

By acknowledging and condoning the corruption of language, the community becomes complicit in political crimes. Corruption may assume the form of euphemisms cooked up by corporate propagandists and "think tanks", to be served up through the popular media and repeated in the loaded language of politicians and corporate leaders. For public consumption, it is then translated into the grimy language of the sensationalist mass media.

One must notice the ever-present pretext of using pseudo – scientific sounding terms to inhuman acts – for example allowing the destruction of hundreds of thousands of innocents in remote communities from agro-chemical and toxic drinking water and displacement of entire residential areas is described as 'flushing out subversive elements in restive neighbourhoods' often in preparation for showcasing to foreign visitors, somewhat like elimination of crop destroying locusts rather than traumatised citizens eking out a living on their lands.

Lawyers acting on behalf of victims of human rights are called 'terrorist sympathisers' whereas systematic military violence against unarmed civilians is called 'national security'. The same perverters of language term any opposition to military rule and nationalistic movements as 'terrorism' whereas ruthless manoeuvres labelled counterinsurgency measures that crush entire villages are described as "measures ushering in peace and democracy to the oppressed".

Few in the mainstream recognise such euphemisms as a sort of collective anesthesia to numb the indolent populations living in affluence not directly affected by violence committed in their names. The media take care to cloak the horror visited on such hapless peoples in benign imagery that obscure the deadly malignant reality. Atrocities and monstrosities against communities perpetuated by illegitimate power are described as 'pacification'. Armies cannot 'pacify' a nation weep-



THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE, REALITY AND THE PATH TO SALVATION

ing in agony of bereavement and dispossession. On the contrary, the violent perpetrators of military cruelty into tranquil communities can only attempt to smother the agonised screams of women and children hoping to stifle them into stillness.

The noble path for any political and social transformation is linguistic clarity, where speakers and writers of language use words and concepts which evoke the reality of life,



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even if those who are culpable may never be brought to justice. Euphemisms used by unscrupulous media with political backing must be unmasked not by linguists but by ordinary citizens and community leaders.

The usurpation of true democracy by hypnotising the people into ignoring the truth and believing disseminated myths must be resisted. If the inconvenient truth ceases to be mentioned, while material comforts are guaranteed in an environment where fiction is espoused and showcased and allowed to pervade the airwaves, this status quo becomes the reality that people come to believe. It is easier on the conscience than harsh facts. In affluent societies, the corpo-

rate media have had immense success in creating 'doublespeak' as a means to erasing truth from memory, and the resultant entertainment and fiction are equally realistic to the unquestioning mind.

It is then easy to concoct enemies, spread fear of "terror", tribal instincts (including racism) to be nurtured in a climate of manufactured reality. It is well established that people need to forget, in order to move on. This is true in broken love relationships, family tragedies, business failures and debilitating illness.

This is exactly what corporate media exploits, by failing to report extensively on burning issues, lest they inflame the dormant human sentiments of compassion and empathy for their fellow beings. Instead, celebrity gossip takes centre-stage, talk shows drooling sleaze and trivia become all-absorbing and soap operas compensate for personal lack of success. So, the notion of informing accurately and completely, the foundations of journalism are abandoned for greed and even racial solidarity against ascendant ideological, economic or social forces.

The people who are powerless against massive odds and military might, can only hope for revenge. In the process, they become what perverters of language like to call 'terrorists' who vent their anger in a largely impotent frustration. Prisons are already

teeming with such 'elements' while those not 'brought to justice' simply live a harrowing existence. The hate and anger burns out of control, usually taking away any sweetness and simple human goodness. Life does not seem worthy of celebration; the need for love and affection is substituted by existential rage.

Future generations (as indeed some generationally oppressed communities already bear witness) will carry such sentiments forward. To those born into inherited freedom and power, life has many colours and fragrances, which they learn to cherish and hold dear. For them, human compassion and affection may come more easily. Those born into subjugated and broken communities on the other hand, see all their dreams controlled by invaders, who keep fulfilment and simple indulgence out of their reach. Ample environmental evidence validates their notion that injustice reigns supreme, directly caused by the oppressors.

Under the circumstances, life would not seem precious anymore; intimidation and threats cease to hold conventional meaning in the face of noble martyrdom; and suicide becomes an easy option enhanced by the attraction of revenge. To break this cycle of violence, those few elites who greedily hold on to power must learn to let go. As Mahatma Gandhi said, there is enough in this world for everyone, but not enough for the greed of a few.

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