprise.

There is a need for the authorities i.e., the CCP, fire authorities, police, etc., to make sure that safety requirements are compulsorily complied with in restaurant kitchens, hotels and other eateries.

This will prevent loss of life and property.

### They came after 8 years

Jacinto Almeida, Cortalim

For the last few months officials from NHA and PWD used to visit Agassaim and Cortalim to do the assessment for the new Zuari bridge. There is no news from them after 15 January 2011 and I hope they do not show their ugly faces for another 5 years.

The corrupt PWD officials say that the new Zuari bridge was proposed 8 years back. What was the government doing all this while? Now, the house panel has taken a final decision and awaits High Command approval. If the Goa government is so serious about NH widening and construction of new bridges, they should commence immediate land acquisition and not wait for another 8 years, to haunt the people.

### The show must go on

Jerry Fernandes, Saligao

I love listening to all forms of music, especially heavy metal/rock, techno, trance, club X, etc. Each form of music has its own beauty. Some are unwilling to accept the emerging new forms of world music. Music does not suppress rights of others, it is total freedom. Then, how can we target music just because modern music is noisy in nature? Of course, I am not saying that we should play amplified music in residential areas.

But in Goa, we are double-standard hypocrites and impose the noisiest type of music everywhere through the funnel shaped loudspeaker. Goa's unique music culture is on the verge of extinction in our own home state, because we are killing the talent of all our upcoming song writers/musicians by brainwashing people's minds on noise pollution. However, the show must go on and Goan music and its culture will live till eternity.

### Coal dust pollution

August Alphonso, Vasco/Kuwait

We've had enough of MPT's nonsense. Does the MPT think that the coal dust pollution is under control in Vasco? I am sick of the thick layers of coal-dust settling all over the house.

I think it is high time that we take to the streets demanding a 100% permanent solution to the problem.

