

out his empire. Then Emperor Jehangir promulgated an order that on Sundays, when Akbar was born, and Thursdays, when Jehangir as-

and rest of humankind. There was an incination towards complete vegetarianism as reflected in Jainism and Buddhism. Since these philoso-

and snail, in particular, take steps for preserving and improving the breeds, and prohibiting the slaughter of cows and calves and other milch

good economic and ecological sense.
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Of racist regulations and institutions

A foreigner visiting India should be treated as an Indian, says Jayant Bhandari

It was distressing when, as children, we were told about the humiliation heaped on Mahatma Gandhi as he was thrown out of the first-class compartment of a train in South Africa. This had happened almost a century back but we were taught how small-minded Gandhi's oppressors were. After Independence, we formulated a Constitution that provided freedom and equality to all. Interestingly, South Africa till recently was one of the very few countries India did not have a link with, owing mainly to its system of apartheid.

Most present day visitors to the West would claim not to have faced any case they could point towards or claimed to have suffered from racism. Of course, if they could, the perpetrator in these countries would soon find himself behind the bars and, perhaps, also short of a few millions. One wishes foreigners visiting India could say the same, for they can't. You only have to be a foreigner, or an Indian who looks like one, to tell how racist our Government and institutions are! For the former (foreigner, that is) the regulations are racist, for the latter their application is.

For a long time 5-star hotels and



national airlines have charged a higher tariff from foreigners. Some of the most visited monuments like Taj Mahal too charge more. On October 28, 2000, to broaden the scope, and what amounts to a regressive step, the Indian Archeological Department, ASI, circulated an instruction to start charging such a differential for oth-

er popular sites as well (and at the same time charging in dollars — reflective of utter disrespect and disregard for our own currency).

One of the most important tourist attractions of Jaisalmer (Rajasthan) is the Parshnath Jain Temple which houses some of the rarest historical and priceless documents in its library. At the gate to the site is a

placard: "No entry for foreigners". The guard confused about the nationality of a fair woman accompanying a white companion asked

It is indeed a matter of technicality how far the fundamental right to equality applies to foreigners. A foreigner visiting India should be treated as an Indian — similar to what other civilised countries do. If for some technical reason such racism is still considered legal, it should be amended. The question is, how does a person distinguish a foreigner from an Indian, as Indians do not necessarily carry citizenship documents while travelling within India. Thus, apparently, colour of the skin and language is assumed to decide this. Only that, both happen to be completely erroneous and racist in application.

Then, it must not be forgotten that to most of us many Indian languages sound completely foreign, more so for the less educated guards at the entry points. Here is one of the many possibilities of a discussion at an entry point: "Kahan se ho?" "Sikkim se." "Tum Chini ho?" "Nahin Sikkim se"... It's anyone's guess what would happen if this visitor didn't know Hindi.

Further, what happens to people who are "whites" or "blacks" but hold Indian citizenships? Do they have to carry citizenship documents? But this is against the fundamental rights of the modern Indian? What an effective way to alienate those who don't look "Indian"! To repeat, such regulations are racist, against fundamental rights, in their application to Indians in India.

Strangely enough, some have an absurd financial logic to support their argument, as to why foreigners should pay more: "While we earn in rupees, they earn in dollars. Thus, if we pay Rs 10, they should pay \$10." Only that any financial expert could tell you how uneducated this logic is. In fact, the newly instituted policy of ASI is actually forcing tourists to leave India early, thus seriously hurting local tourism-based economies.

Most of us can only imagine with horror if there were "No entry for foreigners" placards hung outside the places of visit in Europe and America — offending their Indian (and other non-"white") citizens. We claim to be a country where guests are treated like gods. I wish our deeds only partially matched our words.

Integration and the 'nationalist' party

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