
A Double Treat

A quick note to thank you for the superb double treat you have given us in issue No. 147 with Shivaniji's "Apradhini" and Ira Pande's tribute, "Memories of an Unusual Mother." I am already looking forward to Part 2 of the wonderful piece of fiction, so beautifully crafted. As a fiction writer, it's humbling to see how thoughtfully, yet simply, she weaves her characters with perceptive reflections and insights. You picked one of her best, reminding me why we all longed for Shivaniji's serials in *Saptahik Hindustan* and *Dharmayug*. Iraj's tribute to Diddi is so powerful that tears welled up in my eyes. I wondered why, as I had never met either Diddi or her daughter. The reason is the sincerity in Ira's words, which triggered memories of my long gone parents.

Thank you for including in MANUSHI's pages such a wonderful tribute to India's top-notch short fiction author.

Balwant Bhaneja, Ottawa, Canada

Bonds of Empathy

The article "Apradhini" in issue No. 147 authored by Shivani is truly insightful. It was easy for me to relate with the prison life situations, environment and the profiles of various individual prisoners described in "Apradhini". Being a prisoner myself for the last 14 years, I can appreciate the stinging truth behind Chanuli's statement to the author, "This prison is now my only refuge.... The day passes in my daily chores, but it is the nights that haunt me."

I know many prisoners whose sole "refuge" has become the very prison they reside in Such a refuge is all they know, and the mere thought of re-entering society is frightening, after 15, 20, 30 or more years of incarceration. Our days, like those of Chanuli, are spent performing various chores. But, it is at night, when each



Readers' Responses

prisoner returns to his cell that the sense of "haunting" Chanuli speaks of is most pronounced and brings a rush of doubts and fears in our minds.

Each evening, in the still of the night, as the rodents and insects scurry across the floor, our thoughts go to the children we failed as fathers. We are also unable to forgive ourselves for being unable to be with our loved ones as they exit this life. When we relive our crimes as we try to remember them it is difficult to identify with the person who committed that deed, so long ago, let



Shivani

alone identify with the impulses that fueled that particular crime. We spend many sleepless nights wondering if we will ever be able to function as normal citizens in society, after being released from prison. Sometimes, it is safer to take refuge in the only sure "Reality" of our lives, namely the prison.

While reading "Apradhini", it is obvious that prisoners, regardless of their gender, race, culture, or location experience pretty much the same inner conflicts. I eagerly await the next issue of MANUSHI, in order to read Part 2 of "Apradhini". Peace,

Timothy Eby, Texas Prison, USA

Bridging the Divide

Your detailed analysis of J&K's present Chief Minister's politics in Issue 146 is both factually correct as well as heartening. My community of Kashmiri Pandits is generally suspicious of Muslim politicians. Therefore, they have also been critical of him. However, I personally feel supportive of his approach. Fortunately there are a few more of us Kashmiri Pandits who believe in Mufti's "healing touch" approach. What you write about the politics of the National Conference seems to tally with our experience during a four day peace dialogue held a couple of years ago here in Pune. Many such meetings have paved the way for what Mufti Sayeed and his daughter Mehbooba are practicing today. May such steps multiply exponentially!

Asha Kachru, Pune

A Genius Idea

I loved the symbolism represented by Swachha Narayani which I consider is a genius of an idea. MANUSHI deserves the support and appreciation of all of us for spearheading the movement for the rights of vendors. The documentation of the progress is very informative. Congratulations on all counts.

S. Anandalakshmy, Chennai □