



**POLITICS KARNATAKA**  
Triumph of chicanery 21

**FILM ANAND PATWARDHAN**  
Voice of reason 83



# FRONTLINE

AUGUST 2, 2019

INDIA'S NATIONAL MAGAZINE

[HTTPS://FRONTLINE.THEHINDU.COM](https://frontline.thehindu.com)

Rs. 100



## 'THE STATE IS TAKEN OVER FROM WITHIN'

A conversation with the Marxist thinker Aijaz Ahmad

# Congratulations

OUR SUPER ACHIEVERS



## PRE-CUM-MAIN (FOUNDATION) PROGRAM FOR CSE 2020

### GENERAL STUDIES INTEGRATED

The program holistically prepares for Prelim (Paper I - General Studies & Paper II - CSAT) and Main (General Studies - All four Papers & Essay) and Current Affairs.



- **Regular Batch** : 9 months duration (4 hours classes daily)
- **Weekend Batch** : 14 months duration (Classes on Sat/Sun). Students pursuing graduation - 1st Year / 2nd Year / 3rd Year can also join.

### OPTIONAL SUBJECT FOR MAIN EXAM

Public Administration, Geography, Sociology, History, Economics (for Indian Economic Service also), Psychology and Political Science.

- **Regular Batch Only** : 4 months duration (2 hours classes daily)
- Hostel facility can be arranged.
- **Study Material** is also available.

**ADMISSION OPEN  
APPLY NOW**

**SMALL BATCHES : 80-90 STUDENTS**

**GENERAL STUDIES  
INTEGRATED  
(FOUNDATION) PROGRAM  
FOR CSE 2020**

309, Kanchenjunga Building,  
18 Barakhamba Road,  
Connaught Place, New Delhi - 110001  
Tel. 23317293, 23318135/36, 23738906/07

Regular Batch

New Delhi

Jaipur

Bengaluru

Weekend Batch

26 July, 23 Aug

26 July

19 July

03 Aug

03 Aug

27 July

UDB (Nawal) Corporate Tower,  
3rd Floor, A-1, J.L.N. Marg,  
(near Fortis Hospital), Jaipur - 302017  
Tel. 0141 - 4106050/57, 2722050

2nd Floor, AKS Plaza, 10 Industrial Layout,  
Jyoti Niwas College (JNC) Road,  
5th Block Koramangala, Bengaluru - 560095  
Tel. 080 - 255 35536/ 37/ 38/ 39, 9916035536

# FRONTLINE

VOLUME 36 NUMBER 15 JULY 20-AUGUST 02, 2019 ISSN 0970-1710 [HTTPS://FRONTLINE.THEHINDU.COM](https://FRONTLINE.THEHINDU.COM)**POLITICS**

Karnataka: Triumph of chicanery  
Constitutional issues

21  
24**BUDGET 2019**

Wooing speculative finance  
Vacuous Survey

26  
29**LEGISLATION**

Forest Act changes sideline gram sabhas, tribal people

32

**COMMUNALISM**

Madhya Pradesh:  
Bovine politics  
Pehlu Khan case:  
Victim as accused

36  
38**HIGHER EDUCATION**

U.P.: Private universities' autonomy under threat

41

**WORLD AFFAIRS**

Hong Kong: Protests against "Extradition Bill"

44

Sudan: A chance for peace

48

Libya: Horror stories of an unending war

51

Russia's own "happiness project"

54

**COVER STORY**

A conversation with the Marxist thinker Aijaz Ahmad 4



"The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh had long settled on a strategy whereby it will accept the liberal institutional structures but will fight to acquire long-term state power by taking over the institutions of the state from within... there is no fundamental contradiction between projects of the Far Right and the liberal institutional structures; RSS can take hold of those institutions and rule through them."

**On the Cover**

Aijaz Ahmad

COVER DESIGN: T.S. VIJAYANANDAN  
PHOTOGRAPH: MOHAMMED YOUSUF

**WILDLIFE**

When cheetahs bond

59

**CINEMA**

Anand Patwardhan scores again with "Reason"  
Interview with the film-maker

83

86

**SOCIAL ISSUES**

Maharashtra: Neoliberal road to poverty

89

**CIVIL SERVICES**

"Lateral entry", a blow to reservation

91

**SCIENCE NOTEBOOK** 94**DATACARD**

India's rubber production

96

**BOOKS**

67

**LETTERS**

98

Air Surcharge:  
Colombo - Rs.20.00 and  
Port Blair - Rs.15.00

For subscription queries and delivery related issues Contact: Pan-India Toll Free No: 1800 3000 1878 or [customercare@thehindu.co.in](mailto:customercare@thehindu.co.in)

**Disclaimer:** Readers are requested to verify & make appropriate enquiries to satisfy themselves about the veracity of an advertisement before responding to any published in this magazine. THG PUBLISHING PVT LTD., the Publisher & Owner of this magazine, does not vouch for the authenticity of any advertisement or advertiser or for any of the advertiser's products and/or services. In no event can the Owner, Publisher, Printer, Editor, Director & Employees of this magazine/company be held responsible/liable in any manner whatsoever for any claims and/or damages for advertisements in this magazine.

Published by N. RAVI, Kasturi Buildings, 859 & 860, Anna Salai, Chennai-600 002 and Printed by T. Ravi at Kala Jyothi Process Private Limited, Survey No. 185, Kondapur, Ranga Reddy District-500 133, Telangana on behalf of THG PUBLISHING PVT LTD., Chennai-600 002.

**EDITOR:** R. VIJAYA SANKAR (Editor responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act). All rights reserved.  
Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.

**e-mail:** [frontline@thehindu.co.in](mailto:frontline@thehindu.co.in)

Frontline is not responsible for the content of external Internet sites.

COVER STORY

# ‘The state is taken



# over from within'



PRAKASH SINGH/APP

Interview with **Aijaz Ahmad.**

BY **JIPSON JOHN AND JITHEESH P.M.**



R. RAVINDRAN

AIJAZ AHMAD IS A MARXIST THINKER OF INDIAN origin and an internationally renowned theorist of modern history, politics and culture. He has taught in various universities in India, Canada and the United States and currently serves as Distinguished Professor in the Department of Comparative Literature, University of California, Irvine, where he teaches critical theory.

A large part of this interview concerns questions of Hindutva communalism, fascism, secularism and possibilities for the Left in the Indian context. In other sections, he reflects on globalisation, global prospects for the Left, the uses and misuses of Antonio Gramsci's thought, and the relevance of Karl Marx in our time. The interview was conducted before the recent general election in India and updated after the election results were out.

Aijaz Ahmad argues that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its fronts, including the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), display distinct fascistic characteris-

**PRIME MINISTER** Narendra Modi, who won a landslide victory in the 2019 general election, after the swearing-in ceremony on May 30. With him are President Ram Nath Kovind (centre), Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Ram Vilas Paswan, Ravi Shankar Prasad and other members of his team.

ics, but the Indian state continues to live by the liberal playbook, no matter how hollow the Indian liberal institutions may have become. He anchors this proposition in a distinctive theoretical position.

Aijaz Ahmad believes that there is a fundamental contradiction between democracy and liberalism but says that no such contradiction obtains between the rule of the Far Right and the liberal institutional form of the state. Liberalism undermines democracy and strengthens the Far Right. That is why forces of the Far Right in a whole range of countries—the U.S., Israel, Turkey, India, and so on—are able to rule through liberal institutions.

He also believes that the question of fascism needs to be viewed in two very different frames that are often confused. In one of these theoretical frames, fascism can be viewed as a generic tendency that is permanent and immanent in all forms of the politics of the capitalist bourgeoisie throughout the epoch of imperialism. Numerous political parties that display fascistic tendencies function happily within the rule of liberal/neoliberal capitalism, all over Europe for instance.



PTI

**MODI WITH THE INDUSTRIALIST** Gautam Adani. Modi was the first Indian Prime Minister who gained virtually the total support of the capitalist magnates well before the general election of 2014 got going.

In the narrower frame of reference, however, the fully fascist movements and states such as those of Germany, Italy or Spain arose during the interwar period in very special circumstances. The balance of class forces in those countries was such that abrogation of the liberal form of the state was essential before warlike violence could be unleashed against the very powerful revolutionary movements of the working class that threatened the rule of capital as such. Working-class movements are weaker today than at any other point in virtually a century. A fascist order is unnecessary. The Far Right and the liberal machine can coexist happily in an infernal embrace.

Aijaz Ahmad writes in English and in Urdu. His work has been translated into Chinese, Turkish, Portuguese, Korean, French and Arabic. Some of his books in English are *Ghazals of Ghalib* (New York, 1971; New Delhi, 1994), *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London, 1992; New Delhi, 1995), *Lineages of the Present* (New Delhi, 1996; London, 2000), *Globalization and Culture: Offensives of the Far Right* (New Delhi, 2004) and *Afghanistan, Iraq, and The Imperialism of Our Time* (New Delhi, 2004).

**Narendra Modi again won the people's mandate in May 2019. How do you look at his comeback? What are the main factors that contributed to the BJP's return to power with a historical mandate? How do you foresee India's future under the RSS-BJP's second term in office?**

Led by Narendra Modi, the BJP has certainly scored an electoral landslide. Whether this can be called a “people's mandate” is very doubtful. In order to give their mandate, people have to have the benefit of a rational political debate based on strict respect for facts, not to speak of calm and clear enunciation of alternative policies by the contending political parties. Even if political parties are able to offer rational alternatives based on facts, the people today no longer have access to any of that because the corporate media in India are aligned almost exclusively with the Sangh machine and are no longer committed to public civility and unbiased reporting of facts and policies. A democratic exercise through which the people can give their mandate further requires strict observance of ethical, constitutional and legal norms by all the institutions involved, notably the Election Commission, the highest judiciary, law enforcement agencies—which is no longer the case. There once was a time when the Indian polity observed these democratic norms to a very remarkable degree. But a civil compact of that kind has been fraying in India for some decades now, getting increasingly more corrupted as years go by. By “corrupted”, I don't mean just the massive use of money, which is itself a big factor in determining electoral outcome. I mean an all-encompassing erosion of what could reasonably be called a democratic process. 2019 seems to have been the point when any relation between the size of the electoral victory and the basics of the democratic norm has disappeared altogether.

Indian politics has been Americanised to an astonishing degree. The cult of the great leader—the messiah, the saviour—on the one hand, and the systematic production of fear and hysteria on the other, have become quite the norm. Politics are now driven by 24x7 TV channels, opinion polls, and immense campaign extravaganzas staged with billions of [rupees of] corporate financing, much of it secret and untraceable. The escalating hysteria about citizens and non-citizens, which is likely to reach hysterical proportions with Amit Shah as Home Minister, is itself a carbon copy of [U.S. President Donald] Trump's racist, virtually genocidal policies toward the South American economic refugees crossing into the U.S.



KEVIN LAMARQUE/REUTERS

All of this the Sangh conglomerate has imbibed from the U.S., with three differences: outright hysteria is much more the norm in virtually all the TV channels in India; sources of the money that went into the oiling of the BJP machinery in 2019 were more opaque while the amounts were even greater than in the U.S.; and the low-intensity but unremitting violence that the Sangh deploys so routinely, without fear of judicial reprisal, is far ahead of Trump's savagery.

Did the 2019 results surprise me? Yes, as did the 2014 results. I am not a student of day-to-day electoral politics. My personal expectations in any election are shaped very much by estimates that I receive from sources on the Left and the liberal Left. And you know what those estimates were: narrow margins on either side, possibly a hung Parliament. Once I recovered from those immediate expectations, I returned to the very premises of my structural analysis.

#### **SECULARISM, A MINORITY POSITION ALWAYS**

I always emphasised how a true commitment to secularism was always a minority position in Indian society and politics, how very much more Hinduised Indian society has now become, how communal violence always leads to very rich electoral dividends for the BJP and its associ-

**MODI WITH U.S. PRESIDENT** Donald Trump. The escalating hysteria about citizens and non-citizens is a carbon copy of Trump's racist, virtually genocidal policies toward South American refugees crossing into the U.S.

ates, how all the key institutions of the Indian state were getting eroded and increasingly serving the interests of the BJP, including the Election Commission and the higher judiciary. I had written a more conceptual essay on the larger trends in 2015, in the aftermath of the 2014 elections, which *Socialist Register* published in 2016. That article was then reprinted in a couple of other places, in Britain as well as India, and has now been reprinted again in *Frontline* ["India: Liberal Democracy and the Extreme Right", June 7, 2019]. Much of what has happened now is simply the intensification of what I had then identified as major features of Indian politics.

I had said at that time that the electoral decline of the Congress in one way and that of the Left in another was at least as important as the BJP's majority in the Lok Sabha. I had noted that Modi was the first Indian Prime Minister who gained virtually total support of the great capitalist magnates well before the elections got going, and that he had not only forced Indian politics to go presidential, on the American model but spent roughly the same



THE HINDU ARCHIVES

**JANUARY 24, 1950:** Jawaharlal Nehru signing the Constitution at the final session of the Constituent Assembly. It was largely owing to Nehru that the current of secularism was strong in the first few decades after Independence.

amount of money on his election as did [former U.S. President Barack] Obama on his. A point that probably went unnoticed by even some of the keenest readers was that the money he raised and hoped to keep raising from the corporate sector made him considerably independent of the RSS, the VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad], and even the BJP itself, because he now had enough money to buy up into his loyalty structure the cadres the RSS had provided to the BJP for electoral campaigns, not to speak of the middle-level functionaries of the BJP who too could be bought up with that money. The invincibility of the Modi-Shah duo within their own world is probably owed at least in part to the fabulous wealth they now control.

I had argued at great length that the RSS had long settled on a strategy whereby it would accept the liberal institutional structures but would fight to acquire long-term state power by taking over the institutions of the state from within. "Long march through the institutions" I had called it, in an ironic reference to a famous slogan of the Left from the 1960s. On an even broader scale, I had argued that there was no fundamental contradiction between projects of the Far Right and the liberal institutional structures; the RSS can take hold of those institutions and rule through them. These and many such



THE HINDU ARCHIVES

**B.R. AMBEDKAR.** He was right to insist on the annihilation of caste. No socialist revolution is possible in India without the annihilation of caste.

propositions in that earlier analysis still give me the rudiments that can be developed into a further analysis of where we now stand. So, for instance, and considering what I have argued over the past few years, I was not in the least surprised at the scale of the electoral fraud of various sorts or the fact that every major institution of the Indian state has colluded with the BJP/RSS in protecting it against any fallout. The state has been taken over substantially, from within.

### BITTER REALITIES

A more complex analysis shall have to wait. A couple of bitter things need to be said, however. The first is that the BJP is now really the only truly national party and that the Modi-Shah duo represents a stable centre in this formation. Second, with the exception of the Left, there is no political party, including the Congress, for which the need to fight collectively for secular civility takes precedence over its own sectoral, corporate interest. The corollary of that recognition is that there is no such thing as "secular parties" with which the Left can reliably align itself; secularism for every one of them is a matter of convenience, and the isolation of the Left on this issue is absolute. Third, the decline of the Congress is definitive; any second coming will have to involve major changes that are not in sight.

Fourth, election results in U.P. [Uttar Pradesh] demonstrate that a combination of the politics of religious hysteria and social engineering within the fragmented field of caste politics can prove strong enough to trounce even the combined force of the S.P. [Samajwadi Party] and the BSP [Bahujan Samaj Party], the two major faces of caste politics in the State. From Gandhi to the RSS, the dream has been to contain caste antagonisms within the larger Hindu fold through a machinery of concessions. A middle caste solution for the coexistence of the upper and lower castes, so to speak! The U.P. results are only the most recent among many a success that the RSS has had to its credit on this score, all the way from Gujarat to the north-east. We have to re-examine very closely our settled belief that the question of caste will somehow trump the Hindutva project.

Finally, from the long-term perspective of any prospect for a politics of liberation and renovation, the collapse of the Left-oriented popular vote in West Bengal, and the fact that much of it seems to have veered toward the BJP, is virtually the most disheartening event of 2019. This is not the first time when, nor is West Bengal the first place where, we have witnessed how very disorienting the savagery and duplicities of liberal politics can be for the wretched of this earth. What do the bereft, the desperate and the immiserated do as they try to cope with everyday material miseries and get caught in the crossfire between



VIVEK SENDRE

**SHAKILA PATHAN**, a survivor of the 2002 riots in Gujarat, breaks down while narrating her story at a press conference in Mumbai in March 2011. Violence pays handsome electoral dividends in India. Both Modi and Shah were hardly known before the 2002 violence, following which their march was unstoppable.



BISWARANJAN ROUT

**BAJRANG DAL** activists attacking a group of people with milch cows at the railway station in Bhubaneswar in July 2017. Sangh Parivar outfits routinely deploy low-intensity but unremitting violence without fear of reprisal.

criminal political forces like the Trinamool [Congress] and the BJP? I said before the elections that the Left is so isolated in these ruins of liberal politics that it will have to be fighting for bare survival. Now, with these results coming in, the situation becomes even more grim.

#### ROLE OF THE LEFT

Having said that, I do want to stress three things about the Left in India. One, it commands a level of political experience and organisational depth that is quite unmatched. If anyone thinks that the social movements, the NGOs [non-governmental organisations], the little groups here and there are going to fill the spaces from which the Left is being forced to retreat, that is just not going to happen. Second, the Left is the only force in India that has a coherent vision and a comprehensive social understanding from the standpoint of the poor and the working class as a whole. Third, the Left in India has an extraordinary presence in the intellectual and artistic life of the country; no other political force comes anywhere near. The basic resources are still there, even though the beginning of a reconstruction will now require tremendous audacity.

After all that has happened over the past five years, nothing about the elections of 2019 is really fundamentally surprising—not even the prospect that the next five years are likely to be very much worse. An age that our Independence had inaugurated does seem to be closing, though, and the young will now inherit a country so extensively damaged that they will have no choice but to remake it, from the bottom up.



THE HINDU ARCHIVES

#### VINAYAK DAMODAR

Savarkar. He said Hindus should deal with their Muslim problem in the way the Nazis dealt with their problem with Jews.

**The Hindutva right-wing offensive has attained new heights during the Modi period. Mob lynchings, cold-blooded murders, assassination plots, stifling dissent by right-wing groups were the daily norm in the country in the last five years, and it continues so. How do you analyse these?**

You are of course right about this escalation, but things should be seen in perspective. The republic was born in the midst of a communal holocaust and the largest religion-based migration of peoples in human history, Hindus and Sikhs migrating from Pakistan and Muslims from India. Communal violence has been with us ever since and indeed since well before Independence and Partition. There are undoubtedly millions of Indians who are perfectly tolerant in their social lives and secular in their political conduct. But one should also remember



AP

**SEPTEMBER 28, 1938:** Italy's Benito Mussolini (left) with Germany's Adolf Hitler, just before the Munich conference. As of 1920 the Italian Left was incomparably stronger than the fascists. Yet, three years later Mussolini was in power, and by 1926 his power had become absolute, with the Left decimated as a political force. In this context, Antonio Gramsci asked himself, what is it in our history and society that has led to such easy victory for fascism and such easy defeat of the Left?

that there are severe limits to how tolerant and secular a caste-based, god-intoxicated society can be. That is the first point.

#### DIVIDENDS OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

The second point is that we have seen over and over again since about the mid 1980s that communal violence pays very handsome cultural and electoral dividends. The killing of thousands of Sikhs in the nation's capital served to unite the Hindu nation and delivered to the Congress the largest number of MPs it has ever had. The Ramjanmabhoomi movement was unleashed to detach that Hindu majority from the Congress and win it for the Sangh Parivar. After about five years of agitation, which included homeopathic doses of violence, the BJP jumped from two Lok Sabha seats to 85 in 1989. After two more years of rath yatras and rivers of blood, it rose to 120 seats. Then, in the first election after the demolition of the Babri Masjid, it won a plurality of seats in Parliament, with 161 MPs, and even formed a short-lived government at the Centre.

Given this record, it would be politically foolish for the Sangh to give up the communal violence that comes so naturally to it. I might add that Modi was a minor figure before the Gujarat killings of 2002. After those killings, he and Amit Shah were unstoppable, first at the

State level and then at the federal level. Electoral arithmetic may lead to temporary setbacks now and then, but on the whole, the Sangh Parivar has been gaining power and prestige since about the mid 1980s.

It is not only that the RSS and the BJP have gone from strength to strength in federal as well as State elections, but they have also succeeded in altering the very temper of the nation socially and culturally. India is now a much more Hinduised country than even 20 years ago, and this applies as much to the saffron yuppies as to rich peasants and even lower castes in large parts of India.

For instance, the [A.B.] Vajpayee government tried to introduce a beef ban in its early days but retreated hastily in face of the uproar in Parliament; the Modi-Shah government was able to implement it without any consequential opposition. The RSS is able to implement much more of its agenda. The new groups of leaders, Modi to [Yogi] Adyanath, are much more crude and bloodthirsty than Vajpayee or even [L.K.] Advani, who had spent a long time in Parliament as members of a small party before their rise began. And I need not even comment on the disarray of the opposition. In short, the worst elements of the RSS have risen to power precisely at the time when the BJP is at the apex of its electoral strength. Why should they give up the tactics that have brought them this power?

**You were the first among the intellectuals who warned about the ascendancy of fascism in the country in the context of the demolition of the Babri Masjid. Your lecture, later published as an essay, "Fascism and National Culture: Reading Gramsci in the Days of Hindutva", was an excellent text on the rise of Hindutva fascism in India. In that you wrote that "every country gets the fascism it deserves". Does India get its own fascism now?**

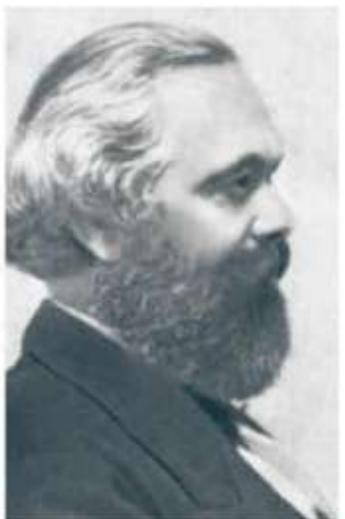
Yes, that was my initial reaction, and I did use the term "fascism" at that time rather frequently. But I introduced many caveats very soon after that initial moment. I still believe that the destruction of the Babri Masjid was a fascist spectacle and that the RSS has many classically fascist characteristics, but I do make a distinction between the RSS and its mass political front, the BJP, which is historically a very unique party. We need very precise dialectical operations to understand the structural novelty of this party before putting an easy label on it. My lecture/essay that you refer to was also written very soon after the Ayodhya demolition. But it was not on the "the rise of Hindutva fascism" as you put it. Rather, it was a reflection from inside India, at a particular moment of crisis, on a particular problem that Gramsci had posed for himself. As of 1920, the Italian Left was incomparably stronger than the rather small and disorganised fascist formation. Three years later, [Benito] Mussolini was in power, and by 1926 his power had become absolute, with the Left decimated as a political force, well before the Nazis came to power in Germany. In this context, Gramsci asked himself: what is it in our history and society, what was in the bourgeois nationalism of our country which has led to such easy victory for fascism and such easy defeat of the Left? Very large parts of the *Prison Notebooks* are a reflection on Italian history, on the special place of the Vatican in that history, on the peculiarities of the Risorgimento and Italian unification, on the stunted nature of the Italian bourgeoisie and its industrial cities, on popular fiction, and so on, so as to grasp patterns of popular consciousness. I tried to raise similar sorts of questions about India. The problem with that essay is that too much of it is based on analogical thinking, which is a very inferior form of thinking. Soon after that I wrote a very long essay on Italian fascism, which I like better.

When I wrote that every country gets the fascism it deserves, I had in mind the great difference between Germany and Italy, between Italy or Germany and Spain, and so on, which then implies that if and when fascism comes to India it will be a product of our own history and society, quite different from any other. You ask me if fascism is coming to India now. The answer is "No". Neither the Indian bourgeoisie nor the RSS needs fascism. In interwar Europe, varieties of fascism came in countries where the working-class movement was very powerful and a communist revolution was very possible. No such situation obtains in India. Communal violence, no matter how ugly or punctual, is not fascism. Do the RSS and several of its non-parliamentary fronts have some fascist attributes? Yes, they do. But so do dozens of movements and parties of the Far Right all over the globe. A fascist streak has been a part of capitalist politics since about the 1880s, but very few states or political parties can be called fascist in the strict sense.

#### LOW-INTENSITY DEMOCRACY

**You say that right-wing forces such as the Sangh Parivar do not need to fully smash and abolish the liberal political framework in India. Instead, they can work within it and make use of it. Is our democratic tradition and liberal political set-up strong enough to keep us a liberal democratic parliamentary system without crumbling under right-wing totalitarian tendencies?**

Changing some aspects of the Constitution is not the same thing as smashing the liberal order. The U.S. Constitution includes many amendments. There are parliamentary procedures for introducing new elements in a Constitution. You or I may or may not like those changes, but so long as those parliamentary procedures are observed, the liberal order remains intact. You must understand that I am a great defender of democracy, but I dislike liberalism. I have actually published an essay denouncing the liberalisation of democracy. A very frightening development over the past five years has been the extent to which the BJP has been able to elicit great compliance from key sectors of the liberal order such as the judiciary, the Election Commission and, of course, the great majority of the electronic media, the dominant TV channels, etc. We have always had a low-intensity



THE HINDU ARCHIVES

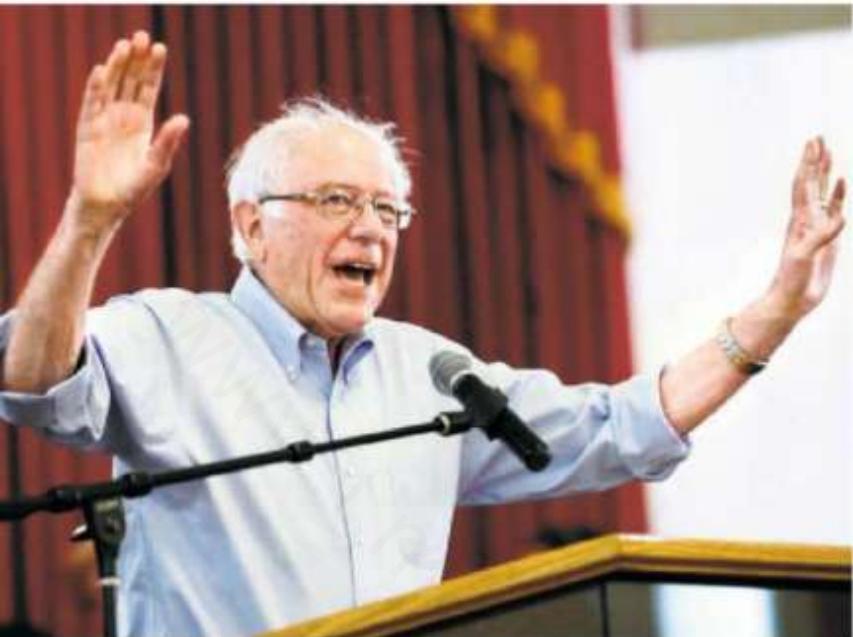
**KARL MARX.** Marxism is a dynamic knowledge, always updating itself, renewing itself, because the material world is always caught up in the whirlwinds of change.



AP

**MAO ZEDONG**, in 1966. He developed his revolutionary force not in industrial cities but in the agrarian hinterlands.

STEVE MARCUS/AP



**BERNIE SANDERS**, a decent New Deal Democrat but hardly a socialist.

democracy, and whatever intensity it did have is getting eroded. And, by the way, I despise the word “totalitarianism”. It was invented to denounce communist countries and then to posit that communism and fascism are equally totalitarian.

**How do you trace the emergence of the RSS and Hindutva politics in the colonial context of the 20th century? Earlier you have written that similar counter-revolutionary forces, the Muslim Brotherhood, for example, emerged in different parts of the world during the interwar period. What led to such emergence? How are they similar in character?**

A satisfactory answer would require a lot of time and space. Three points can be made briefly. First, Europe itself has had a very long history of struggles between revolution and counter-revolution, rationalism and irrationality, secular definitions of nationhood and racial or religious definitions of nationhood, various sorts of liberal institutions as well as various kinds of authoritarianisms, and so on. Colonialism brought all this baggage into the colonies, and such contests became common in our societies as well. So, there is nothing particularly Indian about Hindu nationalism or Muslim nationalism; they are just a colonial variant of, let us say, the French counter-revolutionary tradition which despised the French Revolution for abolishing the monarchy and the privileges of the Catholic Church. Communal violence against religious minorities is nothing but a colonial copy of European anti-Semitism.

Second, organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim Brotherhood were quite aware of the fascist movements in Europe and partially learned from

PETER NICHOLLS/REUTERS



**JEREMY CORBYN**. He belongs to the left wing of the British Labour Party.

them; [V.D.] Savarkar, for instance, said that Hindus should solve their Muslim problem the same way that Nazis had solved Germany’s Jewish problem, that is, through genocide. Third, factors for the emergence, success or failure of such movements in one country or another, at one time or another, are usually very specific to each country. Too much generalisation can be very misleading in such matters.

#### **How important is the idea of secularism?**

Secularism is a good idea in all contexts. One needs to hold on to it. But the struggle against Hindutva majoritarianism requires all sorts of other ideas as well. Congress-style secularism and BJP-style majoritarianism are competing ideologies within a system that is based on the most ruthless forms of repression and exploitation. Indian electoral politics is largely organised around caste, religion and various forms of property. The idea of secularism is descended from the Enlightenment formulae of “Liberty, Fraternity, Equality”. Secularism falls into the broader category of “Fraternity”. Can a caste-based society be “fraternal”? If not, then can it be secular in any meaningful sense? Is “Fraternity” possible without “Equality”—which is to say, is democracy possible without socialism? [Jean-Jacques] Rousseau gave an answer well before the French Revolution, let alone the Bolshevik one: those who are unequal in their access to material goods can never be equal in the eyes of the law! Communism as we know it was first glimpsed during the French Revolution, which gave us secularism as an *opposition* to the power of religion as well as [Francois-Noel] Babeuf’s “Conspiracy of Equals”, a veritable communist organisation. That communist tendency was



G. RAMAKRISHNA

**CPI(M) GENERAL SECRETARY** Sitaram Yechury and Polit Bureau member Prakash Karat with party colleagues at the inaugural session of the five-day-long 22nd Congress of the party in Hyderabad on April 18, 2018. “If anyone thinks that the social movements, the NGOs, the little groups here and there are going to fill the spaces from which the Left is being forced to retreat, that is just not going to happen.”

defeated; we were therefore left with secularism and liberalism. So, for more than 200 years, the question has persisted: Can liberalism alone defend secularism? Is secularism possible without socialism?

My answer is “No”. Look at histories of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in liberal France itself and across all of liberal Europe. So, as regards your question: yes, the *idea* of secularism is very important. But you have to have a genuinely socialist society before this idea can be realised materially. In present-day India, any true realisation of this idea is impossible. We know how poisonous majoritarianism is, but we often forget that liberalism has always betrayed secularism and it always will.

**Left movements are gaining some momentum in different parts of the world. Yes, the Left in India faced a big setback in the 2019 election. But what is the relevance of Left politics in the present Indian context?**

As regards “different parts of the world”, it depends on what you mean by “Left” and which parts of the world you are referring to. The record is uneven. The Latin American Left—the so-called “Pink Tide”—has been largely contained. The largest country in South America, Brazil—Lula’s Brazil—is now under a Far Right hammer, arguably more brutal than Modi’s India. So is Ecuador. Argentina is under the boot of a somewhat less brutal regime but one that is bent on reversing all gains that the working classes made under the two previous administrations. In Venezuela, the Chavista government and movement survive but suffer from unspeakable sufferings arising from the embargo and strangulation of the

economy imposed by the U.S. On the other hand, some core countries of the Euro-American zones have witnessed a challenge from the Left to right-wing governments, in the case of the U.S. a challenge to the government of the Far Right. This too needs to be seen in perspective.

Bernie Sanders in the U.S. is hardly a socialist in any meaningful sense; he is a very decent kind of New Deal Democrat: a higher minimum wage for the working class, a system of the public health resembling that of Canada and Western Europe and other reforms of that kind—catching up with very mild form of social democracy. In Britain, [Jeremy] Corbyn still is what he always was: a representative of the left wing of the Labour Party as it used to be in the 1950s and 1960s. In France, Jean-Luc Melenchon, a former member of the always centrist but now-corrupted Socialist Party, made a remarkable showing at the polls with a more radically left-wing programme than French presidential politics has known in 30 years or more. Who stopped them? The Democratic Party high brass in the case of Sanders, the Blairite wing of the Labour Party in the case of Corbyn, and the refusal of the now very much reduced Socialist Party to make common cause with Melenchon in France. In short, the established liberals’ betrayal of the mildly socialistic Left. An old story!

#### A FATAL MOMENT

The Left in India has always been at a great disadvantage. Since the very beginnings of the electoral rise of the RSS in Indian polities, which actually goes back to the period

of the Emergency, and pressed by the necessities of our present, many on the Left have chosen to forget who sent the armed forces against the communists in Telangana and who dismissed the world's first elected [Communist] government in Kerala. There are times in electoral politics when one aligns with one opponent or the other, but one needs to remember the nature of those opponents. We need not mention the Socialists—JP, [Ram Manohar] Lohia and their progeny—who hated the communists even more than they hated the Congress. When the crunch came during the Emergency, JP preferred an alliance with the RSS over an alliance with the CPI(M) [Communist Party of India (Marxist)] in the anti-Emergency coalition, thus helping ensure the very right-wing contours of the Janata government that emerged out of the elections held immediately after the lifting of the Emergency—a moment that proved fatal for Indian politics in decades to come. That is when the RSS came into its own, aided by the Socialists and the Congress breakaways such as Morarji Desai and his gang. The fact that the power of the Left Front in West Bengal is traceable to that very moment of 1977 has served to occlude the fact that the political isolation of the Left also started growing at roughly the same time.

So, I now return to your question about the role of the Left. Since we have been discussing the issue of Hindutva communalism and majoritarianism, I will reply to you with reference to that very question. In my opinion, the communist Left is the only force in India that has a profound, irreversible commitment to a secular society and polity in India. All the regional parties have collaborated with the BJP, a political front of the RSS, at one time or another. As I was just saying, the JP movement and RSS were close collaborators in the anti-Indira, anti-Emergency movements which then led to the formation of the Janata government in which the Jan Sangh contingent was the largest and most powerful force. Even before Independence, there was always a powerful communal wing within the Mahatma's own Congress. Hindu communalism has always been a major current in Indian society and politics.

The secular current remained dominant for some decades after Independence, partly because of the power and prestige of the communist movement in many parts of the country and partly because the ruling Congress party was itself identified with this current, thanks very largely to [Jawaharlal] Nehru and a very small group of his associates, especially after [Vallabhbhai] Patel died in 1950. That character of the Congress began to decline after the Emergency, even in Indira's time. By the time of

[P.V.] Narasimha Rao's refusal to meaningfully confront the Sangh Parivar over the destruction of the Babri Masjid, an elaborate structure of tacit understandings was in place among the leadership elites of all the political parties except the Left parties. You will recall that Parliament was not allowed by these elites to even formally discuss the Gujarat carnage. I do think, though, that the whole package of Hindutva precepts and plans is now much more acceptable to the Hindu middle classes than ever before, all over the country, and not even Kerala or West Bengal, with their long communist traditions, are immune. So, the Left has to do what it can, but its options are limited. Look at the constant violence, year in and year out, that the Left has to face, at the hands of the RSS in Kerala and the Trinamool in West Bengal. The degradation of Indian politics at the hands of the RSS but also at the hands of the liberals is such that the Left has to first of all fight for its own survival and then to guide Indian politics in rational, secular directions as much as it can.

**Revolts against neoliberal capitalism are growing in many parts of the world. Do you think that a world revolutionary conjuncture is on the horizon? What are the chances, possibilities and challenges of socialist revolutionary upheaval?**

Capitalism is a savage form of mass cruelty, particularly in its neoliberal extremity. There will be revolts so long as these cruelties last, and many of those revolts will come from the Left. But no, I don't think a world revolutionary conjuncture is at hand. As a global phenomenon, socialism has been on the retreat for a long time, since the famous Deng [Xiaoping] reforms of the late 1970s in China. Many people have rightly invoked for our time Gramsci's famous characterisation of his own time—1930s, the ascendancy of fascism—as one when the old world was dying but the new was not yet born and the world was therefore beset by a host of morbid symptoms. The rise of racial and religious hatreds and violence is among those symptoms, and these symptoms arise as much among the victims as among the victors. The most extreme forms of jehadi madness—the so-called Islamic State—got its recruits overwhelmingly from among the victims of the American invasion of Iraq. The Left is currently very much on the defensive, in India as well as across the world.

#### MARX TODAY

**The year 2018 was the bicentenary of Karl Marx. What is the most important contribution of Marx which is ever**

“Many people have rightly invoked for our time Gramsci's famous characterisation of his own time... as one when the old world was dying but the new was not yet born...”



REUTERS

**AFTER A FRENCH AIR STRIKE** on the southern outskirts of Benghazi in north-eastern Libya in March 2011, targeted at loyalists of Muammar Qaddafi. The West has waged a brutal war against Muslim populations over a vast swathe of the globe while taking advantage of Islamic fundamentalism when it suits its interests.

#### relevant? Why Marx?

Well, the question you have asked is so important but also so very broad that I am left more or less speechless. So, let me simply recall something [Jean-Paul] Sartre said more than half a century ago. In the book-length introduction to his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre comments that Marxism is the unanswerable science of the capitalist mode of production and it will therefore remain the ultimate horizon for all thinking so long as capitalism lasts. That, I think, is the crux of the matter. But Sartre also said that Marxism is by its very nature an unfinished and unfinishable knowledge because as a science of the existing world that keeps on changing Marxism too is not a static but a dynamic knowledge, always updating itself, renewing itself, changing itself because the material world, the object of its knowledge, is always caught up in the whirlwinds of change. In other words, Marx lives among us in two forms of existence: in the grandeur of the work that he has bequeathed us as his legacy and then in the intellectual and political contribution of those generations of Marxists who have built upon that legacy.

Let me add something else, though. The greatness of *Capital* is so overwhelming that there has developed a tendency to look to Marx for principles and methods for

economic analysis and to look to [Vladimir Ilyich] Lenin for the strategy and tactics of revolutionary politics. I don't want to underrate the importance of Lenin, but I do want to emphasise that Marx is the seminal figure in the conception of politics itself, a practising revolutionary and the founding philosopher of working-class politics as such. The great tradition of the intellectual-activist in the history of the Left is modelled directly on the life and work of Marx himself.

#### THE CASTE FACTOR

**In the social context of India, some criticise Marxism for its “class blindness” and “Eurocentrism” and for not paying enough attention to the phenomenon of caste. This criticism is levelled against the communist movements too. How would Marxism deal with the question of caste? How do you evaluate the performance of the Left movement in carrying forward the agenda of caste annihilation?**

I do believe that the question of class revolution in India passes through the caste question and that no socialist revolution is possible in India without the annihilation of caste. In this [B.R.] Ambedkar was right in his insistence on *annihilation* rather than reform. He was right in arguing that the CPI [Communist Party of India] had not really understood how much caste had been historically the key to class formation and the making of dominant ideologies in India, and he was right in his deep dislike of Gandhi's cynicism and opportunism on this question. It is also fair to say, I think, that for all the upheavals that India has witnessed in the class and caste structures since Independence, a certain broad correlation between caste and class has persisted. These ground realities should then be connected with other kind of complexities, however. The much higher rates of capitalist expansion in post-Independence India and the newly installed capitalo-parliamentary ruling system served to open up great areas of social mobility for certain selected fractions of the middle and even the most oppressed castes. This involved electoral tokenism but also great many state initiatives ranging from the relatively modest land redistribution schemes and the Green Revolution to the policy of reservations, etc., which greatly benefited the middle castes but also some sections of Dalits as well.

All of this has created some caste-based elites, local power brokers and various kinds of upwardly mobile strata, while caste itself has emerged as a key political category in the parliamentary system as well as in most other spheres of society. Very much more than class, actually! For instance, who would ever insist on reservation of seats for the working class in schools and colleges and state employment or in state legislatures or the Lok Sabha? Caste has a different kind of primacy in the politics of the liberal bourgeoisie itself. In this political sphere, the issue has been captured mainly by the new elites arising out of those middle and oppressed castes. The big bourgeois parties, from the Congress to the BJP, have their own highly cynical ways of manipulating the



IVOR PHILKETT/NYT

**AFTER THE “LIBERATION”** of the Iraqi city of Tal Afar from the Islamic State, in September 2017. The Islamic State got its recruits overwhelmingly from among the victims of the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

issue of caste. There has been a very powerful idea, which these new caste-based elites propagate most vociferously, that the material interest of a caste can only be represented by members of that caste. This kind of caste politics often collides with class-based politics. My observation is that the Left has supported more or less every progressive initiative arising from the oppressed castes, and it has undertaken numerous initiatives of its own on the caste issue at the ground level, all of which go unreported in the media and unrecognised by those upwardly mobile elites. When the Left goes out to organise the urban and rural working classes, it necessarily organises people from the oppressed castes—precisely because most of the working class, especially among the rural landless and the urban sectors of menial labour, comes from those oppressed castes. So, yes, there has to be greater sensitivity, greater energy devoted to this issue, great mass education of Left cadres on the question of caste. However, the question of caste is currently so much monopolised by the caste-based elites that there are great limits imposed on what the Left can do. Whatever it actually does should also receive its proper recognition. The charge of Eurocentricity gets levelled against the Left mostly by members of those upwardly mobile elites.

**Some Left writers say that apart from some passing references to “class” there are no concrete definitions of it by Marx. Mao Zedong was brilliant in defining and analysing class in Chinese society. Samir Amin talks about six classes in modern capitalist society. In Marxist vocabulary what is class, and how it is different from the liberal understanding of the category of class?**

Anyone who thinks Marx does not define class must have a very mechanistic notion of what constitutes a “definition”. Every Marxist who has ever done class ana-

lysis, Mao and Samir Amin included, has derived his/her categories of analysis from Marx. That would not have been possible if Marx’s own work did not offer very precise criteria for determining what a class is. It is true, though, that Marx was not a positivist, nor an American-style social scientist in search of a 11-word—or seven-word—definition that could be marked right or wrong in a multiple choice exam. Marx was a dialectician. For him, class is above all a relational category—that is, a social relation, like capital itself. Neither means of production nor money are capital as such; these become means and forms of capital accumulation only under certain circumstances. Likewise, there is no proletariat in and of itself. It exists only in relation to its polar opposite, namely the capitalist class and only within an elaborate structure of class relations which in its totality we know as capitalism. If there were to be no capitalism or a capitalist class, which is what the word “communism” signifies, human beings would still work but there would be no proletariat. Various types of working classes and class fractions exist within an overall, historically determined system of property, production and distribution. We can specify the structural positions and attributes of particular classes or class fractions in any given social formation but Marxism cannot offer a formalistic, supra historical definition of class *per se*, a sort of definition that would apply to all classes at all times.

#### GRAMSCI’S CONTRIBUTION

**There is a narrative that presents Gramsci as purely an intellectual and cultural theorist divorced from class analysis. His writings are also being treated by some as a break from the Marxist tradition up to that time, and in some way highly critical of that also. How do you read**

### **Gramsci and what is his essential contribution to Marxism?**

Gramsci was 22 years old when he joined the Italian Socialist Party, which was to associate itself with the Third International. He rose rapidly to become a prominent leader within that party. Gramsci was a great, active supporter of the Worker's Council Movement in the industrial city of Turin. He often invoked Lenin's famous slogan "All power to the Soviets" in his arguments against critics of the movement and in the hope that the councils would become the nucleus of a future communist formation. Later, in 1921, he emerged as one of the key founders of the Italian Communist Party [PCI] and then became the party's chief leader in 1924. Meanwhile, he had spent time in Moscow, from where he returned with instructions from the Bureau of the Third International to form an anti-fascist front of all left-wing parties and forces with the PCI at its epicentre, a position that was resisted by many of his colleagues in the party. He was arrested and sentenced to prison for 20 years as the leader and chief theoretician of the PCI.

There are two fundamental themes underlying all his reflections in the approximately 30,000 pages of the *Prison Notebooks*: what were the structural causes—historical, cultural, social, religious causes—for the defeat of the Left and the victory of fascism in Italy; and, how to reconstruct a communist party—for which he used terms like "the Modern Prince" and "the collective intellectual"—in a way that would address the specificities of the Italian situation. Given all this history, it is simply absurd to try and detach Gramsci's thought from its basic communist grounding.

In a sense, Gramsci's essential undertaking was not very different from that of Mao in China. When the party



MAZHAR ALI KHAN/AP

**OSAMA BIN LADEN.** He was a CIA asset before he turned against the U.S.

was in disarray after the defeat of the Shanghai proletariat in 1927, Mao asked himself a simple question: how to reformulate Marxism-Leninism for revolution in the conditions of a vast, semi-colonial, mainly peasant country like China? His solution was ingenious: to execute the *logic* of a proletarian revolution but with a peasant army, developing the revolutionary force not so much in the industrial cities as in the agrarian hinterlands, with strategy not of a frontal attack on citadels of state authority—as in the case of the storming of the Winter Palace—but by surrounding the cities from the countryside. Mao introduced an entirely novel corpus of thought into the Marxist-Leninist tradition.

The PCI was barely five years old when Gramsci entered a fascist prison, which he was to leave only when he was too ill, too close to death. We have to remember that Gramsci was severely ill most of his life and died at 46. As such, his highly original approach to the problem of revolutionary practice in a major European country remained confined to the realm of thought, never allowed to be tested in actual practice. Thus, he cannot be compared to Mao, but the undertaking was similar: thinking concretely about one's own national situation in order to arrive at an adequate communist strategy.

### **BASE AND SUPERSTRUCTURE**

Gramsci was a keen student of Marx and was virtually obsessed with some of the passages in Marx's famous 1959 preface. One of those passages reads as follows:

"The changes in the economic foundations lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure. In studying such transformations it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophical—in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out."

Gramsci drew several conclusions from this. First, that the relation between structure and superstructure is dialectical in nature and neither is reducible to unitary determination by the other. Second, that the scientific method with which we can analyse "the economic conditions of production" with great "precision" cannot give us an equally precise understanding of "ideological forms"; for that we need a complementary but somewhat different science of the superstructures. Third, that "ideological forms" are multiple and have overlapping but also relatively autonomous histories.

The legal superstructure of bourgeois Europe represents not only its capitalist present but is also premised on layered, highly sedimented foundations that date back to the Cannon Law of the Catholic Church as well as the Roman Law of the old Empire. The religious superstructure that is specific to Catholic Italy is not the same as in Anglican Britain or the Saudi variant of Wahhabi Islam; each has a historicity and concreteness of its own. Fourth, and most important, that whereas the fundamental factors and crises that open up the possibility of revolu-

tionary transformation arise in the field of the forces and relations of production, it is in these other “ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.”

Thus, the struggle over the ideological forms and the concrete consciousness that arises out of those forms gains enormous salience for the practice of revolution as such. Gramsci's great interest in actual, empirical analyses of these many ideological forms in Italian history and society and his ambition to formulate a science of superstructures arises out of this revolutionary necessity, not in some new-fangled postmodern culturalism.

**There is an allegation that in the Soviet Union the Marxist ideas of dictatorship of the proletariat and democratic centralism made democracy a casualty, especially in the period of Joseph Stalin. On the other hand, leftist thinkers like Antonio Negri theorise about the revolt not of the traditional working class but of the multitude, without a single-party leadership. What in your view is the relevance and importance of a communist party?**

The two concepts you mention have different origins. The concept of “dictatorship of the proletariat” dates back to Marx himself. In the *Manifesto* itself, Marx describes the liberal state as a managing committee of the bourgeoisie as a whole. Elsewhere, he described that kind of state as a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie over the rest of society in general and over the proletariat in particular—that is, the dictatorship of a tiny minority over the great majority. In today's language you could say “dictatorship of the 1 per cent over the 99 per cent”. “Dictatorship of the proletariat” was to be the absolute negation of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. In other words, it signified the rule of the absolute majority over a tiny minority or, if you will, the dictatorship of labour over capital. Lenin's famous slogan “All power to the Soviets” had roughly the same meaning as “dictatorship of the proletariat”, that is, a more perfect democracy in which various kinds of labour represented themselves through new forms of organisation.

By contrast, the concept of democratic centralism refers to Lenin's organisational concept for the illegalised, underground revolutionary party in conditions of tsarist autocracy and, by extension, more generally in times of great state repression. Rosa Luxemburg had already warned, in Lenin's own time, that this organisational form could under different circumstances degenerate into an autocratic rule by a tiny clique or even into a personalised dictatorship. However, I must say that every party form or state form carries within it the possibility of degeneration, and how well a concept functions in practice has to do with the people who implement it and the objective conditions that determine the conduct of those people. The kind of authoritarian state that emerged during the period of Stalin's leadership had very complex origins in the material conditions that prevailed and is by no means reducible to one concept or another.

As for [Antonio] Negri, he began his career with a



workerist kind of ultra-leftism and was even involved in Italy with terror groups of an ultra-Left vanguardist nature. Some three decades later, he emerged with a kind of theorisation which I regard as an extreme form of anarchism but one so odd that he denies the very reality of American imperialism or any identifiable centres of corporate power. His idea of the “Multitude” can be explained in many ways, but in essence it arises out of that kind of theoretical incoherence. In practice it shares the world view of the NGO world which denies the fact of class struggle and calls for “Changing the World without Taking Power”—in short, a series of social reforms that lead to a more humane face of capitalism.

We have learned at least two things from the experience of recent uprisings in the Arab world. What are called “spontaneous” uprisings of the masses that have no clear-headed leadership—Negri's “multitude”, so to speak—are highly susceptible to manipulation, as happened in Egypt where a powerful mass movement was soon taken over by the Muslim Brotherhood and led to the Islamists' electoral success which, in turn, frightened a whole multitude of Egyptians to such a degree that they actually welcomed the military coup that overthrew the government of the Muslim Brotherhood and brought the great Tahrir Square uprising to a tragic



ROGER ANIS/SAPI

**A DEMONSTRATION** by Muslim Brotherhood supporters in Egypt's Dalga village in August 2013. Leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood were first received in the White House by President Dwight Eisenhower in the 1950s.

end. At the other end, in this age of corporate monopoly over the global electronic media and their visual representations of the world, “multitudes” can be virtually manufactured out of thin air, as was done in Libya and Syria. In earlier histories, it is simply undeniable that Hitler and Mussolini rose to power at the head of right-wing, hysterical “multitudes”. There is nothing necessarily progressive about “people”, “masses”, “multitudes”, etc. Class organisations and struggles are necessary to ensure a progressive content in agitations and uprisings of the popular classes.

#### AMERICANISATION OF THE WORLD

**Globalisation has many facets. How it affects culture is an important thing. What is this cultural face of globalisation? How does globalisation affect our culture?**

The word “globalisation” is a bourgeois euphemism for the latest phase of imperialism. Cultural imperialism

has always been a fundamental aspect of imperialism as such. Any expansion and deepening of imperialist power is bound to also deepen the hold of imperialist culture. This is greatly facilitated in our time by the new information and particularly visual technologies. This applies to high culture as much as to mass cultural forms. Hollywood cinema is the predominant cinematic form, and national film industries in Asia or Africa are basically local variants of it with very big doses of what I call “imitative originality”. American music is the only global music now, and the majority in the middle classes of the world increasingly have no musical tastes except their taste for American music and its local variants, again with great doses of imitative originality. Jeans are now the predominant element in the globalised dress code and becoming more so very rapidly even across the gender divide. I don’t at all mean that there is something reactionary about the wearing of jeans as such or about listening to American music. But there does seem to be an objective correlation between such quotidian changes in day-to-day life and American cultural forms.

At the other end, the American university system is the primary site for the training of the techno-managerial class, even diplomats and the higher-level civil servants, for virtually every country in the world. The American system of education is what is followed in more and more national education systems globally. Again, I don’t mean that anyone who studies or teaches in an American university is a reactionary. There are always radical, oppositional minorities in such institutions. I am simply pointing to the predominant function of this immensely powerful system of ideological reproduction for all spheres of life globally. Postmodernism in all its aspects—from high theory to production of cultural artefacts to day-to-day habits like fast foods—is essentially an Americanisation of the world. The higher up you go in the class structure of our society, the more common would be an identification with various aspects of American culture. American victory in the cultural sphere has in fact been far more impressive than in military battlefields. China may be rising as a competitive economic power, but the spread of American cultural forms there is very striking.

#### THIRD WORLD OR TRICONTINENTAL?

**“Third World” is the term commonly used to describe the countries of the South. Instead people like you use the term tricontinental. How did the term “Third World” become a popular coinage, and what does this shift in vocabulary to tricontinental denote?**

The term “Third World” was coined by a French journalist at the time of the Bandung Conference of 1955 as a catchy phrase for his French readers for the newly rising phenomenon of non-alignment. The phrase caught on, and different people, and even different countries, started using it with varying connotations. I have traced that history in the last chapter of my book *In Theory*. The Bandung Conference was almost exclusively

an Afro-Asian event, along with lone figures like [Josip Broz] Tito from Yugoslavia. The term “tricontinental” arose in revolutionary Cuba and was a particular favourite of Che [Guevara], to connote a fundamental unity of Latin America, Africa and Asia as victims of colonialism and imperialism. The term was popularised through revolutionary publications, international conferences, etc. I do sometimes use the term “Third World”, simply because it is very familiar for a lot of people, but I dislike its French journalistic origins. I prefer the term “Tricontinent” because of its revolutionary origin and Cuban association.

### **COMMERCIALISATION OF RELIGION**

**Many thought that with modernity and the “passing of time”, religion would retreat from the public sphere and that it would be less important for modern man with progress in science and rationality. But contrary to that, religiosity is growing significantly all over the world.**

**How would you explain this growing religiosity?**

The truth of Europe must always be viewed from the standpoint of its victims. Secularism, in the sense of a formal separation between Church and state, certainly got instituted in most Western countries, but religion did not disappear from public life. In his essay “The Jewish Question”, Marx demonstrates brilliantly how the formal privatisation of religion in the U.S. made it all the more sancrosanct by placing it beyond the reach of the state. Anti-Semitism remained a feature of all Western societies, to lesser or greater degree, until it reached its final orgiastic crescendo in the Nazi extermination of Jews.

Edward Said documented at length how old, punctual and ineradicable has been Europe’s hatred of Islam. There is much truth in [Theodor W.] Adorno’s sardonic comment that instead of disappearing religion just got commercialised and that the only thing that remained of the Christian faith was its hatred of the neighbour. Islamophobia is the new name for an old disease. It is true, though, that this disease has been showing very lethal new symptoms over the past two decades or so as the West has waged a brutal war against Muslim populations over a vast expanse from the Red Sea and the Levant to North and West Africa.

In our part of the world, increasing religiosity is among the many forms of right-wing ascendancy in our time, and it is structurally connected to the defeat and/or retreat of the Left. Secular nationalism and communism were the dominant political trends in a host of Muslim countries such as Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Sudan, etc., precisely where Islamism is now dominant, including in its Salafi and jehadi forms. Roughly the same could be said about India if you compare today’s India with the India of 50 years ago. This is by no means just a local development. Imperialism fought as hard against secular nationalism as it fought against communism because both posed a great threat to imperial interests. Right-wing forces of all stripes gained immeasurably from those imperialist offensives.

**Islamist politics is being played out in different forms in different countries. What is the history and growth of political Islam? How do Islamist politics and Islamophobia reinforce each other?**

Political Islam, as we now know it in many variants, was first concocted some 70 years ago in keeping with the Truman Doctrine, which postulated that Islam—the Wahhabi Islam of Saudi Arabia and the Salafi Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood—was the most reliable bulwark against communism in the Middle East [West Asia]. And, the West needed to control the Middle East because it also happened to be the place where the largest reserves of the industrial world’s most important strategic raw materials, petroleum and natural gas, were located. The U.S. intelligence and counter-insurgency networks cultivated as well as created Islamic extremists around the world very extensively.

As soon as a progressive, communist-oriented government arose in Afghanistan, the U.S. managed to assemble an anti-communist force comprising CIA [Central Intelligence Agency]-paid—and Saudi-paid—Mujahideen drawn from some 40 countries for the Islamic crusade against those godless anti-imperialists. Leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood were first received in the White House by President [Dwight D.] Eisenhower. The core leaders of this new gang of Mujahideen were received in the White house by Ronald Reagan. Before he turned against the U.S., Osama Bin Laden was a CIA asset. As the U.S. and its allies launched more and more wars against Muslim countries, every independent journalist and scholar warned that these invasions would necessarily create a whole new breed of anti-West terrorists.

The U.S., however, knew what it was doing. It has been remarkably successful in keeping jehadi terror out of the Western countries, with the exception of about half a dozen mostly minor events over almost two decades, while it condemned millions to death, destruction and homelessness. Against this backdrop of endless wars against entire populations, the U.S. plays a complex game with various jehadi outfits, fighting those who threaten its interests but also keeping many of them in reserve to unleash them in various parts of the world as and when required, in Libya and Syria already and very probably in Central Asian Muslim-majority republics as well as the Muslim-majority zones of China in the foreseeable future. Very few Westerners have been killed by jehadi terror, but this terror has killed hundreds of thousands of Muslims across countries and continents. These games of empire, in these particular forms, are also among the morbid symptoms of our time. □

*Jipson John and Jitheesh P.M. are fellows at Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research and contribute to various national and international publications including The Hindu, The Caravan, The Wire and Monthly Review. The writers can be reached at jipsonjohn10@gmail.com and jitheeshpm91@gmail.com.*

# Triumph of chicanery

The Karnataka model of coalition politics as an antidote to Hindutva politics appears hopelessly compromised as the government totters on the brink of collapse, while the **BJP** waits in the wings to strike at the opportune moment to gain power in the State by hook or by crook.

BY RAVI SHARMA AND RISHIKESH BAHADUR DESAI

THE much-touted Karnataka model of coalition politics, which supposedly heralded an alternative to the rising tide of Hindutva politics, appears to be on its last legs. The desertion of 16 legislators from the ruling Congress-Janata Dal (Secular) combine, which came to power

after a fractured mandate last year, has brought the H.D. Kumaraswamy government to the brink of collapse. The naked display of the lust for power by legislators across the political spectrum, whose only aspirational interest in politics appears to be a ministerial berth, has brought

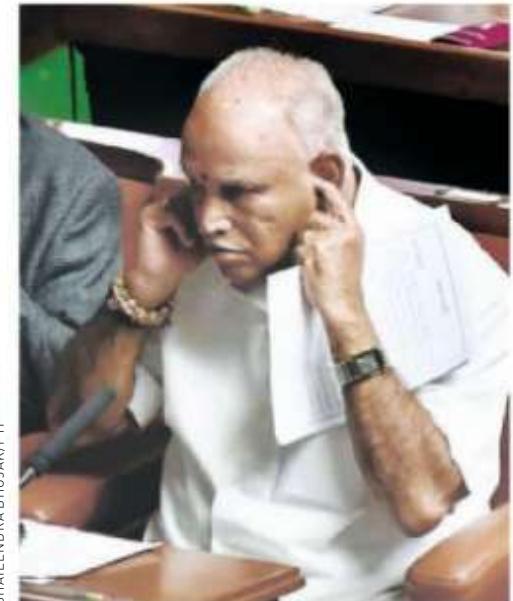
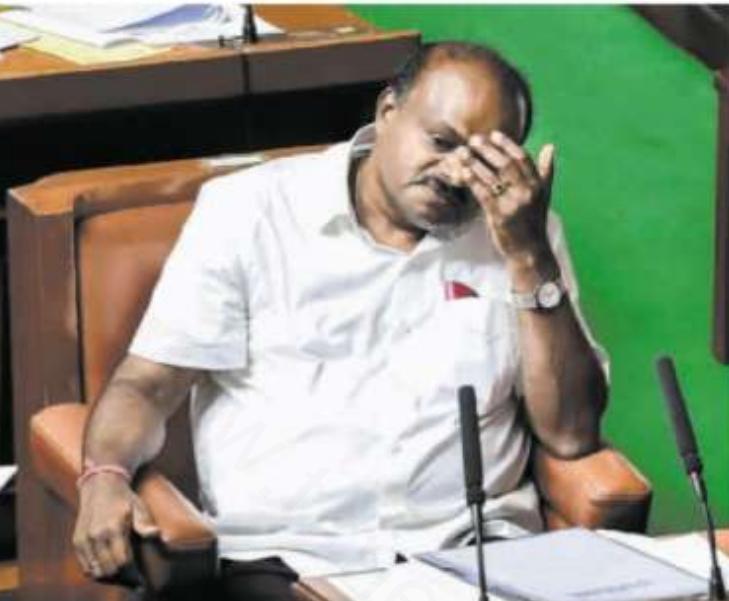
the State administration to a standstill.

However, Chief Minister Kumaraswamy sprang a surprise on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on July 12 by announcing that he would seek a vote of confidence, possibly within two weeks. The BJP, which made a



**CONGRESS** and JD(S) MLAs who submitted their resignations to the Karnataka Speaker leave the Raj Bhavan after meeting the Governor on July 6.

K. MURALI KUMAR



**CHIEF MINISTER** H.D. Kumaraswamy (left) and Leader of the Opposition B.S. Yeddyurappa in the Assembly on July 12.

desperate lunge for power just a year ago, is waiting to strike again.

Even as Karnataka lurches through a debilitating drought, legislators from all the three political parties, including the BJP, the single largest party in the Assembly, remain protectively ensconced in luxury resorts and hotels following Kumaraswamy's surprise announcement that he would seek a vote of confidence.

The BJP has been patiently engineering desertions since March, when it lured Umesh Jadhav, the Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) representing Chincholi, from the Congress and rewarded him with the party ticket for the Kalaburagi Lok Sabha seat, where he defeated Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge. The bait was sweetened further when the BJP nominated his son for the Chincholi Assembly seat.

#### CURRENT CRISIS

The current crisis was sparked off by the resignations of Vijayanagar MLA Anand Singh and Gokak MLA Ramesh Jarkiholi, both of whom never concealed their dissent within the Congress. It became a full-blown crisis on July 6 when 10 legislators, including members of both the Congress and the JD(S), submitted their resignations to Speaker K.R.

Ramesh Kumar, who later said the resignations were not in "proper order".

High drama followed, with the MLAs leaving for Mumbai soon after submitting their resignations. The fact that Kumaraswamy was away in the United States on a private visit seemed to provide an ideal opportunity for the machinations against the government. The Congress flew its chief troubleshooter, D.K. Shivakumar, to persuade the rebels to reconsider, but he failed to gain entry to the hotel where they were staying.

In the days that followed, the number of resignations swelled to 16, including two independent MLAs

who were both Ministers. The Kumaraswamy government, which effectively had a combined support of 115 legislators—78 from the Congress and 37 from the JD(S)—also enjoyed the support of the two independents. Besides, it continues to have the support of the lone Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) member.

Despite being the single largest party by some distance with 105 legislators, the BJP has been in the opposition in the 225-member Assembly, which includes one nominated member from the Anglo-Indian community who has no vote and a seat that is currently vacant.

Meanwhile, the drama shifted to



**BYRATHI BASAVARAJ**, MLA, rushing to the Speaker's chamber on July 11 to submit his resignation before the 6 p.m. deadline set by the Supreme Court.

the Supreme Court where the rebels pleaded that an order be issued to the Speaker to rule on the validity of the resignations. However, this has been clouded by the fact that disqualification notices have been issued to at least some of the legislators by their party leadership. The question whether the Speaker would first consider the issue of disqualification or the validity of their resignations could well decide the future of the Kumaraswamy government.

In terms of immediate survival, disqualification of the MLAs matters little to the coalition. The Congress or the JD(S) can only draw satisfaction from having punished the rebels because they would be unable to become MLAs for six years following disqualification, but that offers little succour to a tottering coalition.

The exit of 16 legislators—13 from the Congress and three from the JD(S)—from the Assembly will bring the combine's strength down to 99 in an Assembly with a current effective strength of 223. The combine will be in a minority if the resignations are upheld.

In such a situation, the BJP, with 105 members in a House with an effective strength of 207 members, would be sitting pretty but just about. It can also count on the support of the two independents.

It appears that the ground realities of politics as an enterprise could have an impact on how the legislators—on all sides of the political spectrum—behave in the immediate future. As of now, Kumaraswamy has bought two weeks' time to woo the legislators back to the coalition.

According to *Practice and Procedure of Parliament* by M.N. Kaul and S.L. Shadkher, which is conventionally followed in the State Assembly, the Speaker can allow a confidence motion in two weeks. Kumaraswamy, by pre-empting the BJP's no-confidence motion, is expected to offer ministerial berths to the disgruntled MLAs. All the 32 Ministers, except the Chief Minister, have submitted their resignations to their party presidents in order to create vacancies for hopefules if they wished to return.

It is obvious that the chief legislators resigned because they were not made Ministers. However, under Article 72 of the Constitution, which limits the size of a Ministry to 15 per cent of the elected members of the legislature (91st Amendment), a House of 225 can only have 33 Ministers.

Senior Congress leaders such as former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, former Ministers H.K. Patil and Ramalinga Reddy and JD(S) leaders such as former Ministers Basavaraj Horatti and Adagur Vishwanath were kept out of the Ministry in the hope that they would understand the constraints of coalition politics. Ramalinga Reddy and Vishwanath are among those who have resigned.

Ramesh Jarkiholi and several other disgruntled MLAs have said that their parties had "not treated them with respect", which, according to Basavaraj Horatti, is code for not being made a Minister. "You can't make everyone a Minister. That is impossible. If they hate this government so much, the Chief Minister ought to rather resign and seek a fresh mandate," he told *Frontline*.

#### GOVERNANCE AT A STANDSTILL

As the government lurched from one crisis to another, governance came to a standstill. Political observers said the mass resignations amounted to a betrayal of the people's trust. The writer Prof. R.K. Hudgi said: "Why did the people's representatives have

to resign? What injustice was done by the State government to their constituencies?"

He also said that only a "lust for power" could explain their action. However hard they may deny it, they are all planning to jump to the BJP in the hope of becoming Ministers in the new government, he added.

"This is a gross violation of the voters' trust. The voters should punish them by not supporting them if they were to contest byelections as BJP nominees," he said.

Dilip Kamat, a social activist and founder of a workers' collective called Grakoos, said: "This government has become famous for all the wrong reasons. It has not fulfilled most of its promises made in the last Budget. It has failed to start relief works even when most parts of the State are suffering from a debilitating drought. Rather than focussing on saving the farmers in their constituencies or developing their region, the MLAs have chosen to run away to Mumbai for power and money."

Although the BJP will be the key beneficiary of the collapse of the combine, it has not sought to form a government. BJP State president and former Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa has so far only called for the resignation of the Kumaraswamy government. Perhaps he is chastened by the experience after the 2018 Assembly election, when he headed a two-day government before the Congress-JD(S)



**CONGRESS** rebel MLA M.T.B. Nagraj (right) meeting former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, in Bengaluru on July 13.

# Constitutional issues

WHEN 10 rebel legislators of the Congress-Janata Dal (Secular) ruling coalition in Karnataka submitted their resignations to Speaker K.R. Ramesh Kumar on July 6 and he refused to accept them immediately, the legislators lost no time in approaching the Supreme Court. They filed a writ petition alleging that the Speaker, in concert with the government, was facilitating their disqualification under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution (anti-defection law), thereby making their resignations infructuous.

The Supreme Court bench comprising Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi and Justices Deepak Gupta and Aniruddha Bose heard the rebel MLAs and the Speaker on July 12. It decided that since the issue involved substantial questions of law, it would continue the hearing on July 16 and directed the Speaker to maintain status quo until then.

## **ARTICLE 190 (3)(B)**

The issues before the court were clear. The rebel MLAs claimed that they were not defecting but resigning from the Assembly in order to seek a fresh mandate as they were fed up with the “maladministration” by the JD(S)-Congress coalition rul-

ing the State. Under Article 190 (3) (b) of the Constitution, if a member of the State legislature resigns his or her seat by writing to the Speaker, and if the latter accepts it, then the seat falls vacant. This Article is qualified by a proviso which says:

“Provided that in the case of any resignation referred to in sub-clause (b), if from information received or otherwise and after making such inquiry as he thinks fit, the Speaker or the Chairman, as the case may be, is satisfied that such resignation is not voluntary or genuine, he shall not accept such resignation.”

This proviso requires the Speaker to apply his mind before deciding on a member’s resignation and not mechanically accept it. The rebel MLAs claimed that any elected member of the legislature was entitled, in consultation with his conscience or other attendant circumstances, to resign his or her membership of the legislature. Their resignations, they claimed, were on the issue of principle and in the public interest. But they did not explain what this principle was and what public interest required their resignation from the Assembly. Clearly, disenchantment with mal-administration would require them to continue their membership of the

Assembly to seek appropriate corrective measures in the public interest.

The denial of their right to resign, they said, was destructive of the principles of democracy and hence violative of the basic structure of the Constitution. Again, they did not elaborate on those principles and how the basic structure stood violated.

The rebel MLAs claimed that subclause (b) in Article 190(3)(b) did not envisage a roving inquiry by the Speaker into the circumstances pertaining to a voluntary and genuine resignation by a member. They alleged that the Speaker, on the apprehension that the Chief Minister was likely to lose the confidence of the House for want of a majority, was acting in a partisan manner to frustrate the will of the House. They stated that as there was no doubt about the voluntariness and genuineness of their resignations, the Speaker ought not to conduct an inquiry to ascertain these facts. They also alleged that the Chief Minister, despite his government being reduced to a minority, was refusing to seek a vote of confidence. If that was so, which was not clear from their petition, why should they resign from the Assembly?

combine asserted its majority in the Assembly.

Siddaramaiah said that the BJP was orchestrating the crisis as a means of moving towards a “Congress-mukt Bharat”. However, the BJP alone cannot be blamed for the mess the coalition is in and has been in since it came to power last year. The BJP leader and former Minister Govind Karjol attributed the resignations to the coalition’s internal contradictions. “Why should we poison someone if just drinking milk is killing him?” he said.

Tensions have been mounting within the coalition ever since it

began its innings. And they had nothing to do with ideological differences or quarrels over policies and had everything to do with the distribution of power.

## **BJP’S CALCULATION**

The BJP’s central leadership is adopting a more cautious approach this time around in a bid to maximise gains over a longer time frame, and Yeddyurappa may not have much of a say in this scheme of things.

If the BJP does form a government, even for a short term, it may well provide the last chance at power for the 76-year-old Yeddyurappa, ar-

guably the tallest Lingayat leader in the State. Although the community accounts for only about 15 per cent of the population, it enjoys political clout disproportionate to its strength in the State. A significant section of the community comprises landowners, moneylenders and agriculture commission agents. They also own several private educational institutions and control numerous cooperative societies, particularly in north Karnataka. Their social and economic power enables them to wield political influence over voters from other communities lower in the social hierarchy.

The rebel MLAs concealed the fact that they would face disqualification proceedings if they defied their party whips and voted against the vote of confidence to be moved by the Chief Minister under Paragraph 2(1)(b) of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution. Resignation from the Assembly, therefore, provided them a convenient option to unseat an elected government, as it would lose its majority in an Assembly whose effective strength stood reduced.

#### PREFERRED TO RESIGN

The rebel MLAs preferred to resign rather than face disqualification under the Tenth Schedule, even though they could have made the same point to their party leaders through the latter option and still sought a fresh mandate in a byelection for the same seat.

They did not wish to be disqualified because they would have become ineligible to become Ministers as Article 164(1B) of the Constitution bars those disqualified on the grounds of defection from becoming Ministers if they do not get re-elected to the Assembly. Article 361B imposes a similar bar on those disqualified under Paragraph 2 of the Tenth Schedule, following their defec-

tion, from being appointed to remunerative political posts.

Abhishek Manu Singhvi, senior counsel for the Speaker, told the bench on July 12 that the rebel MLAs wanted to achieve the benefit, which had been expressly denied to them under the Constitution on the grounds of their defection and defiance of the party leadership, by resigning from the Assembly. Permitting such resignation, therefore, would be a fraud on the Constitution, he said.

Senior counsel Rajeev Dhavan, representing Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, said the bench should introspect on whether it did the right thing by directing the Speaker on July 11 to decide on the resignations on the same day in the evening without hearing the Speaker or the Chief Minister. The bench even refused to hear the Speaker in the afternoon on July 11 when he moved an application seeking relaxation of the deadline imposed on him to decide the resignations of the rebel MLAs. As a consequence, the Speaker insisted on following the provisions of Article 190(3)(b) in letter and spirit and sought more time to decide on the resignations of the rebel MLAs as the Supreme Court's order left him with no other option.

V. Venkatesan

Basavaraj Dhannur, an office-bearer of the agitation committee to recognise "Lingayatism" as a separate religion, said: "Most of the Lingayats in the State support the BJP as they accept Yeddyurappa as their leader and hope that he will be made the Chief Minister one day. If that does not happen, the BJP is likely to lose its support in the community."

But it would be a mistake to treat Yeddyurappa merely as a Lingayat leader. The BJP owes him much for his work in enhancing the party's appeal among sections of Other Backward Classes and Dalits.

The Lok Sabha election was a stunning reminder that the JD(S) cannot afford to take for granted its clout in the Vokkaliga community in its stronghold in the Old Mysore region.

Both the BJP and the ruling combine appear to be considering the dominant sentiment among MLAs: of avoiding an immediate election since no one seems to be keen on fighting another expensive electoral contest just a year after the last one.

It would not be surprising if some of the resignations are "reconsidered" after a bout of hectic bargaining. Even those who do not

become Ministers may seek to be compensated in other ways by the government. In such a situation, the BJP's immediate objective may well be to bring down the government. But instead of taking a jab at power immediately, the party may prefer fresh elections after a period of President's Rule.

The party would expect the momentum that swept it to power in the Lok Sabha election to remain intact in such an election, if and when it happens. For the ruling combine that has proved its utter incompatibility since it came to power, that ought to be a frightening prospect.

It is obvious that the BJP is hoping that the public disgust with the machinations within the ruling coalition may offer it a chance, one in which its own misdeeds of the past—most notably the mega mining scandal during Yeddyurappa's stewardship—may be forgotten.

Karnataka matters a great deal to the BJP because it offers the party its best route to the South where it is still only a marginal player. Its ill-disguised aspiration to a complete dominance of the Indian polity makes Karnataka critical. Despite all the failings of the ruling coalition in the State, the fact that Karnataka was able to thwart the BJP onslaught offers hope and respite from the unbridled assault that Hindutva threatens to unleash.

The BJP now has three possible options. It may bring down the Kumaraswamy government at the earliest and make an immediate attempt to gain power; it may bring down the government but allow the dissolution of the Assembly, paving the way for President's Rule; or it may aid and abet the contradictions within the coalition to sharpen them further and lead to its collapse.

Whatever the BJP does, it is clear that the naked use of money and resources will play a key role, something that has been demonstrated in the past. It is also likely to use key institutions such as the Governor's office, apart from the vast state machinery available to it, to the hilt in its pursuit of power, which is an even more frightening prospect. □

# Wooing speculative finance

Budget 2019 sends the clear message that the second Modi-led government plans to use **every trick in the financial innovation book** in its desperate search for private financing of infrastructure.

BY C.P. CHANDRASEKHAR

THE second Narendra Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government has provided, at best, an inkling of its economic agenda through its first Budget. That Budget has been much discussed since July 5 when it was presented. However, an aspect that has not received the attention it deserves is the underlying perception of how development should be financed.

Union Budgets are meant to lay out how the government plans to mobilise every rupee of its resources over the coming year and how it plans to spend the money. To that end, tax and non-tax revenues and the proposed volume of borrowing, together with the proposed allocation of those receipts, should be the main concern. By listing those, the government reveals its fiscal stance, with attendant implications for growth and welfare.

Budget speech 2019 was, however, different. Of the 105 paragraphs that made up a rather tiresome Part A of the speech, 23 related to financial markets. Since many paragraphs were add-ons without substantial content, it was a large part of the Budget speech. Flows mediated by financial markets rather than the government's own resources are clearly being seen as central to the government's strategy

of financing development. The message is that private financial capital, domestic and foreign, normally looking for quick returns, should be tapped to meet development objectives. The "strategy" cannot stop with proposing this role for private finance. Development requires investment in areas that do not promise quick returns. A typical example is infrastructure, which is crucial for development but woefully short in India.

The second Modi government has announced that it will ensure investments totalling Rs.100 lakh crore in infrastructure over its five-year term, or an average of Rs.20 lakh crore every year. In comparison, the total Central budgetary expenditure in 2018-19 was Rs.24.6 lakh crore, of which just Rs.3.2 lakh crore was devoted to capital expenditure. Much of that expenditure was absorbed by wages, salaries, defence and interest payments. So, unless the government launches a major resource mobilisation effort, the money for the infrastructural push must come from elsewhere. There are no signs of such a push in this Budget, nor is there any promise of one in the future.

The conventional view is that since infrastructural projects require large, lumpsum investments and are

characterised by long gestation lags, they do not attract private players, and tax- or debt-financed public expenditure must lead growth in the sector. But unwilling to tax and having embraced fiscal conservatism that requires reining in the fiscal deficit and public borrowing, the government finds that infrastructural shortfalls have become too large to be ignored. So alternative means of finance must be found.

Until the financial liberalisation of the 1990s, the government's budgetary effort was supplemented with resources from the publicly owned and supported development finance institutions. But with Indian-style financial liberalisation choosing to transform those development finance institutions into pure commercial banks, even that source of support had to be substituted. The government possibly realises it made a mistake phasing out the development finance pipeline.

Budget speech 2019 claims that the government proposes "to set up an expert committee to study the current situation relating to long-term finance and our past experience with development finance institutions, and recommend the structure and required flow of funds through development finance institutions".

But this is at best a feeble cry for a



is to work, private capital must flow directly into the infrastructure field.

During the high-growth years prior to the global financial crisis of 2008, when investment rates in India did rise sharply, bank finance was used to attract private players, with a limited amount of own capital. Public sector banks were encouraged to increase lending substantially to PPP or private infrastructural projects. The share of infrastructure in scheduled commercial bank lending to the industrial sector increased from 3 per cent to almost 35 per cent over the 2000s. Banks complied because they presumed that there was an implicit sovereign guarantee attached to such lending. The private sector, on the other hand, obviously saw this as a gift from the government, which was expected to make these projects remunerative enough to deliver profits after interest and amortisation costs on debt were met. That did not happen, and some private promoters even diverted the resources into their own personal fortunes.

This resulted in defaults, but banks were, for long, encouraged to ignore the defaults and keep the debts ongoing through "restructuring". However, the defaults could not be ignored forever. When stricter asset quality recognition and classification guidelines were issued by the Reserve Bank of India in 2015, the gross non-performing assets (NPAs) of scheduled commercial banks rose from Rs.3,23,464 crore as on March 31, 2015, to Rs.10,36,187 crore as on March 31, 2018.

Enforced writeoffs have been resorted to, but that implies that the government would have to underwrite the losses of the banks. According to a reply to a Rajya Sabha question, "over the last four financial years, PSBs [public sector banks] were recapitalised to the extent of Rs.3.12 lakh crore, with infusion of Rs.2.46 lakh crore by the government and mobilisation of over Rs.0.66 lakh crore by PSBs themselves".

This is not enough to bring the banks back into infrastructure lending, which in any case they would prefer to sidestep, having burnt their

**FINANCE MINISTER** Nirmala Sitharaman and Anurag Thakur, Minister of State for Finance, leave North Block to present Budget 2019, on July 5.

return to an irresponsibly rejected past.

One alternative experiment in infrastructure investing that has been pursued for some time now is the use of public-private partnerships (PPPs). That finds mention in this Budget, too, especially in connection with modernisation and expansion of the Railways: "It is estimated that railway infrastructure would need an investment of Rs.50 lakh crore between 2018 and 2030. Given that the capital expenditure outlays of the Railways are around Rs.1.5-1.6 lakh crore per annum, completing even all sanctioned projects would take decades. It is therefore proposed to use public-private partnership to un-

leash faster development and completion of tracks, rolling stock manufacturing and delivery of passenger freight services."

But as experience in India and elsewhere has made it clear, in most PPP projects the cost and risk are largely borne by the government, while much of the surplus, if any is generated, accrues to the private sector. It is not that the government is averse to such an outcome. But the purpose of the PPP is lost if the government must provide the bulk of the finance. With limits set on its own finances, this would not resolve the problem of inadequate investment in the infrastructural sector. If the strategy of relying on private finance



**TATA POWER'S** 400 MW Mundra Plant in Mumbai, a file picture. The government has announced that it will ensure investments totalling Rs.100 lakh crore in infrastructure over its five-year term. In comparison, the total Central budgetary expenditure in 2018-19 was Rs.24.6 lakh crore, of which just Rs.3.2 lakh crore was devoted to capital expenditure.

fingers once. Moreover, since the government, given its fiscal conservatism, cannot continue to underwrite the losses of banks, the quest for off-Budget sources of infrastructure funding must continue.

It is this hopeless quest that the Budget speech's obsession with financial markets reflects. The effort to coax equity and bond markets to contribute to infrastructure investment financing has three components to it. The first is to expand and make lucrative the space available to financial investors, especially foreign institutional investors (FIIs) and foreign portfolio investors (FPIs). The Budget notes that "an important determinant of attracting cross-border investments is availability of investible stock to the FPIs". So, it proposes increasing the statutory limit for foreign portfolio investment in a company from 24 per cent of total equity now to a level equal to the sectoral foreign investment limit. FPIs will also be allowed to subscribe to listed debt securities issued by infrastructure investment trusts and real estate investment trusts. Simultaneously, the government has asked the Securities and Exchange Board of India to consider raising the minimum public shareholding in listed companies from 25 per cent to 35 per cent so that more shares are available for acquisition in the equity market.

The second is to be less rigorous when assessing the suitability of a foreign investor to enter and invest in financial markets. In the past, the criteria used were aimed at keeping speculative and shady investors out. But now the government plans to "rationalise and streamline the existing Know Your Customer (KYC) norms for FPIs to make (them) more investor-friendly without compromising the integrity of cross-border capital flows".

The terms of entry are also to be relaxed. For example, the Budget has reduced the net owned fund requirement for foreign insurers setting up operations in the International Financial Services Centre from Rs.5,000 crore to Rs.1,000 crore.

The third is to try and make the corporate bond market attractive for investors. Credit guarantees are to be provided by establishing a Credit Guarantee Enhancement Corporation. Measures for "deepening markets for corporate bond repos, credit default swaps, etc., with specific focus on infrastructure sector" are to be put in place to help investors share and transfer risk. Markets are also to be made more liquid for foreign investors by permitting "investments made by FIIs/FPIs in debt securities issued by Infrastructure Debt Fund-Non-Banking Finance Companies (IDF-NBFCs) to be transferred/sold

to any domestic investor within the specified lock-in period".

This opens the doors to short-term flows in an area where investments are necessarily long-term in nature. These measures are by no means novel on a global scale nor are they exhaustive. But the fact that they have been listed suggests that the government plans to use every trick in the financial innovation book in its desperate search for private financing of infrastructure.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also announced that the government was considering organising an annual global investors' meet in India, "using National Infrastructure Investment Fund (NIIF) as the anchor, to get all three sets of global players, top industrialists/corporate honchos, top pension/insurance/sovereign wealth funds and top digital technology/venture funds" to invest in India.

Demands for "reforms" at those meets are bound to be added to the list of measures aimed at attracting investment. The idea is to place foreign finance on a par with foreign direct investors who can integrate India into the global production value chain.

To quote the Finance Minister: "It is high time India not only gets integrated into the global value chain of production of goods and services, but also becomes part of the global financial system to mobilise global savings, mostly institutionalised in pension, insurance and sovereign wealth funds."

It is unlikely that this effort to coax and cajole private finance to substitute for the state in the infrastructural area will succeed. Whether it does or not, the "reforms" that would be adopted to make infrastructure an attractive option for speculative finance would result in changes in financial markets that hugely increase the quantum of risks, package those risks in opaque instruments and pass them on to investors who are unable to judge the risks they are taking on. Increased fragility and a meltdown, rather than an infrastructural boom, are likely to be the result. □

# Vacuous survey

The Economic Survey waxes eloquent on the standout economic problems of our times, without offering solutions or a road map to nudge the country on the path of growth. **BY V. SRIDHAR**

THE Economic Survey for 2018-19, presented by Krishnamurthy Subramanian, Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) to the government, has all the trappings of a lecture on management at a business school where flowery jargon often fills in for economic logic. To make matters worse, there are unprecedented and significant deviations on the national income assumptions for the current year between Subramanian's estimate and those presented a day later by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget.

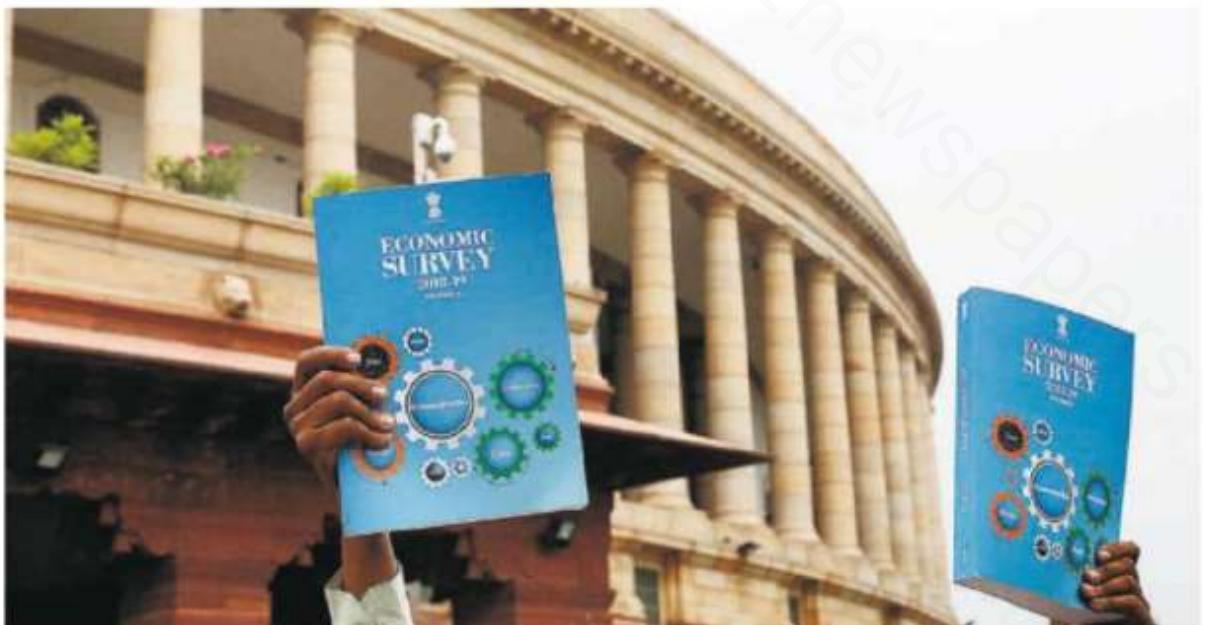
The Survey, delayed this year because of the Lok Sabha election, was expected to address several grave is-

sues that have been plaguing the Indian economy for the last several years. The unmistakable signs of an economic slowdown—most strikingly demonstrated by auto sales data for June 2019, which were the worst in two decades—were an important issue that the Survey was expected to address.

Related to this were the vexatious issues plaguing the Indian statistical system, most notably the key data on national incomes illustrated by the controversial estimates of the gross domestic product (GDP). The expectation that agricultural growth in the current year will likely be half of that in the previous year marked an-

other significant worry. A steep decline in rural incomes caused by a combination of collapsing output prices and stagnant wages added to expectations that the Survey would offer a road map to address this vital question.

Another expectation centred on the prolonged slowdown in private investment, which, for far too long, has been blamed on the disinclination of banks to lend or on the high cost of credit. Related to this was the situation that the Indian financial system—not just banks but also the so-called shadow banks—is currently in, saddled by the burden of non-performing assets. To add to the



**COPIES** of the Economic Survey 2018-19 held up outside Parliament House on July 4

T. NARAYAN/BLOOMBERG

gloom was the escalating multidimensional trade wars unleashed by the Donald Trump administration in the United States that presented a worrying prospect for Indian exports.

In all, Subramanian had enough on his plate before he prepared his maiden Survey. But his performance was disappointing.

#### **CLICHES GALORE**

Cliches abound in the Survey. Managerial lingo, always a poor and fuzzy substitute for macroeconomic logic and rigour, dominates the report spread over three bulky volumes (including a statistical appendix). Thus, we have Subramanian waxing eloquent on how the “sky blue” cover of the Survey has symbolic significance because it marks “an unfettered approach in thinking about the appropriate economic model for India”.

However, in keeping with the overall managerial approach to economics, it simply asserted that the “unfettered” logic would enable the country to “shift gears” to approach the target of making India a \$5 trillion economy for which a sustained annual growth of 8 per cent was necessary. Nowhere in the report is the small matter of how this gear shift may happen or what needs to be done to achieve this target elaborated let alone explained.

There is much irony in this because the Survey itself contains indications of several of the structural problems that the Indian economy now faces.

For instance, private investment, especially in fixed capital formation, has been sliding during the current

**Managerial lingo, a poor substitute for macroeconomic logic and rigour, dominates the report.**

T. NARAYAN/BLOOMBERG



**CHIEF ECONOMIC ADVISER** Krishnamurthy Subramanian at a news conference on the Economic Survey 2018-in New Delhi, on July 4.

decade. Between 2011-12 and 2017-18, private investment in fixed capital formation has declined by a whopping six percentage points of GDP.

Overall capital formation in the Indian economy has also slid by a roughly similar magnitude, which indicates that investment is plagued by structural problems that cannot be attributed merely to an adverse lending environment or to high interest rates.

The obsession with reining in the fiscal deficit, has, meanwhile, ruled out any scope for the government to intervene countercyclically by investing imaginatively in order to a spark a recovery in the investment climate. Instead of frontally addressing the issue of a demand crisis, which is what the decline in agricultural incomes and the failure of private investment in industry indicate, Subramanian regurgitates the familiar argument that India needs to go on the path trod by the East Asian tigers decades ago.

The advocacy of such a path is not only utterly ahistorical but pays no attention to the fact that the world has moved on in a significantly different trajectory since this glib assertion was made more than two decades ago in India.

This Survey marks a significant departure from the exercises of the past. The Economic Survey has generally rested on some model of eco-

nomic rationale. One may disagree with the logic of the articulation, but it was generally accepted that some form of economic reasoning was part of the framework. Subramanian’s Survey is quite different as it exalts vacuousness to a virtue.

Consider this: “We depart from traditional thinking by outlining a growth model that views the economy as being in constant disequilibrium—a virtuous cycle or a vicious cycle. When the economy is in a virtuous cycle, investment, productivity growth, job creation, demand and exports feed into each other and enable animal spirits in the economy to thrive. In contrast, when the economy is in a vicious cycle, moderation in these variables dampen each other and thereby dampen the animal spirits in the economy.” What does one make of this inanity that passes off as a policy response to the grave problems plaguing the Indian economy?

So, Subramanian goes on and on about how investment is the “key driver” and how it needs to be placed on a “self-sustaining virtuous cycle”. He offers a rather strange comparison with China, arguing that growth would occur if only India can get savings and investment on an upswing. This assertion has no basis in logic for several simple reasons.

For one, neither the Asian tigers nor China had a passive state that watched from the sidelines for

private investment to happen; instead, they played an active role by not only investing but by playing an enabling role.

Second, and crucially, these countries had mostly sorted out their major problems of illiteracy, access to health, malnutrition and the other major factors that not only affect quality of life but also have a significant impact on labour productivity. Subramanian's abiding faith in exports—at a time when the international trading climate for exports is the worst in decades—is touching but utterly misplaced. One wonders how he missed the wise words of his doctoral supervisor, Raghuram Rajan, at the University of Chicago, who famously retorted to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Make in India" mantra by calling for "Make for India".

Rajan, the former Reserve Bank of India Governor, had remarked that Modi's call was utterly inappropriate in the context of slack international trade and urged India to focus more on the domestic market to promote manufacturing-led growth.

Throughout the Survey, problems are addressed in a simple-minded fashion. On the weighty issues such as poor access to health care and education, persistent gender biases, sanitation and malnutrition, it has little to offer in terms of direction.

Instead, Subramanian calls for "behavioural change," which he claims were in evidence in Modi's Swachh Bharat Mission, Jan Dhan Yojana and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaigns. He argues that a similar "behavioural change" can lead to success on issues such as gender equality and a march towards "a healthy and beautiful India", apart from bolstering savings and improving tax compliance and credit quality.

The managerial advice to address these persistent social and economic problems is completely new in an Economic Survey. Subramanian devotes an entire chapter to behavioural economics, which has been hyped in recent times in a completely different context in societies completely different from India.

Year	Capital formation in India (percentage of GDP at current market prices)	
	Gross fixed capital formation in private sector	Gross capital formation
2011-12	27.0	39.0
2012-13	26.4	38.7
2013-14	24.2	33.8
2014-15	23.1	33.5
2015-16	21.3	32.1
2016-17	21.4	30.9
2017-18	21.5	32.3

Source: Central Statistical Office  
Note: Based on GDP 2011-12 Series

For instance, the reality with respect to the so-called success of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign is that it rests on the anganwadi and midday meals scheme that are part of the well-regarded Integrated Child Development Services scheme, which has been around for nearly 45 years. Of course, nudging a change in social behaviour can make a difference, but the much more important issue is about the state putting money where its mouth is.

Sadly, Subramanian misses both the historical and social context and the critical role of public policy in furthering social change.

#### DATA AS A PUBLIC GOOD

An apparently innovative suggestion in Subramanian's Survey is the advocacy of a march towards making data a public good that is "of the people, for the people and by the people". While there may be nothing objectionable to this at first glance, the fact that the suggestion comes in the context of the Modi regime's persistently egregious approach to economic data on many counts—the most shocking being the data on GDP and unemployment—marks this out as particularly ironical.

The suggestion comes at a time of growing worries about citizens' private data leaking copiously from government departments. This is enough to indicate that it is an off-hand suggestion without regard to the serious consequences that may lie in store for citizens.

A similar lackadaisical approach

is in evidence with his suggestion to the demographic transition that would result in a higher share of an ageing population in the next few decades. Subramanian urges States to prepare for such a future, but how and with what role for public investment in health care is left open-ended. Instead, he suggests that India ought to prepare for the transition by raising the retirement age in a phased manner. In doing so, he is apparently unaware of one of the defining problems of India today: the rising unemployment among educated youth, both men and women. Of course, he harps on India's "demographic dividend" when millions of young Indians are still asking, "Where is my dividend?"

When Subramanian was appointed CEA, many were surprised because of his relative obscurity among economists. However, to the politically astute, it was evident that he was destined for high office in the Modi regime when he published articles in popular newspapers defending Modi's demonetisation move in 2016. He termed it a "revolutionary" move in the fight against black money and also argued, against the current of mounting evidence, that demonetisation did not hurt the poor.

Throughout the Survey, Subramanian calls for fresh thinking that is free of the prevailing orthodoxy in economics. But he has little to offer except crumbs of advice that are the stuff of management schools. The political right-wing in India has always sought legitimacy in academic realms either by usurping positions in branches such as history and archaeology, but success has largely eluded it in economics.

Even those who are inclined to support the BJP fear its Hindutva tag and only offer outside support. Subramanian, by mouthing a curious mix of swadeshi logic and voodoo economics, but without appearing to hurt neoliberal sentiments, seems to have ticked all the boxes in the Hindutva scheme of things at North Block, which has been declared off-limits to journalists by the Modi regime. □

# Forests over rights

The BJP's proposed amendments to the Forest Act give the Central and State governments untrammelled powers and militate against the hard-won rights of tribal communities. BY T.K. RAJALAKSHMI

A FEW months before the parliamentary election, the Union government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) announced its intention to amend the Indian Forest Act (IFA), ostensibly with a view to protecting and conserving forests and forest produce.

However, the comprehensive amendments, if passed, will result in an over-centralisation of state authority and power over forests and also come into conflict with the Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006, which confers titles and rights to tribal communities and other traditional forest dwellers (OTFDs).

In the proposed amendments, the Centre has arrogated to itself the right to declare any area a reserved forest. Besides, State governments and Forest Settlement Officers (FSOs) are vested with more powers than gram sabhas.

In the section on "bar on accrual of forest rights", the amendments lay down that no civil court shall, after the publication of the notification under Section 4 and up to the date of publication of the notification under Section 20, entertain any suit to establish any right in or over any land or to the forest produce from any land included in the notification published under Section 4.

In the section on conferring rights of pasture or to forest produce,

**TRIBAL PEOPLE** represented by the Shramjeevi Sanghatana protest against the draft of the Indian Forest Act, 2019, in Thane on June 4.

the proposed amendments go a step further than the colonial legislation, where the FSO had the power "not to admit any claim, in whole or in part, unless evidence was provided to him" and he was satisfied that such a claim was within the "carrying capacity of the forest".

A section on "commutation of rights" gives powers to the FSO to decide on the representation of a presenting officer or Divisional Forest Officer whether the exercising of any right, individual or collective, was inconsistent with the conservation of the reserved forest. He would have the power to "acquire such

rights" and commute such rights by making a payment or grant of land to maintain the social organisation of the forest-dwelling communities. A copy of the order would be given to the claimants.

This means that in case a tribal person's or forest dweller's presence is inconsistent with the conservation of the reserved forest, the claim to such forested land, however legitimate, could be set aside. Section 11 empowers the FSO to acquire tribal land and compensate the owner under the provisions of the Land Acquisition Act, 2013.

The amendments empower the



FSO to use the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, in order to acquire and include land in the reserved forests category. A forest tribunal shall hear any appeals and adjudicate on the same.

The amendments do not envisage including the gram sabha in such appellate bodies, leaving much of the decision-making to the forest bureaucracy. The amendments make a pretence of recognising the rights of tribal people and forest dwellers under the Scheduled Tribe and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.

The new Section 22 (A), on the recording of individual and community rights, empowers State governments, in consultation with the Central government, to “acquire such rights” if both governments are satisfied that the exercise of this right—individually and collectively—is inconsistent with the conservation of reserved forests.

While the rights of tribal people and OTFDs stand to be compromised, the State and Central governments will now have the right to allow the leasing out of reserved forest land. An addition to Section 23

allows State governments to lease out and divert forest land only after taking permission from the Central government. Without it, “every lease granted without approval shall be null and void”.

### VILLAGE FORESTS

The amendments provide for the creation of village forests from any forest land or wasteland, which then would be managed by joint forest management committees. These committees would exercise community forest rights but only in “consultation” with, and not needing approval from, gram sabhas and the Forest Department. Under the FRA, the gram sabha’s approval is mandatory.

Under the FRA, village forests cannot come up in areas that are under the claims of the community. Does this mean that the claims of individuals under the FRA would be abrogated under the definition of village forests? In Chapter 4 on “Protected Forests”, a new clause in the proposed amendments gives the Central government the right over a State government to “constitute a protected forest”, including giving directions to State governments to manage contiguous forests in a “landscape approach”. The landscape approach, it is argued, will benefit “local communities”.

The proposed amendments are, in some parts, a virtual repeat of the colonial Act of 1927, with the only change being that they arrogate more powers to the Central and State governments. For example, the titular clause 30 on the “power to issue notification reserving trees” has been tweaked thus: “power to issue notification declaring conservation area, reserving trees...”. Such areas can be declared closed for grazing or for gathering forest produce until the State government decides otherwise. This, in effect, means suspending individual or community rights over those trees. The penalties for violating the clause include eviction of people from those lands and suspension of the rights to pasture and to gather forest produce from forest lands that have been declared pro-

tected. The proposed amendments include new concepts such as “production forests” created for the specific purpose of increasing the production of certain items after considering the “forest productivity and the privileges of local communities”.

### MANAGEMENT OF FORESTS

The amendments also propose to restrict the practice of shifting cultivation and bring part of such areas under “settled cultivation”. The State governments will have sweeping powers to “assume management of forests”, similar to provisions in the 1927 Act. Governments can take over the management of such forests in the public interest to ensure its conservation. Interestingly, the 1927 Act did not use the term “public interest” but basically stated that the government could take over the management of forests if there was “wilful neglect or disobedience” but after taking into consideration objections from the landowner.

In the proposed amendment, the landowners will have no say in the matter. The State government can in the “public interest” issue a notification and take over the management of forests and place them under the control of a Forest Officer.

Entire clauses of the 1927 Act have been retained, including one pertaining to the right of the government to “expropriate” forests in certain cases. Such expropriation would be done for “public purposes” (with public purpose undefined) under the Land Acquisition Act.

### FOREST OFFENCES

The chapter on procedures for dealing with forest offences includes new features that make the punitive measures in the 1927 Act appear lame. Under the proposed Section 52 (3), persons can be arrested without a warrant and the “Forest Officer, Police Officer or Revenue Officer shall be authorised to use reasonable force for seizure and making arrest, as the circumstances warrants so”.

Under Section 66, on “powers to prevent commission of offence”, the amendments give Forest Officers



VIBHAY BIRWATKAR

sweeping powers to “prevent the commission of offence”, which include using “as little force including firearms and do as little injury to person and property...”. It gives the officers, who are deemed to have acted in “good faith”, the benefit of the doubt.

Section 66 (A) gives unfettered rights to Forest Officers to enter and search any place where there is reason to believe that any forest produce, tool, plant, equipment, rope, vehicle or machinery has been used in the commission of a forest offence. The Forest Officer “may” inform the gram sabha or the village panchayat, but it is not obligatory for the officer to do so.

#### **PENAL ACTION FOR ABETMENT**

A new section curiously titled “Attempts and Abetment” in the amendments provides for penal action against those found aiding and abetting the contravention of the Act.

According to the drafters of the amendments, this section is intended to “dissuade political executives to incite masses against the provisions of the Act”. Such a provision was necessary also because “many State governments” had withdrawn cases registered under the IFA of 1927 to draw “political mileage”. Therefore, the new insertion says “such action has to be curbed with a heavy hand because the results are disastrous. Porosity is the root cause of destruction of forest areas.”

#### **'PRIVATE FORESTS'**

In a radical departure, the amendments provide for the creation of “private forests”, or privately owned forests. They also envisage the constitution of a National Forestry Board headed by the Prime Minister with the Chief of the Army Staff as one of the members but completely excluding gram sabhas.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader Brinda Karat was the first political leader to write a public letter to Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Prakash Javadekar expressing concern on the proposed amend-



**A TRIBAL COUPLE** picking out “vippakaya” seeds collected from the forest in the Bhadrachalam area of Telangana.

ments. On June 28, replying to a question by Sushil Kumar Singh in the Lok Sabha highlighting concerns pertaining to the amendments, Javadekar said that there was a need to amend the IFA to bring it on a par with State Forest Acts and the developments over 90 years.

He said the first draft had been prepared by a core drafting committee comprising technical and legal experts and circulated to State and Union Territory governments. According to him, the proposal “was to recognise the rights and role of villagers in managing village forests through the joint forest management committees”. The benefits were in addition to forest rights and occupation of forest land vested in the FRA, he added. He admitted that forest officials had been empowered to use “little force including firearms with appropriate precautions under Section 66”.

#### **TRIBAL PEOPLE'S RIGHTS**

In her letter to Javadekar after his reply, Brinda Karat said the Minister had “played down the extremely repressive measures proposed in the Act”. She said the 91 clauses, including new sections, went beyond what the British dared to do, by militarising forest conservation. The amendments, according to her, criminalised every aspect of tribal life by giving “untrammeled powers to the forest bureaucracy to arrest without warrant and to use arms to implement the law”.

The draft was a “blueprint for

centralisation, commercialisation and criminalisation”, she said, adding that the repeated equating of tribal people with other communities in the draft denied the special status of tribal people in relation to forests.

There is not a single clause that recognised the critical role of the gram sabha in forest conservation or that mandated its consent in any decision pertaining to forests. Brinda Karat also raised jurisdiction issues, stating that it was the domain of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, if at all, to deliberate on the rights of tribal people.

The arrogation of rights to the FSO regarding tribal rights would make tribal people vulnerable to the forest bureaucracy, she wrote. It was also a violation of the FRA to presume that all forest produce belonged to the government.

The Central government had been given overriding powers in many clauses, including decisions pertaining to the “protection and management” of forests and to make rules for shifting cultivation and gathering of forest produce, and declare any forest as conservation forest or community reserve, which was an encroachment on the rights of the States, she wrote.

She also pointed out that there was a long list of prohibited acts under Section 26, ranging from cultivation of forest land to fishing and the rights to pasture and forest produce. In each and every case, the person (tribal) had to show “authorisation”



K.K. MUSTAFAH

**TRIBAL PEOPLE** collecting minor forest produce at Attapady in Kerala's Palakkad district, a file photograph.

from the Forest Officer, she wrote.

Other objectionable features included denying an “evicted” person (tribal) the right to appeal in a higher court; penalising people and entire communities who failed to “report” offences; setting up of infrastructure like “lock up rooms” to implement the Act, which she said was like building “jails” inside forests.

Brinda Karat also said that the amendments were “unacceptable” and needed to be brought in conformity with the FRA and other related laws in order to redress the historical injustices faced by tribal communities that were being perpetuated in modern forms too in the name of development or conservation.

#### EVICTIONS CONTINUE

All these issues, including a February 13 Supreme Court order directing the eviction of unauthorised encroachments in forest lands, were discussed at a two-day consultation by land and forest right groups organised under the broad aegis of the Bhoomi Adhikaar Andolan.

The Supreme Court order was a follow-up on a 2016 order by the apex court based on a petition by a wildlife body alleging encroachments. The Centre did little in the intervening period, which the court pointed out and which land rights groups concurred with. The evictions were stayed following protests from genuine claimants whose claims had been rejected. The hearing is due to take place at the end of July.

At the consultation, Gajanan, a farmer from Madhya Pradesh, said that even though the FRA had been notified, the local Collector and Forest Department officials refused to recognise the rights of tribal people and other forest dwellers. “Neither do they know about the rights of the gram sabha or the FRA itself. The SDM [subdivisional magistrate] says he will find out about the rights of the gram sabha,” he said.

Ulka Mahajan, who has been fighting for the land and forest rights of tribal people in Maharashtra, said that the amendments were targeted at removing the “community rights” conferred under the FRA. They were also required to make land acquisition easier for the industrial corridors and new special economic zones being planned by the Central government, she added.

Bal Krishna Kharwar, a tribal person from Kaimur district in Bihar, told *Frontline* that the Forest Department was harassing villagers in his area, labelling them as “Maoists”. On January 14, he said, the Department bulldozed some 70 houses.

He added that some three lakh families in 167 villages in the district were dependent on forest produce such as mahua tendu and other herbs and shrubs. “Some 80 per cent of the population is tribal. The landed castes want us out,” he said.

In Sonabhadra in Uttar Pradesh, people protested when their claims and titles were rejected. Many were sent to jail. In Bailadila in Chhattisgarh,

garh, an area that comes under the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act, NMDC Ltd was planning to give iron ore mining (developing) rights to a big industrialist after getting consent from what the local people found out was a fake gram sabha in 2014.

“We got the documents through the Right to Information and matched the signatories of the gram sabha that had given assent for the mining and found the name of only one panchayat. The names of former or existing sarpanches of the panchayats concerned were not there,” Mangal Kunjam, a local journalist from the region, told *Frontline*.

In the first week of June, the affected villages held a five-day protest in Kirandul against mining in their areas. The newly elected Congress government has decided to investigate the allegations of fake consent and put on hold activities such as cutting of trees for the project.

In a letter to Chief Ministers, former CPI(M) Lok Sabha members Hannan Mollah and Jitendra Choudhary, the activist Medha Patkar and several others wrote that the interpretation of the FRA in the petition before the Supreme Court (the writ argued that rejection of claims had to lead to evictions) was erroneous.

They wrote that the implementation of the Act was uneven and in many parts of the country, eligible forest dwellers had either not filed claims or not pursued the forest rights to which they were entitled. The performance of State governments with regard to recognising community forest resource rights, including those of single women, was “abysmal and flawed”, they wrote. They urged the Chief Ministers to persuade the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs to seek the recall of all Supreme Court orders pertaining to the eviction of tribal people.

The amendments to the IFA, if passed, will only be a further extension of the harassment being faced by the most marginalised sections, who had until now received some protection of their rights under the FRA of 2006. □

# Pointless punishment

Madhya Pradesh proposes changes to the law against cow slaughter in an attempt to stop lynching, but sections of the State's ruling Congress feel that its provisions are too soft. BY ANANDO BHAKTO

MADHYA PRADESH is on its way to becoming the first State in India to introduce a law against lynching. The Cabinet, led by Chief Minister Kamal Nath, has proposed an amendment to the existing law against cow slaughter to deal with the recent spike in lynchings. The amendment, if ratified by the State's Assembly, will equip the existing law with provisions to combat and contain mob violence. These include a jail term of six months to three years, according to sources in the Madhya Pradesh government. The legislation is likely to be tabled in the ongoing monsoon session of the Assembly, which started on July 8.

There have been 128 cases of mob violence since 2011, leaving 47 dead and 305 severely injured. According to the findings of IndiaSpend, a non-profit organisation that analyses the country's policy decisions, 97 per cent of the violence over bovine issues took place after the National Democratic Alliance led by Narendra Modi came to power in May 2014; 32 of 63 cases took place in States ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

In 2019, there have been five lynchings so far. The lynchings, which more often than not target religious and caste minorities, appear all the more grave amid the government's evident lack of intent to end the perpetrators' sense of impunity. The opposition, too, has not shown

the political will to resist the trend or to talk about it with the seriousness it deserves. BJP lawmakers have repeatedly issued statements virtually endorsing the emerging culture of cow vigilantism, with little or no condemnation of the Hindu right wing's demonising of minorities and the way false allegations of cow smuggling and slaughter are used to trigger an organised backlash.

In June 2018, four suspects were arrested in Godda district of Jharkhand after the lynching of two Muslim men. The BJP MP from Godda, Nishikant Dubey, vowed to provide legal aid to the suspects. "To people who can't fight their case, the government provides legal aid. And since I am their MP, I, in my capacity, will take care of every single expense that they will incur in fighting

their case from the lower court to the Supreme Court," he was quoted by a news channel as saying. The following month, Union Minister Jayant Sinha met and garlanded eight men who had been convicted by a trial court in the lynching of a Muslim man, Alimuddin Ansari, in Ramgarh, Jharkhand, and were released on bail by the High Court.

#### NATIONAL SECURITY ACT INVOKED

The Congress has been more preoccupied with its own electoral prospects than with resisting this dangerous trend. Its opposition to Hindu right-wing forces has been muted. Ahead of the general election, it signalled that it was second to none when it came to enforcing the ban on cow slaughter. In February, the Madhya Pradesh government

**A PROTEST** against lynchings, at the historical Iqbal Maidan after the Friday namaz in Bhopal on June 28.



decided to invoke the National Security Act against three men accused of killing a cow at Khandwa.

In July 2018, the Supreme Court issued a strong condemnation of the rise in vigilantism in India. A bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra described such incidents as “horrendous acts of mobocracy” and directed Parliament to enact a new law with provisions for deterrent punishment for offenders. In September 2018, the court sought reports from several States indicating whether they had complied with its verdict. The apex court also instructed the Centre to run an awareness campaign on television, radio and electronic and print media against lynching and cow vigilantism and subsequently questioned the government on the progress made on that front.

But the violence continued unabated. On June 18, three weeks after Modi returned to power with an even more resounding mandate than the one in 2014, a 24-year-old man, Tabrez Ansari, was tied to a pole and thrashed with sticks by a mob in Jharkhand’s Seraikela Kharsawan district. He later died of his injuries. Reports of Muslim men being forced to chant *Jai Shri Ram* and being beaten up for their refusal to do so have littered newspaper pages and the social media in the past few months.



A.M. FARUQUI

This is the context of the proposed amendment in Madhya Pradesh. However, sources told *Frontline* that there were murmurs within the State Congress over the “mildness of the provision”. The punishment of six months to three years for participating in mob hate crimes was not enough to deter the vigilantes, said a source in the State Congress. Besides, there was no effort to fast-track trials in such cases. The proposed amendment was not enough to reassure the State’s minorities and would only backfire on the Congress, the source said.

Kamal Nath was reportedly questioned on the utility of the latest exercise in a recent meeting with some party legislators. “Several legislators told the Chief Minister that they were disappointed with the proposed amendment, which, in their mind, would do little to contain mob violence. They told him that only a stringent law with provisions of life imprisonment could abate the rising graph of such crimes across the country. Arif Masood, MLA from Bhopal Madhya constituency, was vocal about it. The Chief Minister listened to everyone patiently but did not make any comment,” said a source in the State government.

#### **DEMANDS IN PARLIAMENT**

The demand for a law against lynching came up in the Rajya Sabha in July 2018. Lok Sabha MPs demanded that such killings be probed by a Supreme Court judge. Mallikarjun Kharge, the then leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha, pointed out that lynchings had assumed ominous dimensions. Rajnath Singh, who was Home Minister then, said in response to opposition questions that the government had set up a high-level panel headed by Union Home Secretary Rajiv Gauba to formulate appropriate measures to deal with lynchings.

A year has passed but not much has happened.

Manipur is the only State so far to come up with some path-breaking initiatives. It has passed a law against lynching that covers many forms of hate crimes: “any act or series of acts

of violence or aiding, abetting such act/acts thereof, whether spontaneous or planned, by a mob on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, language, dietary practices, sexual orientation, political affiliation, ethnicity or any other related grounds”. This law also penalises dereliction of duty by public officials who fail to protect vulnerable sections. It lays down that if “any police officer directly in charge of maintaining law and order in an area, omits to exercise lawful authority vested in them under the law, without reasonable cause, and thereby fails to prevent lynching shall be guilty of dereliction of duty” and will be liable “to punishment of imprisonment of one year, which may extend to three years, and with fine that may extend to fifty thousand rupees”.

Jharkhand, which has attracted notoriety with a spate of lynchings, is yet to come out with a separate law to deal with the crime. When this reporter asked Ajay Kumar, media adviser to Chief Minister Raghubar Das, whether any law against lynching was being considered, he directed the question to Home Secretary Sukhdev Singh. He himself would only say that an amendment had been made to an existing law to cover mob violence. Sukhdev Singh was unavailable for comment.

Maharashtra, where five persons were lynched in Dhule district in July 2018, has cleared the decks for compensating families of lynching victims to the tune of Rs.2,00,000 to Rs.3,00,000 and even Rs.10,00,000 in some cases.

On July 2, there was a massive congregation of members of minority communities at the martyrs’ memorial in Malegaon. In response to a call given by Jamiat Ulema, a non-governmental organisation, around one lakh Muslims accompanied by a large number of people from different social and religious backgrounds gathered at the historic site. This was essentially the first rally to draw attention to the need for a separate law to curb lynchings and ensure meticulous prosecution leading to conviction. □

# Victim as accused

A magisterial court in Rajasthan takes cognisance of the State police's charge sheet of December 2018 that names the Haryana dairy farmer Pehlu Khan, who was lynched in 2017 by cow vigilantes at Behror in Alwar district, as an accused in the case. BY T.K. RAJALAKSHMI

IN April 2017, five dairy farmers from Mewat in Haryana were set upon by cattle vigilantes on the Jaipur-Delhi highway at Behror in Alwar district on the pretext that they were transporting cattle for slaughter. The assault was video-graphed by someone in the crowd. One of the farmers, Pehlu Khan, died following the assault ("Vigilante on the prowl, *Frontline*, May 12, 2017). This was the second case of lynch-mob justice after the 2015 incident involving a 52-year-old Mohammed Akhlaq, who was beaten to death in Dadri district in Uttar Pradesh on suspicion of cow slaughter. National outrage erupted, laying the blame on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government at the Centre for creating the polarised atmosphere and for giving vigilantism in the name of protecting the cow a free rein. Many such incidents involving assault and murder by self-styled gau rakshaks, or cow vigilantes, have occurred since then, mostly in BJP-ruled States.

As news of the lynching of Pehlu Khan spread, the police filed cases against the accused, some of whom they nabbed with the help of the videos available. They also slapped cases against Pehlu Khan and his sons of illegally transporting cattle for sale outside the State, a charge that the family has denied.

Pehlu Khan was a resident of Jaisinghpur village in Nuh district in Haryana, and like any other farmer and dairy owner, he bred livestock



**PEHLU KHAN** at a private hospital immediately after the incident.

for milch purposes. Pehlu Khan succumbed to his injuries in hospital. In his dying declaration to the police, he named six persons as having taken part in the attack. The State police did not find any evidence of this, and all of them were given a "clean chit". Another dairy farmer, Azmat Khan, suffered injuries to his head and limbs, treatment for which continued long after the incident. The police filed cases against Pehlu Khan and his sons on the basis of allegations made by the attackers.

Pehlu Khan's sons had explained to the police, just as they had explained to their attackers, that they

had legitimate papers for the purchase of the four animals from a cattle fair in Jaipur. Livestock owners in States where agriculture and animal husbandry are predominant occupations make frequent visits to such cattle fairs where the sale and purchase of livestock is freely transacted.

**A COMMUNITY UNDER STRESS**  
His murder drew the ire of farmer organisations such as the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), which raised the issue of the lynching vociferously as it felt that the agrarian community was already under severe stress and

such incidents had the potential to divide people. As the family lost its breadwinner, the AIKS also helped the family monetarily.

In the December 2018 Rajasthan Assembly elections, the Congress unseated the BJP and formed the government. Ashok Gehlot, who took charge as Chief Minister, did not order a fresh investigation into the case, neither did he do anything about the charge sheet filed in December 2018 that named Pehlu Khan and three others as accused under Sections 5, 8 and 9 of the Rajasthan Bovine Animal (Prohibition of Slaughter and Regulation of Temporary Migration or Export) Act, 1995.

While Section 5 prohibits “the export of bovine animal for the purpose of slaughter” and regulates the “temporary migration or export for other purposes”, Section 8 pertains to penalties for violating provisions of Section 5, and Section 9 pertains to punishment for causing hurt to the animals. The stringent regulations involving the transportation of animals, especially the cow and its progeny, and the various permits associated with them were introduced by BJP-led governments.

The Act was enacted in 1995 by the BJP stalwart Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, who was well into his third term as Chief Minister. It was felt that the existing law, the Rajasthan Preservation of Certain Animals Act, 1950, was not adequate to prevent the intentional killing of the cow and its progeny. In 2018, the BJP government led by Vasundhara Raje made amendments to the Act that give the authorities more power to make arrests and seize vehicles used in the illegal transportation of the cow and its progeny.

The charge sheet against Pehlu Khan mentions that “the accused Pehlu Khan died on April 3, 2017”. The Behror magisterial court took cognisance of the charge sheet on May 29, 2019.

Asad Hyat Khan, an advocate who has been helping Pehlu Khan’s family in the cases, said two applications were filed in the Alwar Sessions Court demanding that the extrajudi-

cial confession made by the prime accused to a television channel be considered as evidence and that the investigation against the six persons named by Pehlu Khan be reopened. “All six persons were given a clean chit by the CB-CID [Crime Branch-Crime Investigation Department]. Pehlu Khan’s dying declaration was the basis for the first information report [FIR],” he told *Frontline*. Four others persons, including two sons of Pehlu Khan, had also named the six persons as having led the assault and instigated others. The two applications were expected to come up on July 10 in the Sessions Court in Alwar.

In March 2019, the Ashok Gehlot government organised a gau raksha sammelan, or cow protection con-

vention, where he assured the owners of cow shelters that he would increase the amount of grant given to them. The grant rates were hiked the same month. The Congress government initiated new measures for cow protection and preservation under the *Gopalan department*, a department created by the previous BJP government.

The initiatives introduced under the *Gopalan department* early this year were seen as steps taken with an eye on the Lok Sabha election in May. It is another matter that despite the soft Hindutva policies of the Congress government, the BJP won all 25 Lok Sabha seats.

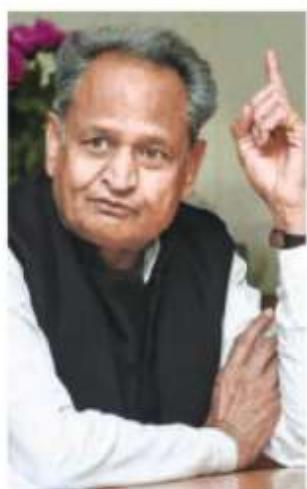
#### **‘MOTIVATED CASE’**

Faced with a barrage of criticism regarding the inclusion of Pehlu Khan’s name in the charge sheet, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot gave an assurance that the government would reinvestigate the case if discrepancies were found. But it is not a question of discrepancies alone. In a strongly worded statement, the People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) said the case was a “motivated one” from the beginning and that the gau rakshaks and the police authorities had a pattern in these murders where the victims and the survivors of the violence were “criminalised and defamed by the killers as cow smugglers”.

The PUCL statement pointed out that on the day of the incident “the two vehicles had three dairy farmers and two of Pehlu’s sons. They were carrying the ‘Ravanna’, the acknowledgement receipt, of the Jaipur Nagar Nigam [the municipal body].” Pehlu Khan had bought two cows for Rs.45,000 and Azmat Khan had purchased another two for Rs.75,000, mainly milch cattle. The PUCL had insisted that the police should have taken cognisance of their past milk sale records before booking them.

It said that there were seven lynching-related deaths between 2015 and 2018 and five of them took place in 2017. “The present government did not bother to inquire into these false cases or present a strong prosecution

Chief Minister  
Ashok Gehlot did  
not order  
a fresh  
investigation  
into the case  
or do anything  
about the  
charge sheet.



SHAHBAZ KHAN/PTI



SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

**IRSHAD KHAN** (left), Pehlu Khan's son who is named in the charge sheet, with his brothers at their residence at Jaisinghpur village in Nuh, Haryana, in June 2017.

in the FIR number 255/2019 or in any of the lynchings that took place since 2015," the PUCL statement said. The State government "must get the prosecution to move an application and withdraw the charge sheet under Sections 5, 8 and 9 of the Rajasthan Bovine law for alleged smuggling and cruelty against the cows", it said. It pointed out that 11 other dairy farmers from Mewat had also been harassed by cow vigilantes, sent to jail and had their cattle seized.

#### COW POLITICS

Ever since the BJP assumed power at the Centre in 2014, protection of the cow emerged as a major thrust of the politico-cultural discourse. Around the same time, several bovine protection laws were amended and made so stringent that even the sale of a camel outside the State was proscribed in Rajasthan. The camel was made the State animal in 2014, and in 2015, the government enacted the Rajasthan Camel (Prohibition of Slaughter and Regulation of Tem-

porary Migration or Export) Bill, 2015, which virtually clamped down on the sale of the animal outside the State.

The sale and transport of cattle became a regular nightmare for dairy owners and farmers, who are caught between the restrictions imposed by law and the terror of vigilante groups. Mob rule and lynching became regular features, with an escalation in the incidents where members of the minority community were the victims. In July 2018, Rakbar Khan, also from Mewat, was lynched by cow vigilantes in Alwar, where he had purchased a few milch cows ("Lynch mob again", *Frontline*, August 31, 2018). Alwar became a district synonymous with lynching incidents though the rule of the mob was not confined to Rajasthan.

The latest lynching episode was on June 17 this year when a 24-year-old man, Tabrez Ansari, who was returning home in Saraikela Kharsawan district in Jharkhand, was forced to utter *Jai Shri Ram* and

*Jai Hanuman* by a mob, who beat him up after accusing him of stealing a bike. Ansari succumbed to his injuries on June 21. This was the 14th such incident in Jharkhand, reports factchecker.in, a website that tracks incidents of hate crime.

In July 2018, horrified by a spate of such incidents, the Supreme Court issued a set of guidelines, holding that "horrendous acts of mobocracy" cannot be allowed to overrun the law of the land. It asked the Centre to come up with a law directing State governments and Union Territories to put measures in place to deal with cow vigilantism and mob lynching. Such incidents continue to occur with impunity despite the highest court of the land taking serious cognisance of them. The Jharkhand Food Minister called it a stray incident, but statistics show that more than a dozen such incidents have taken place in the State. What the political class, especially the BJP and its allies, does not realise is that given the reach of social media, such incidents are no longer "stray incidents" but have the potential to sow suspicion and drive deep social wedges between communities. □

# Autonomy under threat

The Uttar Pradesh Private Universities Ordinance to bring “uniformity” in higher education may have run into rough weather, but the State government proposes to table a Bill that could undermine the academic and administrative autonomy of private universities. BY PURNIMA S. TRIPATHI

UTTAR PRADESH, especially the National Capital Region area adjoining the National Capital Territory, has emerged as a hub of higher educational institutions in the last decade. As many as 27 private universities have been established since State government brought in policy changes to invite private participation in the field of higher education. Each university was set up with its own Act, which was ratified by the State Assembly.

The Yogi Adityanath government recently decided to bring in an umbrella legislation to control all these universities, as well as those in the pipeline, with the intention of having tighter control over their academic environment and administrative functioning. The Cabinet approved a draft ordinance to this

effect on June 18. The ordinance, called the U.P. Private Universities Ordinance was announced at a press conference in Lucknow the same evening, even before it had received the Governor’s assent.

Briefing the media, the government’s spokesperson, Siddharth Nath Singh, said the ordinance was brought to regulate private universities in the State in order to secure the future of students. He said the government had made some new laws to improve the quality of the education in these universities. Some of these universities fail to give degrees at the last moment, he added. The new ordinance will have a say on the fee structure, teachers’ appointments and other matters relating to the management of these universities.

There are around 30-32 new rules for these private universities, including keeping an endowment amount of Rs.5 crore with the government for any lapses, Siddharth Nath Singh said. Besides, the new law will make it compulsory for 75 per cent of the teachers to be appointed on a permanent basis and ensure that these appointments are made in a transparent manner.

The new law has fixed the extent of land that would be needed for the setting up of universities: 20 acres in urban areas and 50 acres in rural areas. The ordinance also provides for reservation of 10 per cent of the seats, with 50 per cent of fees, for economically weaker sections. It will give the State government the power to derecognise any university that is found violating the rules or indul-



**SHARDA UNIVERSITY**, one of the prominent private universities in Uttar Pradesh.



### **AMITY UNIVERSITY, NOIDA.**

ging in gross misuse of funds or frauds. The Uttar Pradesh State Higher Education Board was made the nodal agency to implement and regulate the provisions of the new law and take action if necessary.

#### **CHECK ON 'ANTI-NATIONAL ACTIVITIES'**

But what actually made everyone sit up and take note was the provision that each university had to give an undertaking against indulging in, associating with or allowing any anti-national activities on its premises. The proposed law gives the State government the power to revoke a university's registration if it is found lacking on this parameter. The proposed law also requires universities to give an undertaking that they will "preserve the secular, democratic fabric and aspire for universal brotherhood and tolerance" and promote the ethos of national integrity among students.

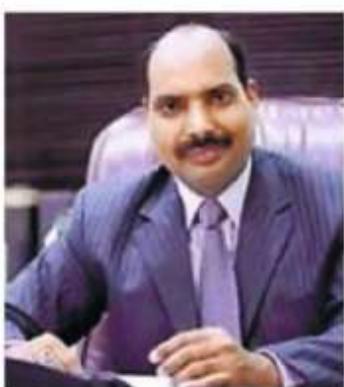
Since there was much confusion on this aspect, State Minister for Higher and Secondary Education Dinesh Sharma, who is also the Deputy Chief Minister, clarified on June 19 that the State government had received complaints of "anti-national activities" at some universities that could cause a "disturbance" in the State. "Anything that harms the unity and integrity of the country will not be allowed. We have come to unite the country and are committed

to checking such activities," he said.

Reacting to this announcement, the U.P. Private Universities Association said that while the overall intention of the ordinance was laudable, there was no need for it as



**BALVINDER SHUKLA**, Vice Chancellor of Amity University.



**Y.K. GUPTA**, pro-chancellor of Sharda University.

there were sufficient laws to check unlawful activities taking place anywhere in the State, let alone on university campuses.

Pankaj Agrawal, secretary of the association, said in a statement: "Why would any university let its campus be used for anti-national activities? We would never let our educational institutions to be used for anti-national activities. We promote strong values among students. The government, in fact, should incorporate nationalism among students in the curriculum from early school days." Agrawal is also the chancellor of Shri Ramswaroop Memorial University, Lucknow. He said: "We have already incorporated these points in the constitution of our university and abide by it."

Balvinder Shukla, Vice Chancellor of Amity University, another prominent private university in U.P., said: "There have been no instances of anti-national activity on our campus. We have a strong value system and we celebrate Republic Day and Independence Day with zeal. We have aligned our curriculum that gives emphasis to nation and character building. We teach our students to respect the law of the land," she said in a statement.

Y.K. Gupta, pro-chancellor of Sharda University, another prominent private university in the State, said: "There are already enough laws to control such activities if needed. Laws to curb unlawful or anti-national activities which apply to all citizens apply to us also in the campuses. So where is the need for having a separate law for universities."

In view of such wide-ranging condemnation of the proposed law, Governor Ram Naik refused to sign the ordinance. Senior U.P. government officials told *Frontline* that the Governor had refused consent on the grounds that there was no cause for urgency to bring in an ordinance since the same Cabinet that had approved the ordinance had also approved convening the Assembly session from July 18. "With only a month to go for the Assembly session, an ordinance cannot be promulgated. Besides, the Governor also

raised objection to the fact that the draft ordinance did not have the inputs from the Finance and Legal Departments," senior officials said.

In view of such a categorical rejection of the ordinance, the U.P. government has since decided to move a Bill instead. "Yes, we have decided not to bring the ordinance and will instead table a Bill in the next session of the Assembly. No ordinance should be ideally promulgated once the State legislature has been convened," Dinesh Sharma told the media in Lucknow on July 4.

Experts in the field of higher education opined that the Bill if enacted into a law would seriously undermine the academic and administrative autonomy of private universities. The provisions of the proposed Bill are such that the universities will be reduced to becoming an adjunct of the government, completely divested of their autonomy.

The representatives of many private universities told *Frontline* that the government appeared to be in a tearing hurry to bring in a "one size fits all" policy, which went against the grain of academic freedom. A strongly worded note on the proposed law submitted by Sharda University to the government stated: "Once a university has been established, the role of the government should be that of a facilitator, ensuring autonomy of institutions. Universities aspiring to achieve excellence need a free, liberal and facilitative environment. Distrust against private universities may result in a situation wherein they will not be in a position to drive any academic agenda driven by innovation and creativity."

The note detailed how the current statutes that govern private universities in the State are duly



**GOVERNOR RAM NAIK.** Senior officials said that one reason he did not sign the ordinance was the fact that it did not have the inputs from the Finance and Legal Departments.

recognised by the University Grants Commission and approved by the State legislature. The note added: "The proposed new law robs the universities of their freedom and autonomy, destroys the free spirit, and academic atmosphere of the campuses and leaves them wholly exposed to bureaucratic control, interference and inspector raj."

The note also specified that private promoters had ventured into the field of higher education in Uttar Pradesh a decade ago only on account of the "clear and unequivocal understanding, assurance and promise given by the State government that the sponsoring body shall have the maximum autonomy and freedom in the matter of administrating and managing the educational institutions and the State government shall not interfere or meddle in the academic, administrative and managerial affairs of the

university". The note stated that over the years, the universities had made heavy financial commitments on account of such assurances and had done well, in fact better than public-funded institutions. To go back on these assurances and bring in government control at each step, whether academic, administrative or managerial, would amount to "a blatant breach of trust and an antithesis of the ideals and objectives with which they were allowed a decade ago".

Interestingly, most of the university representatives who spoke to *Frontline* agreed with the opinions expressed in the Sharda University note but refrained from going on record. "If these universities back out or shift base because of the stifling environment here, can you imagine the plight of the students? How many new universities has the U.P. government established in the last decade?" asked an Amity University official.

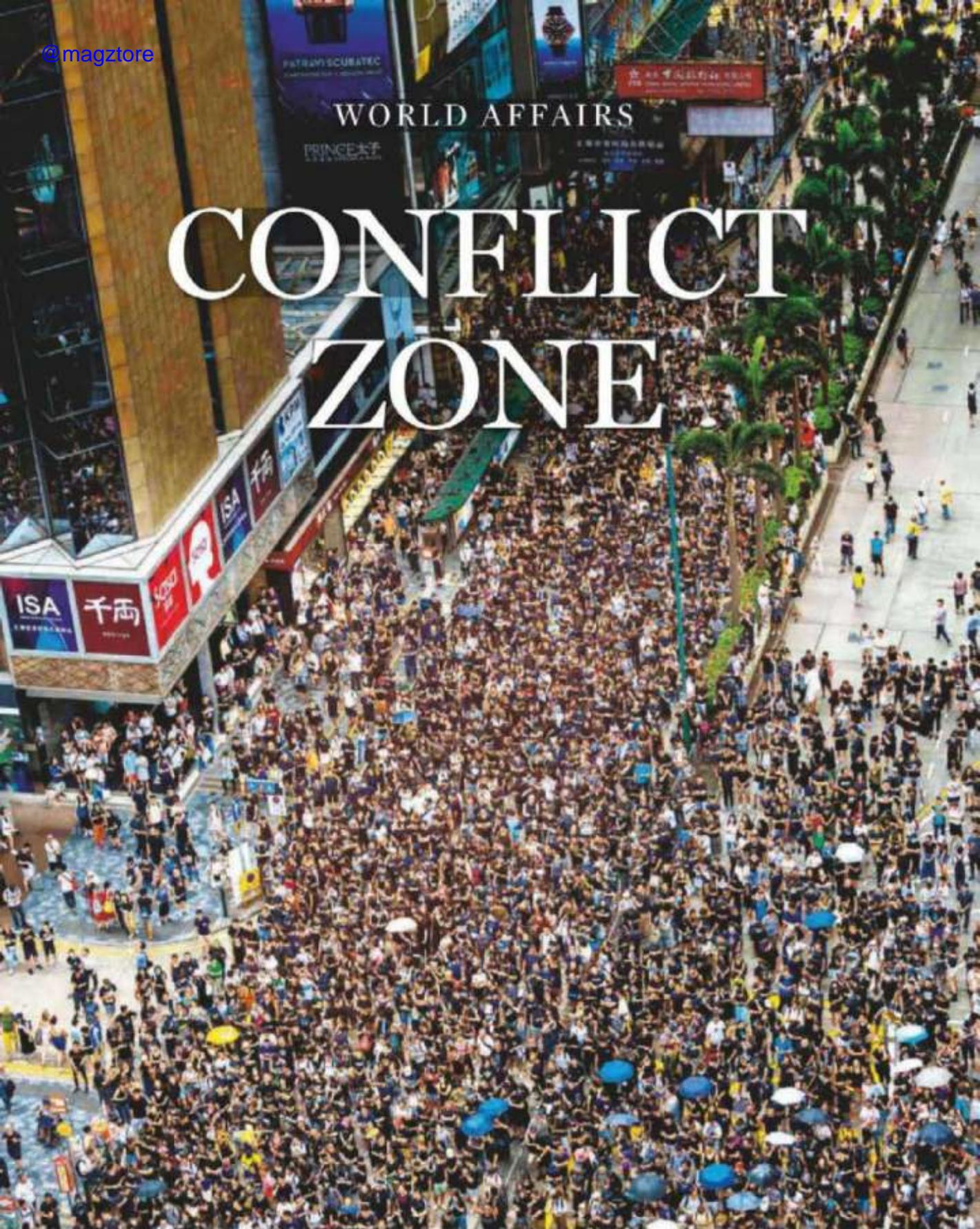
This strong reaction from the private universities comes in view of the fact that the proposed law seeks to control not only admission criteria, recruitment of teachers, curriculum, fee structure, and so on, but academic content as well. It gives the State government overriding powers in the form of a regulatory authority, completely controlled by serving government officials, who will inspect these universities once a year and can recommend action without giving the university any chance to reply. "This goes against the very principle of natural justice," said a senior functionary of Sharda University. Senior State government officials, however, appeared determined to go ahead with the proposed legislation, saying the government was firm on bringing "uniformity" in the standard of higher education.

Amidst the paranoia about "one nation one vote" and "one nation one ration", the Uttar Pradesh government has gone a step further and come up with "one State, one education". Good sense should prevail, and the State government should leave education to academics and not let bureaucrats meddle with it. □

The proposed law seeks to control not only admission criteria, recruitment of teachers, curriculum, fee structure, and so on, but academic content as well.

WORLD AFFAIRS

# CONFLICT ZONE



BILLY H.C. KWOK/BETTY IMAGES

**PROTESTERS MARCH** towards the West Kowloon railway station, Hong Kong, on July 7 calling for the complete withdrawal of a controversial extradition Bill.

# Massive street protests against an “extradition Bill” rock Hong Kong, forcing the government of China’s Special Administrative Region to suspend its tabling in the Legislative Council.

BY JOHN CHERIAN



BOBBY YIP/REUTERS

**HONG KONG CHIEF EXECUTIVE CARRIE LAM** (left) with Chinese President Xi Jinping. A file photograph.

THE UNPRECEDENTED SCENES OF MASS protests in Hong Kong, and their timing, have not gone unnoticed in the international community. The “umbrella protests” in Hong Kong, which, in many ways, resembled the “colour protests” in countries such as Georgia and Ukraine, occurred at a time when China was facing off with the United States over a host of issues. The “trade war” between the two was poised at a delicate stage.

The protests also coincided with the G20 meeting in Osaka, Japan. The protest leaders had petitioned the G20 leaders to bring up the issue in their meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Among the G20 countries, only India and Indonesia refused to accept the petition from the Hong Kong protesters. U.S. President Donald Trump and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe were among the leaders who brought up the issue during their meetings with President Xi on the sidelines of the G20 summit.

The so-called Umbrella Movement, which had its origins in the street protests of 2014, claims to champion the cause of democracy in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. The movement is mostly student-led, although the recent protests saw the participation of a cross section of society. The sheer

numbers this time told its own story. Many Hong Kongers actually seemed to be swayed by the propaganda that the freedoms guaranteed to them under the “Basic Law” after the British left in 1997 were under threat.

Other protesters could have been motivated by the growing disparity and divide between the rich and the poor in Hong Kong. In the past, the mainland was poor and Hong Kong was rich. This is no longer the case. Guangzhou and Shenzhen have recently surpassed Hong Kong in gross domestic product. But the people in the former British colony still seem to have a superiority complex *vis-a-vis* the people from the mainland. They forget that Hong Kong had prospered mainly because it was a gateway to China until the country was opened up by Deng Xiaoping.

The recent protests began after the Hong Kong government’s decision to table a “fugitive offenders’ extradition” Bill in the legislature that would have allowed the extradition of people involved in serious economic and criminal offences from Hong Kong. Many Chinese nationals and foreigners seek refuge in Hong Kong after committing serious economic and other crimes on the mainland and elsewhere. The protesters claimed that the proposed “fugitive Bill” would put people residing in Hong Kong, locals as well as foreigners, at risk, besides

## 2014 protests

THE protests in 2014 centred around the demands for Western-style elections and “true universal suffrage”. They brought the city to a virtual halt for almost two months. The protesters had claimed at the time that Beijing had reneged on its commitment to grant the residents of Hong Kong open elections by 2017. After the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) was returned to Chinese control in 1997, it has been governed under the “one country, two systems” model. Under this framework, Beijing remains in charge of defence and foreign policy while Hong Kong enjoys limited self-governance and civil liberties. The judiciary in Hong Kong has maintained its independence, and the media there is robust.

Beijing did not give in to the demands of the protesters for the direct election for the office of the Chief Executive. If the demand had been conceded, even those demanding a reframing of relations with Beijing would have been allowed to run. Beijing agreed to the holding of elections by 2017 but on its own terms. Only two out of the three carefully vetted “nation-loving” candidates would be allowed to run for the top post of Chief Executive. A 1,200-member Electoral Committee representing citizens, major corporations and “functional constituencies” such as labour organisations and teachers’ unions chose the Chief Executive of the SAR.

Before the handover in 1997, the Governor of Hong Kong was directly appointed from London. Hong Kong residents are allowed to choose half of the representatives to the Legislative Council. Many of the legislators elected to the council are so-called pro-democracy activists and are not afraid to openly criticise the government of China.

*John Cherian*

eroding aspects of the “Basic Law”. They claimed that the legal system on the mainland could not be trusted to provide even the basic standards of judicial fairness.

The protests peaked in the last week of June and went out of control on July 1. On that day, a radical fringe consisting mainly of students went on the rampage and broke into the premises of the Hong Kong Legislative Assembly, known as Legco. July 1 is a public holiday known as “Establishment Day” in Hong Kong. It was the date on which the United Kingdom handed over the colony back to China. Windows were smashed, rooms were ransacked and anti-China graffiti was plastered on the walls of the Legislative Assembly. The violent demonstrators hung the colony’s British-era colonial flag after painting over an emblem displayed prominently in the

Assembly chambers that states that Hong Kong is an integral part of the People’s Republic of China.

Church leaders, lawyers and student groups had joined in the chorus against the “extradition Bill”. But the violence triggered by a section of the protesters and the storming of the Assembly seems to have caused serious apprehensions in the ranks of the protesters. The Hong Kong authorities have given the protesters a long rope, as they have done in the past. There have been comparatively few arrests so far. There is a realisation among the people that Hong Kong’s status as a key global economic hub could be jeopardised if the protests are allowed to continue.

### WESTERN SUPPORT

The Hong Kong street protests, despite taking a violent turn, have been supported by key Western governments. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo along with his British and German counterparts openly criticised the “extradition law”. Jeremy Hunt, the British Foreign Secretary, warned China of “serious consequences” if Beijing breached the “legally binding agreement” it had signed with the U.K. The Chinese Foreign Ministry retaliated immediately by accusing the U.K. of continuing to have a “colonial hangover”. It reminded the U.K. Foreign Secretary that China had implemented all aspects of the agreement with the U.K. leading to the handover of Hong Kong. “I need to re-emphasise that Hong Kong has now returned to its motherland,” the Chinese government spokesperson said. “The rights and obligations returned to the British side under the declaration have all been implemented. The U.K. at every turn considers itself a guardian; it is a delusion.”

China’s ambassador to the U.K., Liu Xiaoming, was more forthright in his criticism. He accused Hunt of interfering in Hong Kong’s affairs and supporting “violent demonstrators”. Liu said that the U.K. should “show respect” and keep its hands off “the semi-autonomous territory”. Hunt is in the race for the leadership of the Conservative Party. His opponent is Boris Johnson. Both of them have staked extreme right-wing positions on international issues and hark back to the glories of the U.K.’s imperial age.

Chris Patten, the last British Governor of Hong Kong, went to the extent of saying that Beijing was reneging on its promise to the people of Hong Kong by introducing a new extradition Bill. “It is a proposal, or a set of proposals which strikes a blow against the rule of law, against Hong Kong’s stability and security, against Hong Kong’s position as a great international trading hub,” Patten claimed in a statement. Representatives of 11 European Union nations also met with Carrie Lam, Hong Kong’s Chief Executive, to register their protests on the proposed changes.

Carrie Lam has been stressing all the while that the new Bill was being tabled with the sole purpose of plugging a legal loophole that is being exploited by criminals. A recent incident that caused a big outcry in Hong Kong involved a Hong Kong resident killing his pregnant girl-



KYLE LAM/BLOOMBERG

**AT A DEMONSTRATION** with umbrellas in the Tsim Sha Tsui district of Hong Kong on July 7.

friend in Taiwan. As there is no extradition agreement with Taiwan, the Hong Kong government could not extradite the accused to the country to face trial for manslaughter, despite the requests of the authorities.

#### SAFEGUARDS IN THE BILL

There are enough safeguards in the Bill that the Hong Kong government is proposing that would prevent the extradition of any person who is at risk of conviction in the mainland on the grounds of his religious or political orientation. Under the provisions of the Bill, any person who faces torture or the death penalty will not be extradited from Hong Kong. For that matter, Hong Kong has signed mutual extradition treaties with 20 other countries, including the U.S., U.K., Canada and neighbouring countries such as the Philippines and Singapore.

Simon Young, a professor of law at the University of Hong Kong, told *South China Morning Post* that the proposed changes in the extradition laws would strengthen cooperation with Macau and Taiwan in combating commercial and financial crime. The Chinese government has said that it has played no role in Hong Kong's decision to amend its extradition laws. At the same time, it has indicated its strong support for the move, strongly criticising the "actions and words" of some countries pertaining to the internal matters of Hong Kong.

Carrie Lam has consistently been denying the accusation that Beijing played a role in the drafting of the new

legislation. She emphasised that the revision was necessary to better uphold the law and fulfil international commitments. The amendments would cover around 37 offences, including those related to fraud and other white-collar crimes. Under the proposed amendments, only China's highest court and top prosecutor will be allowed to file an extradition request.

The protesters' main demands—the withdrawal of the extradition Bill and the resignation of Carrie Lam—have not been taken seriously by the authorities. The Chief Executive has said that her government will stay the course, though it has suspended the tabling of the extradition Bill for the time being until tempers cool down. She said in the first week of July that she would be more responsive to public sentiment and seek out divergent views to find a solution to the impasse with the protesters.

"The violence and the lawlessness has seriously affected the core values of Hong Kong's legal system," Carrie Lam told the media. "I feel very indignant and saddened by this and want to strongly condemn it. I believe the public also thinks the same." However, there is some criticism at the haste in which Carrie Lam tried to push through the extradition law. She had evidently assured Beijing that public opinion, swayed by the murder of the pregnant Hong Kong woman in Taiwan, would support the move. Beijing had warned the Hong Kong government to take the public on board before tabling the Bill. □

18+

@magztope

# WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

# AVAXHOME -

the biggest Internet portal,  
providing you various content:  
brand new books, trending movies,  
fresh magazines, hot games,  
recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price

Cheap constant access to piping hot media

Protect your downloadings from Big brother

Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages

Brand new content

One site

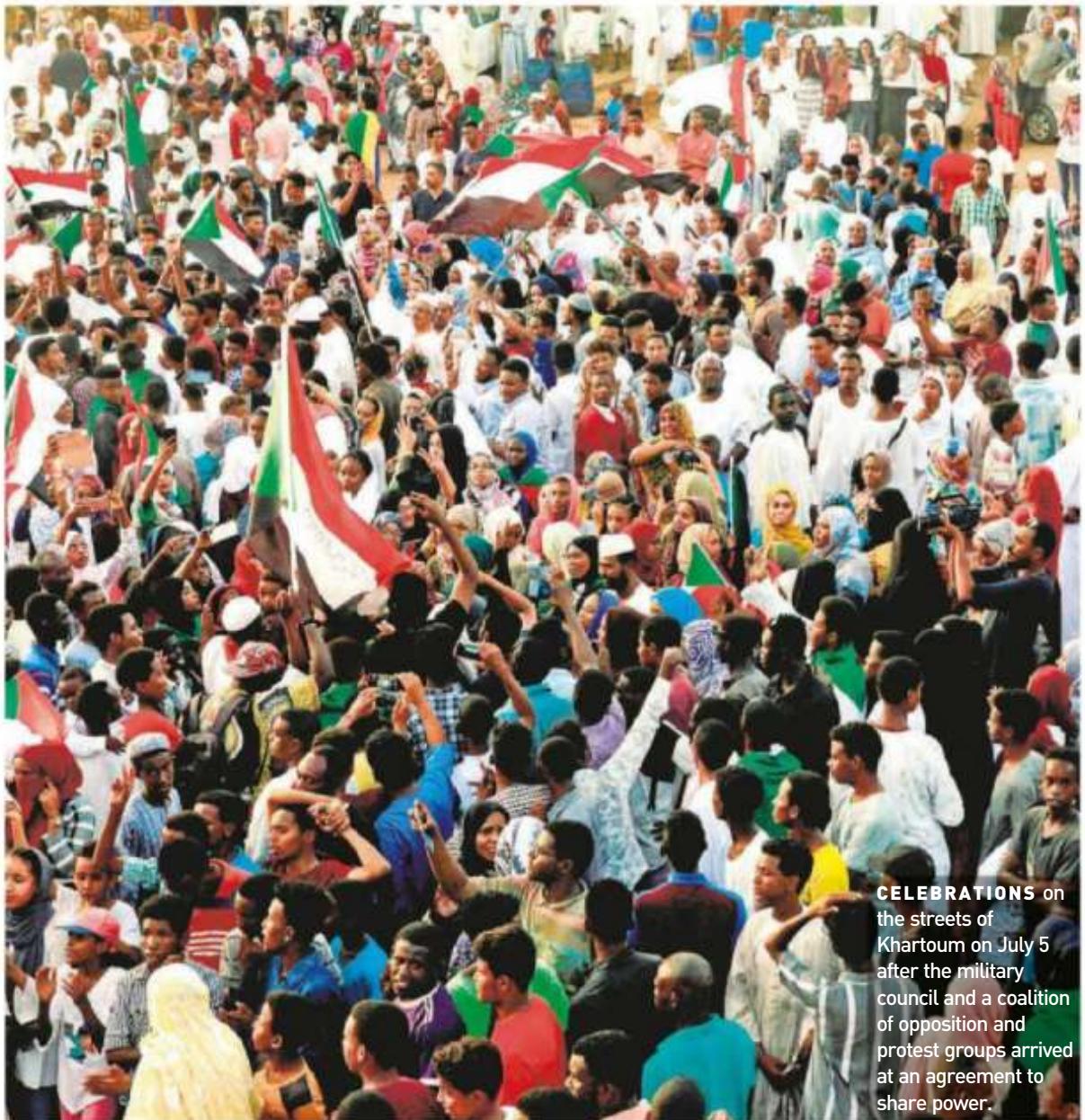


AvaxHome - Your End Place

We have everything for all of your needs. Just open <https://avxlive.icu>

# A chance for peace

Sudan's opposition groups fighting for democracy have agreed to a **power-sharing deal with the ruling military council**, but civilian leaders warn that it is only a first step and their guard cannot be lowered. **BY JOHN CHERIAN**



**CELEBRATIONS** on the streets of Khartoum on July 5 after the military council and a coalition of opposition and protest groups arrived at an agreement to share power.

MOHAMED NURELDIN ABDALLAH/REUTERS

IN THE FIRST WEEK OF JULY, JUST A MONTH after the bloody crackdown on peaceful civilian protesters by the Sudanese military and at a time when hopes for a compromise solution to the crisis in Sudan were fading, the African Union (A.U.) announced that the political impasse had finally ended. In talks brokered by the A.U., Sudan's ruling military council and the coalition of civilian groups that have been valiantly fighting for the restoration of democracy agreed to a power-sharing formula, leading to the formation of a transitional government. In a development that took observers of the region by surprise, both sides agreed to the formation of a joint military-civilian sovereign council. Mohamed El Hacen Lebatt, the A.U. mediator, said that the council would "run the country for three years or slightly more". Opposition leaders have said that the arrangement will last for three years and three months.

The agreement was announced a few days after the country witnessed huge protests. The opposition said that 128 people were killed on June 3, when the protests began. The protest leaders had called on the people to launch a total civil disobedience movement. The country was brought to a complete halt for three days after the public responded to the call. In all, more than 150 opposition protesters were killed by the military in June. The crackdown had briefly demoralised the opposition, send-

ing many of the protest leaders underground. But the opposition quickly regrouped. The protests in the last week of June were some of the biggest that Khartoum, the capital, has witnessed so far.

The latest round of protests, which occurred simultaneously in all the major cities, could have sent a strong signal to the military junta. The protests were organised despite the closure of the Internet by the authorities and the imposition of a ban on meetings and press conferences of the opposition.

#### EXTERNAL PRESSURE

The A.U. suspended Sudan after the army refused to cede power to civilians following the ouster of the former military ruler, Omar al-Bashir. The European Union was also piling up pressure on the military regime. It has promised economic assistance to the country on the condition that it transitions to civilian rule. The Donald Trump administration has been loath to take a strong stand against the military and has preferred to let the Saudis and the Emiratis take the lead in Sudan. President Trump himself has showed in the last three years that he is more comfortable dealing with strong authoritarian rulers in the region such as General Fattah El-Sisi and the Saudi Crown Prince, Mohamad bin Salman. In Libya, the Trump administration is openly supporting another



EBRAHIM HAMID/AFP

**MOHAMED EL HACEN LEBATT** (left), the African Union envoy to Sudan, watches as General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (second from left), deputy chief of the military council, shakes hands with an army general following a press conference in Khartoum July 5 in which the peace agreement was announced.

strongman-in-waiting, Gen. Khalifa Haftar, against the internationally recognised government in Tripoli.

According to reports, it was the behind-the-scenes role of the United States, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) that pushed the Sudanese military into serious negotiations with the opposition. There is a perception in Sudan that the June 3 attacks were carried out with the tacit approval of Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Sudan's top military leaders visited Riyadh, Abu Dhabi and Cairo before they ordered the crackdown. After Bashir's ouster, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt voiced their support for the military junta that replaced Bashir.

The Saudis and the Emiratis had even promised to bail out the Sudanese economy by offering billions of dollars in aid after Bashir's ouster. Tahir Osman al-Hussein, who was once a close associate of the former President, had come back to Sudan from exile in Saudi Arabia. He is known to be close to the Saudi royals. After he fell out with Bashir and escaped to Riyadh, he was appointed as a special adviser on African affairs in the Saudi royal court. Many Sudanese suspect that he played some kind of a role in recent events. According to reports in the American media, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi had an apparent change of heart after the June 3 crackdown. General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (widely known as Hemeti), who supervised the crackdown, was in Riyadh a few days earlier, meeting with Mohamed bin Salman. The two are known to be exceptionally close. Dagalo has been instrumental in despatching thousands of Sudanese mercenaries to help the Saudis in their brutal war in Yemen.

According to reports, the Saudis and the Emiratis became alarmed with the growing unpopularity of their closest ally among the Sudanese people. The two monarchies reportedly played a role in kick-starting a new round of talks, which resulted in the latest deal.

The Gulf monarchies have invested in huge land purchases in Sudan for agricultural purposes and also depend on the country to a great extent for meat imports.

Instability in Sudan, one of the most important countries in the region, would add to the chaos already prevalent there. The last thing the U.S. and its allies want is the establishment of a government in Sudan that is detrimental to their interests. The Gulf monarchies and their regional allies such as Egypt fear that the Muslim Brothers could fill the political vacuum if the unrest continues in Sudan. Egypt shares with Sudan a long border and the waters of the Nile.

#### **RULING ARRANGEMENT**

Under the agreement, five seats in the council would go to the military and five to representatives from civilian parties and groups that spearheaded the protest movement. One additional seat in the proposed ruling council will be given to a civilian who is acceptable to both the military and the protest movement. The ruling Transitional Military Council (TMC) has agreed to a key opposition demand of starting a "transparent and independent" investigation into the June 3 killings. Un-

der the terms of the new agreement, anyone found guilty will not be allowed to hold a position of power in the sovereign council. A military officer will lead the sovereign council for the first 21 months, after which a civilian will take over for the remainder of the council's term. The head of the TMC, Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, will be the first interim leader. The Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), the umbrella group of opposition parties that has been in the forefront of the struggle to restore civilian rule, has been given the task of selecting Cabinet Ministers after the sovereign council takes over from the military junta.

The military has so far opposed the formation of a purely civilian legislature. For the next three years the country in all probability will be run without a parliament.

The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) under General Dagalo has been accused of sexually assaulting women protesters. It is widely believed that the June 3 atrocity on unarmed civilians would not have come to pass without the approval of the head of RSF. The opposition has called for the immediate dispersal of the paramilitary forces from Khartoum and other major cities, removal of the curbs on the Internet and the release of all political prisoners.

Gen. Dagalo, who is formally the deputy head of the TMC, is viewed as the real power broker in the current military dispensation in Sudan. He has been quick to welcome the agreement with the civilian opposition groups, saying that the deal "will not exclude anyone".

All the important opposition leaders also welcomed the deal. The Sudanese Professional Association, which played a key role in the protests that brought down Bashir, issued a statement welcoming the agreement. "Today our revolution has won and our victory shines," the statement said. Omar Eldigair, the leader of the FFC, said that the agreement "opens the way for the formation of the institutions of transitional authority, and we hope that this is the beginning of a new era".

The civilian opposition realises that it cannot afford to lower its guard. Khaled Omar, a protest leader, has cautioned that the agreement is only a "first step". Many civilian leaders feel the protests should continue to keep the pressure on the military and prevent it from renegeing on its commitments as it has done so many times in the past. They fear that the concessions given by the military junta are a ploy to buy time. The opposition had in any case made many concessions for a deal to be facilitated.

Gen. Dagalo has too much at stake to play second fiddle to a civilian administration for long. Besides making top dollar by sending fighters to Yemen, he has stakes in lucrative gold mines in Darfur, his military power base. Khartoum itself is occupied by the RSF, which is manned by the former "Janjaweed" fighters of Darfur. The Janjaweed, a militia comprising mainly Sudanese Arabs, played a key role alongside the Sudanese army during the war in Darfur. The long-suffering people of Sudan could be in for a long haul before popular rule is restored. □

# Murder and mayhem

Horror stories are emerging from Libya, where refugees are being held in inhumane conditions in detention centres and rebel groups are battling each other in an **unending war set off by NATO** and fuelled by Europe.

BY VIJAY PRASHAD



ISMAIL ZETOUNI/REUTERS

A MAN IN A LIBYAN DETENTION CENTRE HOLDS a sign that reads: "European Union pretends they don't know what is facing us." He is on a hunger strike. "We don't need to eat," says another man through the Facebook Messenger app. Food packets are set aside. They are not interested in this kind of charity. They want to leave the detention centre. They want to leave Libya. "Save us from the next bombs," they say. "Save us from the violence."

The men and women in these detention centres along the Libyan coastline are not unfamiliar with violence. They come from places such as Sudan and Somalia,

**MIGRANTS** carry the remains of their belongings from the rubble that their detention centre turned into after it was hit by an air strike, in the Tajoura suburb of Tripoli on July 3.

where conflict has marked their entire lives. Others come from West Africa, where they have fled climate catastrophe and economic collapse. They had hoped to reach Europe, which has consistently advertised itself as a place of prosperity and safety. Those advertisements have been the attraction for people who are fleeing various forms of terror.

On July 2, aircraft attached to the armies of General



MAHMUD TURKI/AAP

**FIGHTERS** loyal to Libya's Government of National Accord open fire in the al-Sawani area south of Tripoli during clashes against forces loyal to Gen. Khalifa Haftar, on June 13.

Khalifa Haftar bombed a garage right next to the detention centre in Tajoura. Haftar's Libyan National Army, one amongst many militia groups, said the garage was a weapons depot but denied the bombing. It said the aircraft belonged to the Government of National Accord, a United Nations-backed government that has stumbled along since 2015. The aerial bombing killed at least 60 people in the detention centre. Over a thousand people have been killed as a result of Haftar's bid to seize the capital, Tripoli, which began in April.

Immediately after the bombing, Ghassan Salame, head of the U.N. Support Mission in Libya and Special Representative of the U.N. Secretary-General, said an inquiry would be conducted into what could "clearly constitute a war crime". Salame, a Lebanese academic, came to Libya in 2017 after working for the U.N. in Iraq. He is a cautious person, so his words need to be taken very seriously. His use of the phrase "war crime" is not rhetorical. He means it. But the real question here is, who perpetuated the war crime?

#### GENERAL HAFTAR'S WAR

Libya has been in deep trouble since 2011 when an internal civil conflict was converted by the U.N. and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) into an international war. NATO's bombers came on the side of a rebel army that comprised a range of actors, from former Al Qaeda fighters to liberal lawyers.



**GEN. KHALIFA HAFTAR,** in 2018.



Massive NATO bombardment hastened the fall of the Libyan government, whose leaders were either killed (including Muammar Qaddafi) or went into exile. No unified rebel command was formed since the range of militia groups conducted the ground war underneath European planes. Each of these groups was backed by an external force such as Egypt, France, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the United States. After Qaddafi was killed, the rebel factions turned on each other.

The spoils in Libya are great: a massive oil reserve that is close to Europe. But, over the past eight years, no power has been able to establish itself. Several factions claimed to be the legitimate government; gunfire was the mode of conversation. The country was flooded by arms; the war has been unending and the political will fractured. Even the U.N. seemed to slip into the factionalism: a former U.N. envoy named Bernardino Leon had to be removed for taking money from the UAE.

Gen. Haftar, who had been close to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency from the 1980s until his re-appearance in Benghazi, Libya, in 2011, hastily drew upon his old links in the military. When it became clear that he was not going to be anointed as the next strongman of Libya, Haftar built up his army with the help of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Haftar destroyed the other militia groups in Benghazi, including the Al Qaeda variants, and then began to make his move against the U.N.-backed government in Tripoli.

Early this year, Haftar secured most of the oilfields and terminals in the eastern and southern parts of Libya. His forces then began their march towards Tripoli. Some 20,000 people were displaced in the early



TAHA JAWASHI/AFP

**ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS** at a detention centre in Zawiyah, near Tripoli, on June 17, 2017.

weeks of the fighting, which has now stalled. The U.N.-backed Government of National Accord has refused to negotiate with Haftar. Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj has offered a new plan for a ceasefire, but it does not include Haftar in any future government. This is unacceptable to Haftar, who has said that he wants al-Serraj gone. The U.N. backs al-Serraj, who has also received arms and funds from Turkey. During the high point of 2011, when the old governments of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya fell, Turkey watched with pleasure as various Muslim Brotherhood governments came to power in these countries. Turkey's Justice and Development Party, led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is the Turkish franchise of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in these countries set off alarm bells in Egypt's military and in the families that run Saudi Arabia and the UAE. They formed a bloc to overthrow the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Tunisia, and their backing of Haftar was part of their wider regional war against the Brotherhood. Al-Serraj is not a man of the Muslim Brotherhood, but he is nonetheless a bulwark against the full-scale takeover of North Africa by Egypt, the Saudis and the Emiratis. This war in Libya—ignited by NATO's bombing of the country—is part of the regional cold war.

Evidence suggests that it was Haftar's aircraft that bombed the detention centres. But he should not alone be in the dock. Alongside him would belong the architects of NATO and the governments that are part

of this regional cold war. All of them bear some measure of responsibility for the dangerous situation in Libya.

#### EUROPE'S DETENTION CENTRE

In 2015, Europe faced a refugee crisis. Hundreds of thousands of migrants gathered along the edge of the Mediterranean Sea to make a dangerous crossing into Europe. They fled Syria and Turkey in small boats, heading towards Greece, or got into unstable boats in Libya to cross towards Italy. Thousands of them died. Europe began to find ways to block the arrival of these migrants to its shores. Its coast guard would return migrants to Libya and Turkey, fences rose at its borders, and its armies went into the Sahel region of Africa to virtually build a wall to prevent migrants from getting anywhere near the Mediterranean Sea.

NATO's war in Libya had made it the prime destination for migrants, many of whom were brought there by people smugglers who would then put them into leaky boats and wish them luck. One in five migrants who got into those boats drowned.

The European Union (E.U.) began to collaborate with the Government of National Accord in Libya and with various Libyan militia groups. E.U. money went to the Libyan Coast Guard, which took to shooting at humanitarian vessels that came into Libyan waters to rescue migrants. In 2017, the Italian government signed a deal with the Libyan government that allowed the Libyan Coast Guard to intercept boats heading to Italy and to return the refugees and migrants to Libya. These refugees and migrants were then handed over to detention centres.

The Libyan government runs close to 20 detention centres, while other entities, including militia groups, run another dozen. Many of the official detention centres are also run by ad hoc militia groups that are paid by the government with the money from the Europeans. The Az-Zawiya detention facility, for example, is supposedly run by the government but is in fact run by the al-Nasr Brigade of Muhammad al-Khushlaf, also known as al-Qasseb.

The U.N. says that the conditions in this detention centre are "inhumane". It is said that al-Khushlaf is the mentor of a people smuggler named Abdellrahman al-Milad, also known as Bija. Bija, who has been called the "kingpin of Libya's human trafficking mafia", is paid by the Europeans for his dual role as a Libyan Coast Guard commander. The detainees in these camps are used as forced labour. Detainees in other camps have been sold into slavery.

Libya has drifted out of the consciousness of the world. It re-enters only because tragedy has struck. The situation on the ground is terrible and the dangers beyond description. Europe's rhetoric of concern is meaningless here. It is the architect of this tragedy. □



**PRIME MINISTER**  
Fayez al-Serraj.

ULF LAESSING/REUTERS

# Pursuit of happiness

Russia showcases methods and programmes associated with its own iteration of the “happiness project” pioneered by Bhutan, with specific focus on longevity, health care, education and an active lifestyle.

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHS BY **VENKITESH RAMAKRISHNAN**, RECENTLY IN MOSCOW

WHEN THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL Assembly passed a resolution titled “Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development” in July 2011 urging member nations to measure the happiness and well-being of their citizens and calling happiness a “fundamental human goal”, it also acknowledged that the inspiration for pioneering such an initiative was the small

country of Bhutan and the “happiness project” the Buddhist Himalayan kingdom had been pursuing since the early 1970s.

The “project” was first highlighted before the world in 1972, when Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the then Crown Prince of Bhutan, stated that gross national happiness (GNH) was more important than gross national product



IAN LANSBERG/AFRICAN NEWS AGENCY

(GDP). The premise for such a statement was that the sense of well-being among citizens also needed to be taken into account along with economic indicators to take forward sustainable development of communities. The U.N. resolution accepted this premise as one validated by international experience.

Since the passage of the 2011 U.N. resolution, many nations have adopted the concept and evolved diverse governance initiatives based on it. In February 2016, United Arab Emirates (UAE) Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum appointed Ohood Al Roumi as the country's first Minister of State for Happiness with the brief of overseeing "plans, projects, programmes [and] indices" that improve the country's overall mood.

In May this year, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern released the first-ever "well-being budget" of the country and asserted that the purpose of government spending was to ensure citizens' health and life satisfaction, and that that was the metric by which a country's progress should be measured, not wealth or economic growth alone. "GDP alone does not guarantee improvement to our living standards", nor does it "take into account who benefits and who is left out", she said.

The appointment of Tracey Crouch in January 2018 as the first Minister for Loneliness in the United King-

dom was also a governance initiative with several linkages to the 2011 U.N. resolution. Over the past decade, Russia, too, has sought to adopt and adapt to the "well-being and happiness concept and project" in its own unique ways, employing what is often termed as "strategies and methods with distinctly Russian characteristics".

The Third Forum of Social Innovations of the Regions held in Moscow from June 19 to June 21 showcased some of the strategies, methods and programmes associated with the project. The focus was on five specific social development themes: longevity, health care, education, an active lifestyle and happiness, which was stressed in conference documents as something that "should permeate the entire social sphere".

Indeed, different countries have adapted to the "happiness project" in different ways, but the Russian enterprise in this direction, as witnessed at the Forum as well as in the field units, seems largely guided by the original Bhutanese example. The Bhutanese definition of GNH emphasises nine domains and four pillars of happiness that collectively guide and lead to harmony with nature and traditional values.

The nine domains are psychological well-being, health, time use, education, cultural diversity and resilience, good governance, community vitality, ecological



**MOSCOW**  
**MAYOR** Sergei Sobyanin doing a walkabout at the third Forum of Social Innovations of the Regions, held in Moscow from June 19-21.

**THE DIGITAL PALACE,**  
headquarters of centralised digital services, in Moscow.





**KSENIA VLADIMIROVA**, in charge of "My Social Centre", with Maxim Leukhin, associate coordinator.

diversity and resilience, and living standards. The four pillars are sustainable and equitable socio-economic development, environmental conservation, preservation and promotion of culture, and good governance.

Dorji Penjore, who heads the Centre for Bhutan and Gross National Happiness Studies, has been interacting with his Russian counterparts in government for many years on the concept. He was a participant at the 2019 Forum too, once again reiterating the concepts promoted by his country.

#### LONGEVITY PROJECT

The Moscow Longevity Project, launched in March 2018 under the auspices of the office of the Moscow Mayor, Sergey Sobyanin, was one of the key projects that was foregrounded. "For the mind, for the soul and for health" is the slogan of the project, which is totally free of cost for the beneficiaries. It caters essentially to women over 55 and men over 60 and has specific schemes to enhance their overall physical well-being through focussed medical care, fitness and leisure activities apart from elevation of intellectual and creative skills covering areas such as information technology and arts and crafts.

Every citizen of Moscow in the specified age group is eligible for the project. The academic Andrey Kurpatov, a specialist in neuroscience and human behaviour, who was involved in the development of the longevity project, said: "The human race has already learned how to deal with the problems of body ageing, but we are not yet technologically prepared to prevent brain ageing, because science knows obscenely little about the human brain."

The managers of the various units of the project said

that this understanding had been factored into the conceptualisation and the day-to-day functioning of the scheme.

In practical terms, the schemes in the project include longevity training—athletics and gymnastics under the supervision of doctors in special clinics—and "Silver University", a free educational programme for elderly people, enabling them to start new careers. These are normally conducted in specially set up "longevity centres".

There is also a regular outing initiative termed the "Kind bus", which gives elderly Muscovites a free tour around Moscow. Some of the offbeat programmes listed under the project include Scandinavian walking, learning English, drawing, singing, dancing and honing acting skills. According to official statistics, more than 13,000 people are engaged simultaneously in three or more types of classes of the project. The project is most popular among participants aged 55-75 years. The majority of the participants are women, who account for 87.1 per cent of the beneficiaries.

Svetlana Petrova, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Russian Federation, said that there was a special federal project called "The Older Generation" that replicates some segments of the Moscow Longevity Project in other parts of Russia.

"The project is aimed at improving the quality of life of older people. First of all it is about health, social assistance and leisure activities," she said.

Another stand-alone programme that supplements the Longevity Project is the establishment of "Healthy Moscow" pavilions that are functional across 40 parks in Moscow, where visitors of all ages can get free basic medical check-ups, which include electrocardiograms

and fluorography. This is a walk-in service that does not require registration.

Doctors and paramedical staff in some of these pavilions told *Frontline* that access to such periodic, free tests would ultimately lead to the integration of new health-saving technologies into the health care system and shift the focus from the treatment of diseases and their consequences to prevention. They also said that this could generally change people's attitude to their own health.

According to Alexandra Alexandrova, first deputy head of the Department of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the City of Moscow, there are specific well-being programmes and schemes for people of pre-retirement age too.

"The main problem faced by such citizens is job search. On the directions of the Mayor of Moscow, a special platform has been created in the city that will help people aged over 50 in finding employment. We call them people of wise age. Now there are 8,74,000 such people in Moscow, but considering the changes in the pension legislation by 2024, with each year there will be 30,000 fewer of them," she said.

#### **PROGRAMMES FOR YOUTH**

Shukut Roman, Director of the "Youth Job Centre" under the Labour and Security Department of Moscow, told *Frontline* that several programmes and schemes were directed at the youth. "Unemployment *per se* is not a huge problem in Russia as it is under 5 per cent, but the real issue for the young people is getting productive and profitable employment commensurate with the changing times. And providing that is the focus of the new social innovation and happiness project related schemes and programmes such as 'My Work' and 'My Career'. These schemes provide free and focussed guidance and hand-holding for job seekers," he said.

There are other supplementary programmes such as "My Social Centre", which helps people get acquainted with the results of the state's programmes, and "Metropolitan Education", which points to and facilitates value addition for those at different stages of their educational career.

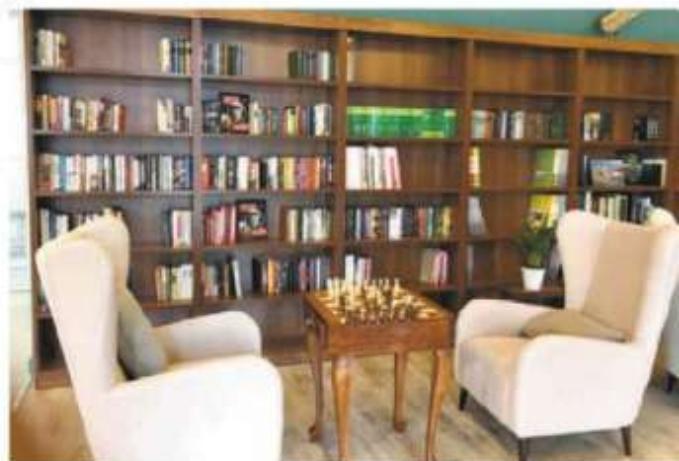
Dmitry Glushko, Deputy General Director of the Union of the Agency for the Development of Professional Communities and Workers Young Professionals (Worldskills Russia), said that in 2019, more than 2,500 people in 11 regions of the Russian Federation would be retrained as part of the "Young Professionals" project.

"Part of the project is a demonstration exam in Worldskills standards passed by the graduates of educational institutions. This exam has been held in more than 1,300 companies already and passed by 5,500 people. We see that the salary of specialists who passed the exam is 60 per cent higher," Glushko said at the Forum. The project also provides for retraining of the adult population in 116 competencies.

Another part of the project is "Ticket to the Future" for schoolchildren. "This is a large career guidance plat-



**SENIOR CITIZENS** making use of the facilities at the Digital Palace.



**A FREE** recreational facility for senior citizens.

form where about a million schoolchildren can work at the same time," said Glushko.

An interesting aspect of almost all the facilities and service centres that this correspondent visited as part of a larger international media team was that the infrastructure facilities of all of them were built during the Soviet period. For instance, the "Youth Job Centre" building was set up in the 1920s with many different aims, including job promotion.

Shukut Roman said that he had even set up a museum in the premises highlighting the history of the



**SHUKUT ROMAN**, Director of the Youth Job Centre in Moscow.



**COUNSELLING** going on at the Youth Job Centre.

building and its functions since the 1920s. But at the time of the Forum it was under renovation and was not accessible. He further said that over the years, the “sincerity and service scales” provided by the centres of public services had undergone a transformation and become more positive. Other facilities such as “Health Pavilions”, “My Social Centre” and “Digital Palace” were also housed in Soviet-era structures. The latter facility’s walls were adorned with colourful engravings of Lenin. Even the centre that hosted the Forum had been in use during the Soviet period and a massive statue of Lenin stood on its grounds. An businessman of Indian origin who has been living in Russia for the past 30 years said that large sections of the current Russian leadership, including President Vladimir Putin, do not believe in blind repudiation of the gains that the Soviet era brought to Russia.

“Putin’s firm rejection of calls to move Lenin’s embalmed body from the mausoleum to a grave, asserting that such an act would be tantamount to stating that the Russian people had not gained during the 70 years of the Soviet Union, clearly points to this perception,” he said.

Going beyond showcasing the new initiatives based on social innovations and the happiness project, the Forum became a setting for widespread interaction across different streams of stakeholders. These included

drivers of governance such as senior politicians and officials such as Chairperson of the Federation Council of Russia Valentina Matvienko; Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyanin; Presidential Representative in the Central Federal District Sergey Shchegolev; State Duma Chairman Vyacheslav Volodin; Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation for Social Policy Matters Tatyana Golikova; Health Minister of the Russian Federation Veronika Skvortsova; representatives from academia; social innovators; non-state social service providers; and performers of socially useful services.

The interactions at the Forum had a good turnout, with widespread participation by volunteers associated with various “well-being projects” and members of the public. Anastasia Rakova, one of the key organisers of the Forum, stated the event had been thrown open to the public for the first time and the response was overwhelming. An estimated 35,000 people participated in the event along with 200 public and political figures and 24 leading experts from the United States, France, the U.K., Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Israel, the Netherlands, Argentina, Greece, Denmark, Finland, Bhutan and Azerbaijan.

Some 65 sessions were held during the three days of the Forum. The experts and academics who participated included Michio Kaku, the renowned theoretical physicist and futurologist; Jenn Lim, CEO of Delivering Happiness; Melita Vuinovic, World Health Organisation Representative in the Russian Federation; and Nyuta Federmesser, whose work at the grass-roots level in palliative care is widely acknowledged.

Discussions at these levels witnessed repeated assertions about the imbalance of “happiness-oriented” services between Moscow and other parts of Russia. Even the Mayor of Moscow acknowledged this when he said that Russia needed to make sure that good social services reached other parts of the country too.

The final declaration of the Forum took this and other limitations into consideration even while highlighting the gains and positives of the engagement with social innovation and the happiness project. The final proclamation indicated that the existing scale of the projects and their future scalability needed to be studied closely and enhanced.

It also reiterated the need to continue with the new framework and the new scientific direction on the economic theory of happiness based on an alternative to the economy of consumption and the ideology of the mindless, unsustainable development. It also emphasised the need to connect objective economic criteria with the subjective feelings of people and determine the socio-economic categories that could ensure balanced economic growth. It underscored one of the factors that changes the focus on the “economy of happiness” in the decision-making system, which in turn needs to actively perceive the key trends of the last decades, especially at the level of the use of information technology and the transition to digital platform solutions in the provision of social services and other activities in the social sphere.□

WILDLIFE

# CHEETAH BONDING



**THIS PHOTOGRAPH** of a cub lying with his forelegs on the shoulder of a sibling at the Masai Mara Reserve in Kenya was featured in the 2019 calendar of "BBC Wildlife" magazine.

@magztoe

**MALAIKA**, iconic  
supermom of  
Masai Mara.



A wildlife photographer spent a week on the trail of a cheetah named Malaika and her two cubs in Masai Mara and came away with some stunning visuals.

Text by G. SHAHEED and photographs by PADMANABHAN NARAYANAN



**DOGO AND KIGUMBA** in an affectionate moment.

IT was drizzling and a cold wind was blowing in the Masai Mara National Reserve in Kenya. Two naughty cheetah cubs were playing around their mother. They pounced on her and struck her with their paws, then followed a “hit and run” game.

“Their mother, named Malaika, was an iconic “supermom” and she enjoyed their playful fight though she was alert”, said Padmanabhan Narayanan, a wildlife photographer based in Doha, Qatar, who followed the mother and her two male cubs with his camera for a week in November 2017. Malaika was quite a famous cheetah. She had a striking gait, with sparkling eyes and was always calm, composed and alert. Tourists and wildlife photographers would seek her out. The guides had many tales to tell about her daring exploits, her skill in hunting, her shrewdness and the way she protected her cubs, Dogo and Kigumba, from predators such as lions and hyenas.

When Narayanan saw Malaika for the first time, she was just 10 years old and the two male cubs were one year and four months old. Unfortunately, Malaika is no more. The specifics of her death still remain a mystery, but she is believed to have been attacked and eaten by crocodiles in the Olores Orok river in March 2018. Or she may have drowned while crossing the river. Narayanan says he will visit Masai Mara again to observe the cubs. They will be more than three years old now and leading an independent life.

It is a Herculean task for cheetahs to protect their cubs during the first four months. Although the cubs are kept in a secret place, predators often intrude. Cubs may die of diseases too or they may be abandoned by the mother. The cheetah’s coat is in great demand and commands high prices, which encourages poaching.

Cheetah hunts fascinate Narayanan. It is more dra-

@magztore

**MALAIKA TEACHING THE  
CUBS** to throttle and kill prey.



@magztoe



@magztore





**DOGO AND KIGUMBA.**  
A spectacle that has  
captured global attention  
in Masai Mara now is a  
group comprising five  
cheetahs.



**ONE OF THE CUBS** with the hare it killed and refused to share until Malaika intervened.



**PADMANABHAN NARAYANAN.**

VARUN ADITYA



#### THE VAST AND OPEN PLAINS of the reserve.

matic than that of other big cats and is overwhelming and thrilling visually, he said. The long slender legs, the long strides and the trim waist transform the cheetah into lightning when it launches itself in an explosive sprint to chase and kill its prey.

#### GEORGE SCHALLER

Dr George Schaller, the wildlife biologist and an authority on the ecology and behaviour of wild cats, says: "The hunt of the cheetah is one of the most exciting spectacles in Africa; the slow stalk, the tense period of waiting until the prey is inattentive and finally the explosive rush at 60 miles per hour marks the cheetah as the fastest of all land animals." In one of his celebrated works, *A Naturalist and other Beasts*, he says that the cheetah "hunts mainly in the open plains.... Any fawn in a herd is immediately pursued. Although cheetahs can attain tremendous speeds, they are unable to keep it up for more than 900 feet. If the prey dodges several times, the cheetah gets exhausted. Then it may have to give up the chase.... The cheetah is a pragmatist, likes better a small meal than none at all."

Female cheetahs are usually solitary, but male cheetahs may form groups. A spectacle that has captured global attention in Masai Mara now is a group comprising five cheetahs.

The forest records say that Malaika has had eight litters. But she was able to raise successfully only five cubs out of 10. The cubs usually separate from the mother at the age of two and a half years. The cubs follow the

mother when it hunts. In fact, the mother grooms them to hunt. Narayanan says he watched a cub as it followed a gazelle, which then sprinted away. But the mother caught it and taught the cubs how to throttle and kill it. On another occasion, a cub caught a hare. But it was reluctant to share it with his brother. The mother interfered and tore the hare so that it could be shared among the brothers.

A wildlife photographer seeks to get as many facial expressions of the cheetah as possible. Narayanan once got a brilliant frame of a cub lying on the grass, his forelegs on his brother's shoulders in a mark of affection. That shot got selected for the *BBC Wildlife* magazine's 2019 calendar.

More than 23 African countries, including South Africa, Kenya, Namibia and Tanzania, have thriving cheetah populations. The Asiatic cheetah is critically endangered and is confined to a few isolated pockets in Iran. Their population is about 60, and efforts are being made for their conservation. Divyabhan Singh, a prominent conservationist and former member of the National Board for Wildlife, did considerable studies of the Indian cheetah and came to the conclusion that the major cause of its decline was hunting by royalty. The extinction of the cheetah in India prompted the Government of India to try to import it from Namibia and reintroduce it in India. But the decision remains caught in legal and administrative tangles.

*G. Shaheed is the Chief of Legal and Environment News Bureau, Mathrubhumi, Kochi.*

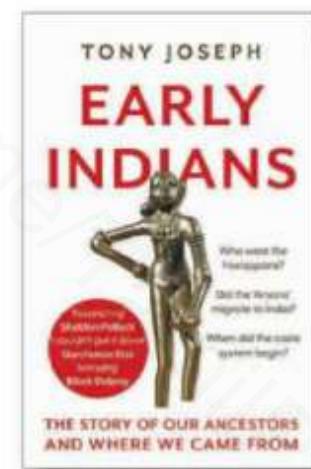
# Of India's genetic roots

A remarkably accessible book **about the ethnic foundations of the Indian people**, dense with evidence from archaeology, linguistics, ancient texts and the recent study of ancient genes.

BY KESAVAN VELUTHAT

EVER since similarities between Sanskrit and the classical European languages, namely Greek and Latin, were noticed and a common origin for their speakers was proposed, the “Aryans” were looked upon as foundational to Indian civilisation. The theory of the “Aryan race” has been most convenient to nearly everybody. The colonial masters used it to justify their rule over India. It was something like a soothing ointment for the newly emerging Indian middle class, which was licking the wounds of colonial degradation. Keshub Chandra Sen went to the extent of describing the coming of the English to India as a “reunion of parted cousins”. For the nationalists, the “wonder” that was “Aryan” India, with all that the Sanskrit language had produced, was something to which they could turn for inspiration.

In regional politics, too, it was useful: the Dravidian movement in Madras presidency drew its sustenance largely from the theory of the “Aryan race” and its “other”, the Dravidian greatness. The Dalit movement spearheaded by Mahatma Phule used it to show how the invading “Aryans” had dispossessed the rightful



## Early Indians

**The Story of Our Ancestors and Where We Came From**

By Tony Joseph  
Juggernaut Books,  
2018

Pages: 288  
Price: Rs.699

owners of the land. A “theory” that explained nearly everything was, by definition, an impeccable theory.

The only difficulty that a section of the advocates of the greatness of the “Aryan” in India saw was that they came from outside: how can it be that the foundations of Indian civilisation were imported? For those who insisted that the *pitrubumi* and *punyabhumi* of all authentic Indians should lie within the national boundaries—pray, which nation?—it was self-defeating to say that the “Aryans”, supposed to be the builders of the great civilisation, were outsiders like the Muslims.

There was a dilemma when Bal Gangadhar Tilak wrote about the Arctic Home of the Vedas: on the

one side, there was no denying the nationalism of Tilak; on the other, it was a happy thing to lose the original home of the precious “Aryans”, even if it was Tilak who caused it. M.S. Golwalkar found a way out: the Arctic, the original home of the “Aryans”, was in India, in the region of modern Odisha and Bihar. It was the North Pole that took a zigzag course in a northerly direction while the Aryans stayed back! How do you like it?

The first jolt to the idea that the “Aryans” were foundational to Indian civilisation came when evidence of the Harappan civilisation was brought out in the 1920s. It was not only “non-Aryan” but also “pre-Aryan”. While the discovery was celebrated by many, including those who

looked upon the “Aryan” as invaders who dispossessed the rightful owners of the land, those who insisted on the “Aryan” foundations of Indian civilisation started gradually feeling uncomfortable. They looked for ways to claim the Harappan civilisation for the “Aryans”. To begin with, it was only a fad that would bring a smile to the reader’s face, but eventually, the comicality with which the Arctic home thesis was tweaked repeated itself: computer-enhanced images of the horse started turning up and Sanskrit was read in the Harappan seals, literally, left and right. Depending on the party in power, the Government of India spent huge sums of money in attempts to prove that it was not Indus Valley civilisation (why should you hand it over to those horrible Pakistanis?) but Sarasvati Valley civilisation (authentically Indian, claiming antiquity from the Vedic literature) and, therefore, “Aryan”. One thing about that discourse is clear: Indian civilisation owes itself to the “Aryans” and that the “Aryans” are, to the last person, born and raised in India. If you said anything different, you would be an anti-national.

Tony Joseph’s *Early*

*Indians: The Story of Our Ancestors and Where We Came From* is a book that will eminently qualify for such a description. No, it is not about the putative “Aryan race” or its original home. It is about the ethnic foundations of the Indian people. It seeks to raise and answer two basic questions: Who are we? and Where do we come from? “We” here includes all people of India from the earliest known period down to the present, people inhabiting this sub-continent irrespective of caste, creed or religion.

And the answer is complex, particularly because the ancestry of different sections of the Indian population is so intermixed, with strands drawn from different sources. Joseph summarises this complex answer in two simple (grammatically, that is) sentences: “We are all Indians. And we are all migrants” (page 221).

One of the more im-

portant revelations in recent years in the field of human prehistory results from the science of genetics. The developments in that discipline over the past decade are nothing short of explosive.

#### OUT OF AFRICA

Although evolutionary science had recognised the importance of distinguishing among the different species of early man, it is only in recent years that an Out-of-Africa (OoA) thesis of the migration of the anatomically modern humans, the *Homo sapiens*, was established unequivocally. Analysis of DNA made that possible. But more recently, the analysis of ancient DNA (aDNA) has given the scientist greater confidence to talk about the various strands that go into the making of the ancestry of individuals, groups of people and even whole populations. The realisation that the human population the world over

descended from a few *Homo sapiens* who migrated from Africa some 70 thousand years ago took the world by storm. Evidence of “human” life and operations before—long before—that was explained as belonging to the near-human species such as *Homo erectus*, *Homo heidelbergensis*, *Homo neanderthalensis*, and so on, but the weaker *Homo sapiens* succeeded in the race for survival, largely on account of better tactics and superior technology. That made sense.

After making the methodology and logic of genetics, particularly the study related to DNA, clear to the lay reader, Joseph raises, and proposes his answers to, the question of peopling India. Although evidence of near-human species is available from 3,00,000 years ago, the earliest fossil of an anatomically modern human outside Africa, discovered at a rock shelter in north-

ern Israel, is only around 1,80,000 years old. And even that is only an isolated instance. The successful OoA migration occurred another 1,10,000 years later, around 70,000 years ago. Although humans or near-humans were around long before that, there is no trace of their having left behind successors. The OoA migration of modern humans arrived in India around 65,000 years ago. They may have come across earlier near-humans who were probably stronger than them. The OoA migrants avoided these physically stronger people to begin with and, later, equipped with better technology, such as the microliths, overpowered them. To be sure, the OoA migrants had gone to other parts of the world as well.

As the different parts of the globe were being populated, the OoA migrants were also undergoing mutations in their genes on account of the conditions under which they lived. While each group retained most of what it inherited, traces of new ones were making their appearance. That is how there are so many variations among the descendants of the OoA migrants.

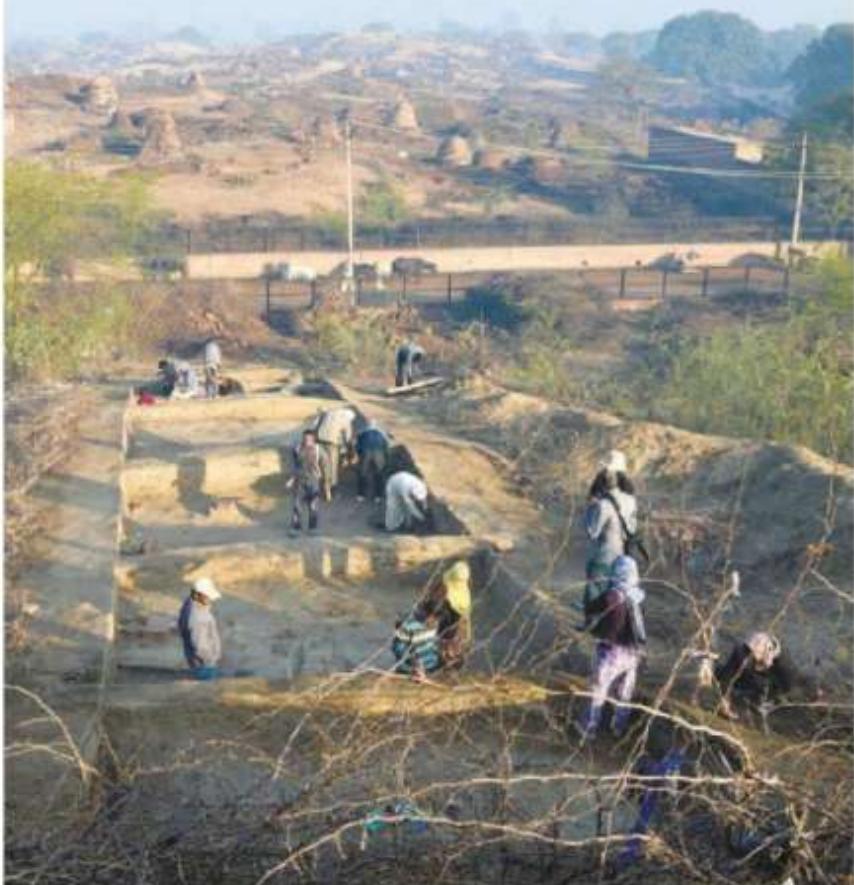
These hunter-gatherers, with technological advances graduating from the microliths of the Mesolithic Age to the polished hand-axes of the Neolithic Age, started all that went with the transition: what Gordon Childe called the Neolithic Revolution.

By 7000 BCE, a new agricultural settlement emerged at the foot of the Bolan Hills in Baluchistan,



V.V. KRISHNAN

**AT BINJOR** in Rajasthan, the 4MSR archaeological site near the international border with Pakistan's Punjab. It has both Early and Mature Harappan characteristics. Evidence of the Harappan civilisation in the 1920s gave the first jolt to the idea that the “Aryans” were foundational to Indian civilisation.



D. KRISHNAN

**AT THE HARAPPAN SITE OF RAKHIGARHI** in Haryana, excavation on mound four, RGR-4. The people who built the Mature Harappan civilisation were a mixture of the “First Indians” and the agriculturists from the Zagros mountains of Iran who had arrived at Mehrgarh around 7000 BCE.

in a village now known as Mehrgarh. That developed into one of the largest habitations of the period in the area between the Indus and the Mediterranean. At around this time, Iranian agriculturists from the Zagros region arrived there, which led not only to their mixing with the “First Indians”—that is, the descendants of the OoA migrants who had settled there—but also to changes in the cropping pattern. Geneticists believe that this took place by 4700–3000 BCE. Barley and wheat were cultivated and domesticated animals were consumed. Agricultural settlements had spread all across north-

western India by now—in the Indus and Ghaggar-Hakra valleys as well as in Gujarat. At the same time, evidence from Lahuradewa in Uttar Pradesh, in the Upper Ganga plain, shows that rice was harvested and life had become somewhat sedentary there by 7000 BCE. Mehrgarh was not an isolated case of experimenting in different kinds of agriculture.

During 5500–2600 BCE, agricultural settlements in the north-western part of the subcontinent developed into towns with their unique styles. Kalibangan and Rakhigarhi in what is now India and Banwali

and Rahman Dheri in today’s Pakistan are among them. Distinct Early Harappan cultures such as Sothi, Amri and Kulli developed in this process. All these were subsumed in the process, and a higher level of standardisation evolved, with a complex script, seals, pottery, bricks, weights and measures, and so on. The Mature Harappan civilisation was born. The people who built this complex civilisation were a mixture of the “First Indians” and the agriculturists from the Zagros mountains of Iran; the admixture had taken place long before the first cities had come up. In one sense, it was authentically

South Asian inasmuch as the Asians, Americans and Europeans were not any more Africans! And they had no trace of Anatolian ancestry.

It is important that this genomic conclusion is independent of any archaeological or linguistic correlation. But those who studied Mehrgarh had come more or less to the same conclusion long before the genomic evidence was available. Linguistics, too, pointed to the same conclusion. Of the different Mesopotamian languages, the one that the Iranians from Zagros are likely to have spoken is Elamite. Linguistic similarities between Brahui, spoken in Baluchistan, and Elamite have been established. The kinship of Brahui with the Dravidian family of languages is well known. Thus, it turns out that what the genetic study points to is exactly what the earlier archaeological and philological studies had suggested: about a heavy Dravidian content in the Harappan.

In fact, this is exactly what the most modern work on the Harappan script tells us. Asko Parpola and Iravatham Mahadevan have, in their independent studies, pointed out the possibility of the language of the Harappans being related to the Dravidian. No, neither claims to have *read* the language. It is the systematic study of the signs, their occurrence, their frequency, patterns of pairing and the context that led them to this conclusion. The attempts of Aryan/Sanskrit enthusiasts are rendered laughable by these studies.

The Mature Harappan continued until about the middle of the second millennium BCE. Perturbations in the isotopes of oxygen atoms present in the layers of a stalagmite growing from a cave in Meghalaya have now been accepted as proof of the failure of monsoons all over South Asia about 4,200 to 4,000 years ago. Joseph, in a lighter vein, suggests that it is Varuna, the God of water, who has to be blamed for the end of the Harappan civilisation—not Indra, as Mortimer Wheeler did about seven decades ago! Jokes apart, the Harappan civilisation had already declined by the second half of the second millennium BCE, when north-western India witnessed a fresh wave of migration as shown by evidence from genetics. Elements from the Eurasian Steppe make their presence felt in the DNA of the new migrants. What is interesting is that in the new wave of migration, it is the male element (represented by the Y chromosome) that is considerably more than the female element (represented by mtDNA).

Obviously, the new migrants were mostly men, and they mingled with women of the local population—that is, the admixture of the “First Indians” and the Iranians from the Zagros mountains. This evidence of a possible migration from the Steppe region is borne out by the archaeology of the Bactria-Margiana-Archaeological Complex (BMAC). A recent article by Michael Witzel (2018: “Beyond the Flight of the Falcon: Early ‘Aryans’



D. KRISHNAN

**A THREE-CENTIMETRE SEAL** with the Harappan script. A systematic study of the signs led to experts like Asko Parpola and Iravatham Mahadevan to point to the possibility of the Harappan and Dravidian languages being related.

Within and Outside India”, in Kumkum Roy and Naina Dalal (eds), *A Festschrift for Romila Thapar: Questioning Paradigms, Constructing Histories*, Aleph Books, pages 274-292) considers all the evidence that is available. Witzel makes the following statement: “The complex Indian data exhibits many overlaps in archaeology, genetics, linguistics and Vedic texts. When comparing the results of these fields they largely agree with each other and sustain an emerging picture of the origin and spread of the *arya*, their language, poetry, religion, ritual, culture, and even their genetic set-up.”

Although he is circumspect about the kind of evidence from these disciplines (“Just as the fields of archaeology and linguistics, the rather new branch of genetics, population genetics, has its in-built problems.”), his conclusion is clear: “In sum, neither was India ever isolated, nor did all facets of its archaeological, linguistic, textual, genetic/somatic data arise ‘on their own’ inside the Indian subcontinent; instead, they

look back up to some 60,000 years of Out-of-Africa history. Just like other Asian subcontinents—Europe, the once dry Sundaland, Northeast Asia—the Indian subcontinent presents a fascinating array of internal developments and external influences that only patient and unbiased study can reveal.”

Before these speakers of an Indo-European language describing themselves as the *arya*, migrating from the Steppes, arrived in what is now India, the ancestors of those who speak the Austroasiatic languages had come here. Two major waves of migration, one through an inland route via South-East Asia and the other an island-hopping one with its origin in China, had reshaped South-East Asia. Rice and millets had been fully domesticated in the Yangtze and Yellow river valleys long ago. The first migration brought with it the Austroasiatic languages, such as the Munda, new plants and a new variety of rice to India by the turn of the second millennium BCE. This recognition

shows that around the time that the Mature Harappan civilisation was about to bow out, there was the influx of another set of people coming through eastern India. Even in the case of the heirs of these migrants, their maternal lineages are of “First Indian” origin.

This last point is very interesting. Even in the case of the Steppe pastoralists migrating to India, there was a heavy predominance of men. Joseph shows a brilliant flash of insight in his observation that the convention that women speak Prakrit while the “high-born” speak Sanskrit in plays may be “because women may often have belonged to a different, a non-‘Aryan’, language culture than the high-born, or ‘Aryan’ men from the Steppes they were married to in the early period of their migrations”.

This book is remarkably accessible to the reader, dense as it is with evidence from multiple branches of knowledge such as archaeology, linguistics, ancient texts and, most notably, the recent study of ancient genes (aDNA). It goes without saying that not all scholars will agree with the conclusions drawn on the basis of results of individual disciplines; so also, some may doubt the validity of generalisations based on limited samples, especially in the study of genes. But, here is a firm basis on which the study of Indian history can begin. This is of especial importance in the context of the post-truth conditions of the present when myth-making seeks to replace authentic knowledge. □

## BOOKS in review

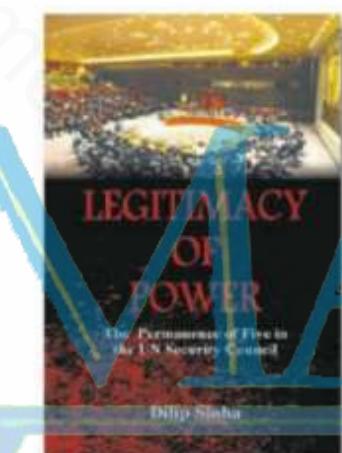
# Making of the U.N.

This book by an eminent practitioner of multilateral diplomacy is not only for students of international relations and serving diplomats but also for the layperson in view of its lucid presentation of complicated issues. BY K.P. FABIAN

**A**MBASSADOR Dilip Sinha is eminently qualified to write on the Permanent Five (P5) in the Security Council. He was chief of the division in the Ministry of External Affairs dealing with the United Nations when India was in the Security Council in 2011-12 and, later, Permanent Representative to the U.N. in Geneva. His style is lucid, the research meticulous, and the jargon-free narration impeccable.

There are 16 chapters in all, apart from the conclusion. The author promises a "study of international security co-operation and its moorings in international law *from the perspective of the countries in the South*" (emphasis added.) He gives a historically sound account of the genesis of territorial states in Europe following the end of the Thirty Years' War (1618-48).

The account of the origins of international law shows analytic rigour. The Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius published *The Law of War and Peace* in 1625 when the Thirty Years' War was still raging. With the rise of the territorial states, the need



## Legitimacy of Power

**The Permanence of Five in the UN Security Council**

By Dilip Sinha  
Indian Council of World Affairs  
Vij Book India Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 2019

Pages: 320  
Price: Rs.595

arose for a law of nations "binding upon civilised states in their relations with one another". This called for a fundamental change in the concept of law, as law was commonly understood as a body of commands given and enforced by a sovereign. Who was the sovereign to enforce the laws among the states? As Immanuel Kant pointed out, Grotius and others like him were "sorry comforters" because such laws "do not and cannot have the slightest legal force since states as such are not subject to a common external constraint".

The concept of God-given "natural laws" is a partial answer to Kant. It is

partial as we do not see the enforcer.

The author draws attention to the difference between *collective security* and *collective defence*. The latter has been "the primary incentive for international cooperation". It means collective action by members against an external threat. *Collective security* deals with threats "emanating from an internal source against which all members accept the obligation to take joint action".

The U.N. was formed as a "collective defence organisation against the enemy states of the Second World War". The U.N. "created an international order in

which member states agreed to restrict their sovereign right to wage war and to repose their faith in a small body of members of the Security Council".

We all have an idea about why and how the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union became permanent members of the Security Council. The author gives an insightful account of how China became a permanent member. But for President F.D. Roosevelt's determined insistence, China would not have been in. He fantasised about the immense market of 500 million in a China industrialised and "Christianised" after the war and the benefits for the U.S. from exporting to such a huge market. T.V. Soong, brother-in-law of Chiang Kai-shek, ambassador in Washington, enjoyed easy access to Roosevelt. Chiang Kai-shek, married to the daughter of a rich publisher of Christian missionary books, was a Southern Methodist Christian. Winston Churchill was scandalised to see China in. He pointed out repeatedly to Roosevelt that it was a big mistake to overestimate China's contribution to victory in the war.

To Churchill's chagrin, he found that some in Washington accorded equal weight to the British Empire and to China under Chiang Kai-shek. Roosevelt's trusted envoy, Averell Harriman, did not agree with him on acceding such an important place to China.

The reader will note the impact of individual



THE HINDU ARCHIVES

judgment or prejudice on foreign policy decisions. She might also wonder whether Chiang Kei-sheik was the only Chinese leader fighting the Japanese invader. How about Mao Zedong? Roosevelt was keen to include Brazil. Churchill was adamant on getting France in, though it was yet to be liberated, and Roosevelt had to agree. However, the Russian leader Joseph Stalin formally agreed to including France only at the Yalta Conference in February 1945, five months after the liberation of France in August 1944. If Brazil is in, there will be six permanent members, and in order to give notional majority to the non-permanent, there will have to be seven of them, giving a total of 13, a

**JUNE 1945:** U.S. President Harry S. Truman speaking at the closing session of the United Nations San Francisco Conference where the U.N. Charter was finalised.

number that Roosevelt disliked.

It was Roosevelt's idea to give permanent membership to the "four policemen" (the U.S., the Soviet Union, the U.K. and China) who would keep peace in the world. (We are talking of a time before Roosevelt had accepted France.) Roosevelt shared this idea with Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov in 1942. The latter added one more thought: the four "police-men" alone should hold weapons. Roosevelt, agreed as can be seen from Anthony Eden's book *The Reckoning* where Roosevelt is quoted as saying that the smaller powers

"should have nothing more dangerous than rifles".

The first outline of a new organisation was prepared by Boris Stein, a Soviet diplomat, after the 1943 Tehran Conference attended by Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, known as the Big Three.

The first U.S. draft followed the Stein draft. There was disagreement about the name of the post-war organisation. Roosevelt wanted to retain the name "The United Nations", representing the Allies. Stalin opposed using a wartime name. He proposed "World Union" or "International Security Organisation". Churchill supported Roosevelt, and

Stalin yielded. The U.N. was not conceived as a universal organisation. Nor did decolonisation figure among its goals. The U.N. Charter has three articles (53, 77 and 107) that refer to possible action against "enemy states" despite the World Summit of December 2005 deciding to "work towards deleting the references", as the author puts it. The first two words, "work towards", are typical U.N. language.

The "veto" power held by the P5 came in for much discussion. The Big Three were agreed on the need for the veto but worried about criticism from other member states. Confident of their ability to have ma-

jority support, Washington and London were prepared to show some flexibility. Stalin objected. Finally, Roosevelt's formula, under which none of the P5 could prevent discussion of any issue but could veto enforcement action, was agreed to by Stalin.

This in brief is the account of the Dumbarton Oaks Conference held in 1944. The author gives an equally thorough account of the San Francisco Conference of 1945, where the Charter was finalised.

Chapter 5 is appropriately titled "Beginner's Luck: The Early Successes". The successes included the location of the U.N. headquarters in New York, the selection of a Secretary-General, accelerating the emergence of Indonesia as an independent state, and the U.N.-brokered ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir.

Chapter 14, "Impermanence of the Permanent Five", makes important points. Except for a while between 1970 and 1990, the U.S. has dominated the Security Council. All Security Council resolutions authorising the use of force were either moved by the U.S. or had its support, with Russia and China either blocking or grudgingly supporting. These two seldom use the Security Council to promote their global interests as the West does.

Chapter 15, "Wars that Escaped Security Council Action", and the last one, "Security Council Reform", round up this exhaustive study. Let us look at the conclusions. The author starts by asking pertinent questions:



THE HINDU ARCHIVES

**U.S. PRESIDENT F.D. ROOSEVELT** and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Roosevelt wanted to retain the name "The United Nations" for the post-war organisation. Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin proposed "World Union" or "International Security Organisation".

How has the Security Council fared in performing its Charter responsibilities?

Has it fulfilled the expectations of those who drafted the Charter?

How do the current members of the U.N. evaluate it?

The author has pointed out, *inter alia*, that:

- In the absence of compulsory adjudication of disputes and a machinery to enforce verdicts, the Security Council's actions to maintain international peace and security become a reactionary preservation of the *status quo*.

- An increase in the permanent seats will make the Council more undemocratic. The debates will be longer and decision-making will be slower.

- All countries are not equal. Weighted voting can be introduced.

The author promised us a study from the perspective of the countries in the South. Therefore, the

reader might have expected a mention of India's important role in the Security Council on the Korean War. Sir Benegal Narsing Rao was India's Permanent Representative when India was on the Security Council in 1950-52. He played a crucial role in shaping the Security Council's decisions. Similarly, V.K. Krishna Menon helped to bring about a ceasefire by working out a formula on repatriation of the prisoners of war. India's resolution drafted by him was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly on December 3, 1952.

This reviewer mentions this matter because he has come across ignorance of India's role in the Korean War context on the part of the political science faculty in more than one university. The reader interested in knowing more on India's crucial diplomatic role might look up the book *Between the Blocs: India, the United Nations and Ending the Korean War* by Robert Barnes, one of the rare books dealing with India's role. One can read it free on the Internet.

The book under review could do with more editing. For example, on page 39 we read: *The United Nations was formed as a military alliance during the Second World War. After the war, its three main allies—the United States, the Soviet Union and Britain converted it into an international organisation for continued collective defence against the enemy states, Germany and Japan.*

The reader might wonder about the need to seek collective defence against Japan and Germany, both under occupation.

These days one comes across concocted stories about Nehru's having rejected twice the offer of a permanent seat on the Security Council. The reader would have appreciated a paragraph or two on this, especially in the context of the rewriting of history gathering momentum these days. The author has made rather laconic references to the so-called offers.

The author has conclusively proved the illegitimacy of the P5 and hence the title is rather intriguing. All told, this well-researched book by an eminent practitioner of the art of multilateral diplomacy will be read not only by students of international relations and serving diplomats but also by the general public in view of its lucid presentation of complicated issues. □

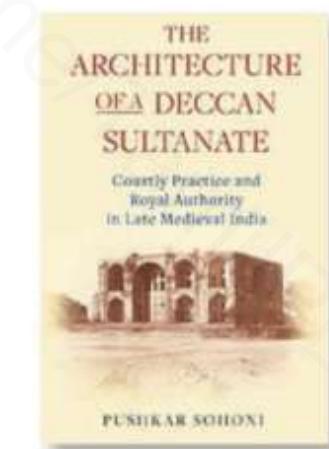
*K.P. Fabian is the author of Diplomacy: Indian Style.*

# Deccan architecture

Architectural exploration in the sultanate of Ahmednagar can provide deep insights into the political history of the Deccan. BY VIKHAR AHMED SAYEED

**B**Y the late 15th century, the Bahmani kingdom that had ruled much of the Deccan since its establishment in 1347 was imploding because of internecine differences among its nobility. Westerners, or the “Afaqis”—immigrants from Persia and Central Asia—had differences with the natives, or the “Deccanis”, an eclectic group of nobles that consisted of descendants of the early Delhi sultanate migrants, local converts to Islam, Habshis (Africans) and Marathas. The weakening of the kingdom was accompanied by ambitious provincial governors declaring independence one after the other, leading to the emergence of five separate principalities, or sultanates.

The earliest to break away and proclaim himself sultan was Ahmed Nizam Shah I, who was the governor of the north-west province of the Deccan, later to be known as Ahmednagar, after the name of the city he would build and designate as capital of the sultanate. Of the four other sultanates that would cleave away chunks of the Bahmani kingdom,



Bijapur and Golconda were the large and important ones to emerge.

Ahmednagar survived as a robust Shiite polity for more than a century, until 1600, and then in a feeble form until 1636 before the Mughals, with their unceasing imperial ambitions, completely swamped the city. It took 50 more years for the Mughals to subjugate all the kingdoms of the Deccan when Aurangzeb finally defeated the sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda in 1686 and 1687 respectively. Even though it was the first sultanate to fall to the Mughals because of its location, Ahmednagar survived as an inde-

pendent state for more than 100 years.

During this time, it carved out a distinct identity in statecraft apart from leaving behind a fairly rich architectural legacy, which is the subject of study of the book under review. With this clearly defined ambition, Pushkar Sohoni, who is an architectural historian, has turned the spotlight on the sultanate of Ahmednagar and presented a method by which architectural exploration can provide deep insights into the political history of a geographical region.

The art and architecture of the Deccan sultanates was the focus of many

scholars in the past. In pre-independent India, the region's architecture was studied as an addendum to the Islamic architecture of northern India (for example, the second volume of Percy Brown's seminal work on Indian architecture, 1942). More recently, the study of the Deccan as an independent area has come into its own, with scholars such as George Michell and Mark Zebrowski (*Architecture and Art of the Deccan Sultanates*, 1999) publishing detailed studies.

Among exhaustively edited volumes on the same theme, a few stand out in recent times, including *Silent Splendour: Palaces of the Deccan, 14th-19th Centuries* edited by Helen Philon (2010) and *Sultans of the South: Art of India's Deccan Courts, 1323-1687* edited by Navina Najat Haidar and Marika Sardar (2011).

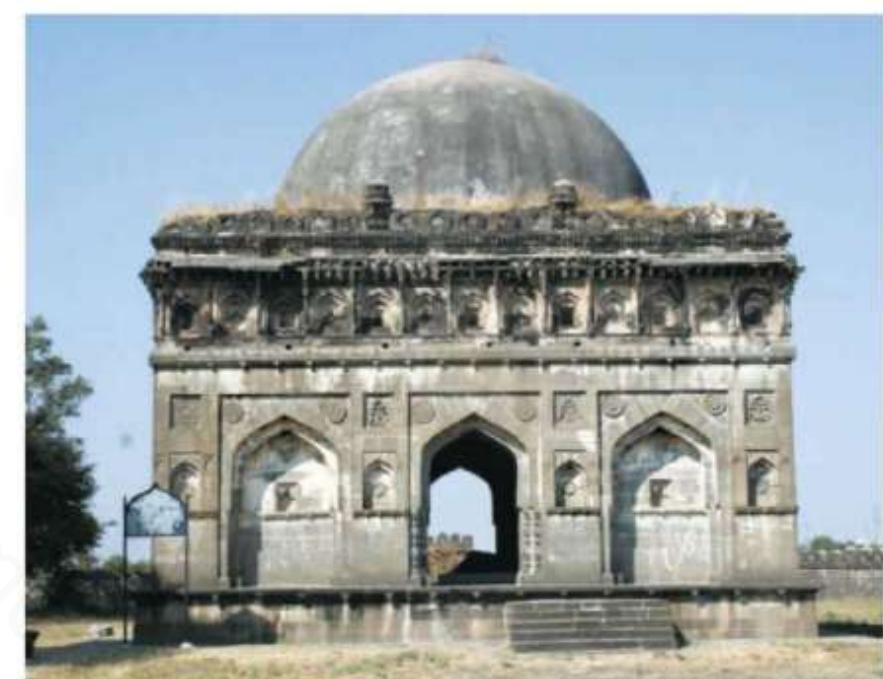
Richard Eaton and Phillip B. Wagoner have published a book titled *Power, Memory, Architecture: Contested Sites on India's Deccan Plateau, 1300-1600* (2014) that looks in detail at secondary urban centres of the Bahmani and Deccan Sultanate era such as Kalyana, Raichur and Warangal.

Coming to the scholarship on individual sultanates: Pramod B. Gadre has studied Ahmednagar in some detail (*The Cultural Archaeology of Ahmadnagar during Nizam Shahi Period, 1494-1632*, 1986); Deborah Hutton has looked carefully at the art of Bijapur (*Art at the Court of Bijapur*, 2006);

Marika Sardar has extensively studied the fortifications of Golconda ("Golconda Through Time: A Mirror of the Evolving Deccan", unpublished PhD thesis, 2007). The book under review adds to this burgeoning bibliography on the art and architecture of the Deccan sultanates.

In his prefatory chapter, Sohoni makes a forceful case for the independent study of the Deccan, which had a distinct identity from "Hindustan", or northern India, for most of the past. He writes: "The deep connections of the Deccan with West Asia, completely independent of Northern India, along with the autonomous cultural and historical developments in the south have shaped the Deccan very uniquely. Detailed studies of the polities of the Deccan, therefore, of architecture and statecraft, need to be undertaken in order to explain how, in moments of disengagement with the north, unique formations were created independent of developments in North India."

This disconnectedness from north India led to the emergence of a distinctive architecture as the Nizam Shahis developed their own style. Sohoni's argument is that the "...architecture of the Nizam Shahs does not follow a linear development from its Persian origins to the creation of a regional style. The buildings are variously of broadly Persianate and Indic characteristics, at times both, but to call them derivative is unfair, as the kingdom of the Nizam Shahs was trying to create a new architectural



BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

**BAGH RAUZA** [c. 1509], the tomb of the founder of the dynasty, Ahmed Nizam Shah I.

language as a regional claim."

This study of architecture and the politics of Ahmednagar also leads Sohoni to argue ingeniously that the Deccani kingdoms saw themselves as "regionalists" who were resisting the "Hindustani" expansion led by the Mughals. This is an interesting perspective of medieval India.

Thus, the Deccan kingdoms were resisting the cultural expressions of the north by forging links with Persianate lands, which led to autonomous architectural representations. Chaul, Dabhol, Bhatkal and Goa were the principal ports through which connections with the wider Persianate world were forged independently, bypassing north India. In their architecture and in other aspects such as coinage, literature and painting, the Deccan sultans intended to bolster their

independent claims as Deccan potentates. At the time, the Deccan was a multi-ethnic society with strong and independent connections to Persia.

There was also a great deal of cultural interaction and churning in the region involving ethnicities as diverse as African, Arab, Central Asian and South Asian. Thus, Sohoni provides ample evidence to back his argument that the Deccan has to be studied independently from "Hindustan".

Sohoni's intervention is valuable for the much-needed nuance it provides to the story of medieval India. In the reductive nationalist and colonialist versions of the time, Muslim rulers are seen as invaders "...upsetting indigenous practices until the 'Hindu revival' under the Marathas in the seventeenth century which is a simplistic and naive model of regional history".

Through Sohoni's work, we see that the Nizam Shahi's forbears were Brahmins who converted to Islam. Sohoni goes on to demonstrate, through his close reading of visual architecture, that the Nizam Shahi state "...formed the basis of the nascent Maratha state that emerged in the mid-seventeenth century under Shivaji Bhonsale".

Sohoni delineates his method of studying architecture: "In this book, art-historical methods of visual inspection and formal analysis, along with documentation of architecture and construction, expand on earlier attempts to overcome the limited interpretations of previous text-based histories." His book has a detailed historiographical note on the Nizam Shahis combined with the study of other aspects, such as the role of guilds and the material used in buildings of the

time, providing a fulsome interpretation of architecture.

Sohoni also looks briefly at the literature, visual culture and coins of the Nizam Shahs. It is interesting to note that Ahmednagar started minting its own coins only in the second half of the 16th century, and this was done only when it realised the implications of Mughal expansion and had to symbolically demonstrate its independent status.

Commencing his detailed look at the architecture of Ahmednagar, Sohoni dedicates a chapter to urban patterns in six settlements of Ahmednagar: Junnar (the first capital of the Nizam Shahis), Daulatabad (the older capital of the northern Deccan), Ahmednagar (the capital built from scratch by the Nizam Shahis), Chaul (a major seaport), Parenda (a fortified military centre built by the Bahmanis) and Sindkhed Raja (the hereditary fief of the Jadhavs, Maratha nobles at the court of the Nizam Shahs). He also looks at the water technology and the fortifications in these settlements.

In the next chapter, Sohoni looks at the palaces and mansions of Ahmednagar such as Farah Baksh Bagh, a large building originally set on a raised platform in a pool of water. Sohoni spends some time on this monument before moving on to detailed discussions of other monuments such as the Hasht Bihisht Bagh, Manzarsumbah and Kalawantinicha Mahal.

In a subsequent chapter, Sohoni discusses the architecture of 12



BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

**DAMDI MOSQUE** (c. 1562). In one chapter of the book, the author discusses the architecture of 12 mosques spread across various settlements in Ahmednagar.

mosques spread across various settlements in erstwhile Ahmednagar. Interestingly, Sohoni points out that there was no main congregational mosque in Ahmednagar where proclamations of sovereignty could be made on Friday, which is something unique and can be attributed to the Shiite orientation of its rulers. In the next chapter, Sohoni looks at tombs. One would imagine that like their royal forbears and peers among the Deccan sultanates the Nizam Shahis would also have grand tombs, but barring the first king of the dynasty, none of the other kings are buried here as their bodies were embalmed and sent off to Karbala (Iraq) in homage to their Shiite belief.

Thus, the 14 tombs that have been discussed are of the higher nobles who were buried in the region and memorials that are attributed to Maratha nobles, such as the ancestors of Shivaji in Verul and

that of Lakhiji Jadhav in Sindkhed Raja. Another chapter is dedicated to the discussion of miscellaneous buildings, including royal *hamams*.

Sohoni does not claim to have catalogued all the extant buildings from the Ahmednagar era, but his list is fairly thorough and includes all the prominent monuments in the region.

Through his work, the author sounds an urgent note of caution as many of these buildings are in a poor state of preservation with a few even slated for demolition. Several noteworthy monuments are not even protected by archaeological authorities. Sohoni has provided accompanying photographs and architectural plans for many of the monuments in his work. His detailed appendix is also useful as it provides an annotated listing of inscriptions on several monuments.

Sohoni concludes by providing an overview of what the Nizam Shahis

represented. They were the last medieval state that the early modern Mughal state encountered as it swept across the Deccan.

He writes: "This study locates the Nizam Shahs as a critical component of the architectural and political history of the sixteenth-century Deccan, and hopefully can restore to them some of the status that they once commanded in their own time." Drawing a direct link from the Nizam Shahis to the incipient Marathi state that emerged, Sohoni contradicts reductive scholarship that sees the Marathas as breaking from an Islamicate past. He writes that "...it is possible to conclude that there was no nationhood or polity based on an ethnic identity, and that their ethnic identity was a marker of social rise through military service. The cultural forms of the greater Islamicate world, as expressed in the Deccan by the Bahmanis, the Vijayanagar kings, and the later sultanates, were also adopted by the Maratha courts. In conception, execution, and ornament, the architecture of the early Marathas was exactly the same as that of their sultanate overlords and peers. The structural forms, decorative details, and planning logic conform to the Islamicate architecture of the Deccan sultanates."

This book is valuable to architectural historians and historians of medieval India. A logical expectation would be for similar research to be done on the other Deccan sultanates, each of which represented robust regional resistance to the imperial policy of the Mughals. □

# Trysts with trauma

Engaging and disturbing narratives, in prose and in verse, about displacement, dispossession and the legacy of Partition. BY ZIYA US SALAM

**A**n eerie calm descended on the Indian subcontinent in 1947. A million voices, of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, were silenced forever. Hatred was the pulse of the times. Never mind Mahatma Gandhi, Noakhali was a reality. Lahore and Ludhiana were torn asunder.

As trains arrived in Delhi or Lahore, all that the bystanders could do was to count the casualties. The living, devastated and brutalised, were all but dead. Blood and grief ran through the streets of Delhi and Rawalpindi.

So profound was the grief, so overwhelming the silent sorrow of the humanity on either side of the border, that the Imperial cinema hall in Delhi, which revelled in playing the best of Hollywood and Muslim social dramas until Independence, closed that chapter of its professional engagement. Surrounded by refugees from the new state of Pakistan and being a daily witness to train-loads of blood-soaked bodies in the immediate aftermath of Partition, the Imperial cinema hall decided to speak the language of the refugees. In

came Hindu mythological movies and Punjabi dramas. Cinema could at least pretend to heal.

Slowly, the community recovered its voice. But it took a long time. Long enough for the illustrious poet Gulzar to turn moist-eyed when he reached his

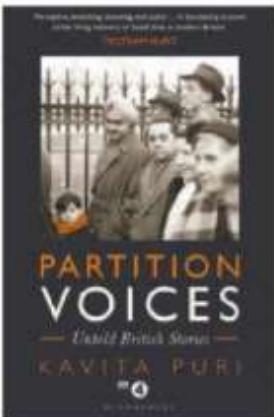
birthplace, Dina, now in Pakistan, almost 60 years after he left the place as a child. Much like former Prime Minister I.K. Gujral and the noted journalist Kuldip Nayar. They had all suffered or heard tales of untold suffering related in hushed whispers on long

winter nights at homes. The sorrow of Partition and the stories of displacement and dispossession were like family secrets. Each was hidden from the public eye, yet each was similar to the other.

The noted journalist Kavita Puri stumbled upon one such story. It was a story her father had kept to himself for 70 years. Then, one day in 2016, it tumbled out. The result? *Partition Voices*, an evocative book that leaves you breathless with its human predicament and gives voice to stories long held prisoner to silence.

It is a different path that Kavita Puri charts. Not for her the stories of horror from the refugee camps in Delhi. Instead, she digs up the stories from England, where many Indians and Pakistanis went in search of a new home, of bread and butter. She writes: "My father broke his silence after nearly seventy years to speak about what happened to him during the partition of British India. Seventy years. A lifetime. He never returned to the place of his birth, the place he was forced to leave, the place he always hoped to see again. Ravi Dutt Puri was born in 1935 in Lahore, Punjab, in British Colonial India. When he finally told me about the things he had witnessed as a twelve-year-old boy, I understood why he had kept his silence."

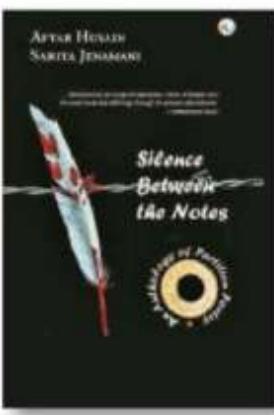
Why indeed? Simply because the loss and suffering were unimaginable. Nearly a million people were killed. Nearly 10 million were displaced.



### Partition Voices

**Untold British Stories**

By Kavita Puri  
Bloomsbury  
Pages: 320  
Price: Rs.499



### Silence between the Notes

**An Anthology of Partition Poetry**

By Aftab Husain and Sarita Jenamani  
Dhauli Books  
Price: Rs.395

Among them were pregnant women, innocent children, the aged and the ailing. The human cost was staggering. Yet statistics failed to convey the profundity of the tragedy, the enormity of the challenge ahead.

For instance, take the story of Mohammed Hussain Sultan and his daughter Khurshid, and how their family stood divided at the time of Partition. Kavita Puri writes poignantly: "...Mohammed Hussain Sultan turned up at his now teenage daughter's school in Delhi. He told Khurshid to leave with him immediately. He had already warned his child that if he were ever to appear and ask her to come out of class, she must do as he says. NO questions. Mohammed was a Muslim civil servant working in the Imperial Secretariat. Days earlier, he had been tipped off by some Dalits, untouchables, who he had been giving charitable assistance to, that there were to be riots in the area he lived in. 'Leave quickly,' they told him. He arranged to send his family to Karachi; only Khurshid would stay with him, as she was about to sit for her school exams. His wife and eldest daughter, dressed in saris to look like Hindu women, made their way to Delhi station, bound for a new country. Khurshid's mother was carrying a newborn, and in her purse, she kept the photograph of her husband, and Khurshid with her younger brother, Yusuf, who had died years earlier, and was buried in India. She took it as a reminder of the son she was leaving behind in India's earth."

Or take the story of Denys and Mohammed Sarwar, a rare bond between a British officer and his batman. Sarwar was a responsible man, cheerful, gentle. And Denys, who had learnt to speak Urdu, trained, ate and lived alongside Indian cadets. Kavita Puri writes that at the time of Partition, Sarwar and Denys transcended their nationalities: "When Denys and Mohammed parted, they both knew it was for the last time. 'I don't remember discussing it at all, but I'm sure we all knew in our heart of hearts that we wouldn't see each other again,' says Denys. 'I couldn't put my hand on my heart saying, I remember being in tears or near to it saying goodbye, but I'm sure I was. Everything seemed to be happening so quickly at that stage. India was part of the British Empire. Then it suddenly became independent and everything sort of happened bang bang bang on top of the other. And I think there was probably very little time for emotion.'"

If there was little time for emotion for a British man, there was none for an Indian; the costs of Partition were exponentially higher.

Kavita Puri's is not the only voice on Partition 72 years after India and Pakistan kept their trysts with destiny. There are the equally engaging, and disturbing, voices of Aftab Husain, the eminent multilingual poet and writer from Pakistan, and Sarita Jenamani, the Cuttack-born multilingual poet. They have selected, edited and contributed poems on



*Partition in Silence Between the Notes: An Anthology of Partition Poetry.* The poems have been described by the noted author Mohammed Hanif as "songs of separation, voices of despair and the cruel music that still rings through the present subcontinent".

#### POETRY TO PORTRAY TERROR

Human misery does not make for instant poetry. It lends itself more readily to prose, short stories, even long-form journalism. But

distance in time allows for the poetic metre to find its own soul. If sad songs and music be the abiding memory of Partition, then Aftab Husain and Sarita Jenamani give us abiding melancholy. They write in the introduction: "After the Second World War German cultural critic Theodor W. Adorno had famously pronounced, 'writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.' He meant, perhaps, that any attempt to capture life in concentration camps in poetry, simply denigrates

**Clearly, when it comes to Partition, there are no ends, only fresh beginnings.**



THE HINDU ARCHIVES

**THE PARTITION OF 1947** resulted in the largest mass migration in human history.

the horror faced by those who lived and [those who were] murdered by Nazis. However, many survivors, their descendants and the writers who saw that horrendous crime, have used poetry to portray the terror and dread of the Holocaust into words. Very often, as we know, poetry serves as the ideal medium to describe the emotional and personal experiences and to express ideas that perhaps could not be adequately rendered through other forms of literary expression. Poetry, in this case, acts as a powerful medium in which these writers could express the inexpressible."

Expressing the inexpressible here are poets from both sides of the geographical divide. They include luminaries such as Akhtar ul Iman, Ahmad Riaz, Agha Shahid Ali, Adil Jussawala, Sukrita Paul Kumar, Nida Fazli, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Balraj Komal, Sahir Ludhianvi, Mohan Rana, Fahmida Riaz and Shankha Ghosh, besides the editors themselves.

Aftab Husain, incidentally, comes up with a piece of poetry that expresses the widely held belief of Indians and Pakistanis: they become one when they leave the subcontinent. In "Reunion

in a Third Country", he talks of Barcelona, where he met Balbir Singh. "We had three languages at our disposal to communicate/ But, we found ourselves speaking Punjabi—our mother tongue". Without shouting from the rooftop, Husain is able to point to language as the bond of commonality. Religion divides, language unites.

Sarita Jenamani takes recourse to melancholy in her poem "70 years later". She writes: "August does not let us forget those maimed and mangled bodies uprooted and cleaved from life by a vertiginous fury/ August is a month of monsoon and monsoon brings a maze of hope."

Particularly unsettling is the writing of Fazli, whose own kith and kin migrated to Pakistan even as he held steadfast to India at the time of Partition. Here he writes, somewhat laconically: "On changing house, on getting into new grooves/many things break, many things get lost."

Leaving one more forlorn is Komal's "The Lonely Girl": "I've no one in the world today, My mamma, papa, older sis,/ My sweet, innocent little bro,/ The proud rays of my chastity,/ The small hut in whose lovely shade, I heard the tuneful lullaby,/ Whilst picking flowers, singing songs, And smiling all the while, Now all has gone, I'm left forlorn/ And nothing stays with me."

The best work in the book, predictably, comes from the pen of Fahmida Riaz whose oft-read "You turned out just like us" has an unusual echo at this

time in India. The poet, who was uprooted from her land at one time, writes: "You turned out just like us/ where had you been hiding all this while, brother?/ That stupidity, that idiocy/ The century that we whiled away/ knocked at your doors at last/ Congratulations brother! / The ghost of religion is dancing/ You will establish Hindu Raj/ You will muddle all the things up/ You will devastate your garden/ You too will sit and think it over/ All is set I am sure/ You too will pass fatwas:/ Who is Hindu, and who not/ Life here too will be hard to live/ You too will taste the dust."

"Silence Between the Notes" tells you one thing loud and clear: the passage of years clears the way to a poet's expression of a tragedy most profound. Distance in time only hides emotions, it does not diminish them.

As for Kavita Puri's book, she treads the path unknown, uncharted. Nobody has ever brought out the stories of South Asians now settled in the United Kingdom. Merely because their present is calm and composed does not mean their past was without trials and tragedy. Kudos to Kavita Puri for documenting Partition's lasting legacy in Britain, an irony in itself. It is a unique book, one that lives with you long after the stories end. Clearly, when it comes to Partition, there are no ends, only fresh beginnings.

As for those displaced and dispossessed in 1947, there is consolation: all of us are immigrants. All that matters is how far back you go in time. □

# Physician par excellence

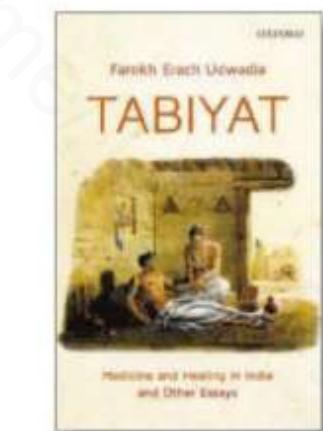
This book helps in preparing its reader to face death calmly even as it instructs him in the **history of medicine** and the joys of music. BY **A.G. NOORANI**

*"Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider." —*

Francis Bacon's essay "Of Studies", *The Moral and Historical Works of Lord Bacon*, Bell and Dolby, 1866, page 136.

IT is a unique feature of this book, written by a physician par excellence, that page after page it plunges the reader into thought and forces him to ponder and reflect. It is, in a sense, a successor to his earlier work *Man and Medicine: A History*, published by Oxford University Press in 2000. As that work had taught us to expect, the author's knowledge and range of interest go far beyond those of a physician, no matter how accomplished. Nor must I fail to mention *The Forgotten Art of Healing and Other Essays* (2009).

Dr Farokh Erach Udwadia is a truly educated and civilised person. He is steeped in the humanities, history—far beyond the history of medicine—and music, to which he is pas-



**Tabiyat**  
**Medicine and Healing in India and Other Essays**

By Farokh Erach Udwadia  
Oxford University Press  
Pages: 210  
Price: Rs.695

sionately dedicated. The last chapter on death brings out the best in him—a reflective disposition, freedom from conventional wisdom and a humanity that informs this work as it did the earlier ones.

The author writes from the perspective of a physician. But his insights are not limited by that discipline. The first essay in this volume is revealingly entitled "A Knowledge of the Humanities and History Makes a Better Physician".

At the outset, he states his fundamental belief with crystal clarity. "I believe that a knowledge of the humanities and history makes a better physician; it is a concept that is close to

my heart. I passionately believe so....

"There is no greater saga in the history of mankind than the epic of medicine. Medicine emerged out of the mists of magical and empirical beliefs of the ancient civilisations. The trail of medicine has witnessed several twists and turns, victories and defeats, scintillating light and sombre darkness. Over five thousand years of history, medicine has evolved into a powerful force, an art, a science, a profession that has taken a quantum leap into the twenty-first century."

There are of course limits to medicine as there are, indeed, to most sciences. As Edmund Burke remarked: "The law sharpens the

mind—by narrowing it." Although few lawyers will admit that, a physician does not impair his faculties by widening the areas of his interests. On the contrary, he widens them.

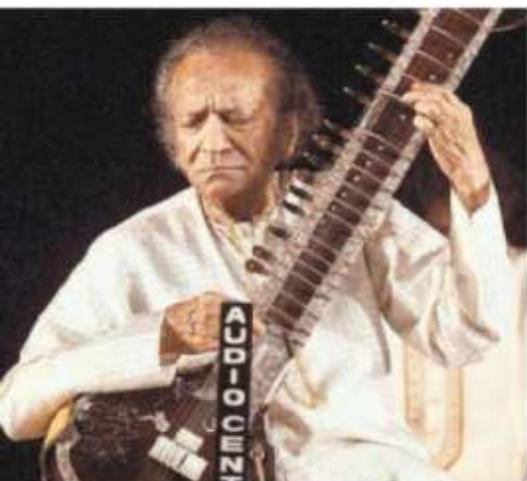
Dr Udwadia writes felicitous prose with ease. What he writes of medicine is true of other professions as well, especially the law, whose practitioners tend, not seldom, to be cocky.

The book has essays on other specialised subjects like "The Fight Against Infection: The Microbes Hunters" and "War and Medicine" (an important topic on which one wishes Dr Udwadia had drawn on the Geneva Conventions also) and medicine and healing in India.

## FAITH AS A HEALER

The essay "Tabiyat: Medicine and Healing in India", which gives the book its name, provides a good introduction to the Unani and Ayurvedic systems of medicines. They rose high. The author traces Ayurveda's history and draws on its philosophy. This brings us to the doctor's comments on faith as a healer. "Faith in the healing power of prayer stretches back to antiquity. Let me quote from the scriptures [Avesta] of the ancient Persian civilisation, 'Of all the healers, Oh Spitama Zarathustra, mainly those who heal with the knife, with herbs, and with sacred incantation, the last one is the most potent as he heals from the very source of disease.' Indeed, even today, there are many like me who believe that 'More

JAYANTA SHAW/REUTERS



SHAUKAT AHMED/PTI



**A SITAR RECITAL** by Pundit Ravi Shankar. (Right) A qawwali session at Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Dargah in Ajmer. The author writes eloquently on the close connection between music and healing.

things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.

"In the doctor-patient relationship, faith in the doctor unquestionably helps in healing, particularly in a critical illness. Any doctor practising any system of medicine for a significant length of time will vouch for this fact. How does faith act? Faith acts through the mind-body complex. Though there is a great deal of research going on in relation to the mind-body complex, there is very little we know and much to be learnt."

After 1000 C.E., especially since the latter half of the 18th century, Ayurveda declined because its teachers lacked the spirit of scientific inquiry. The book is studded with moving passages, such as this: "I cannot help feeling that the average Indian, the Indian in rural areas, the Indian living in slums of large cities, the poor, the marginalised, or even the middle-class Indian, deserves a better deal with regard to his health. I just cannot imagine how the deprived Indian bears his

lot with such indomitable courage, fortitude and philosophical equanimity. Perhaps it is due to his religious faith, his belief and trust in God, his belief in Karma or in the immortality of his soul that enables him to do so." The passage occurs appropriately in the chapter "Tabiyat: Medicine and Healing in India". Nor is Florence Nightingale ignored. She also was moved by faith.

#### MUSIC & MIND

To this reviewer, the most arresting chapters are on music and death. Music is far more closely related to *tabiyat* (health) and healing (that is, restoration to health). The chapter on music is entitled "Music, the Mind and Medicine" and it begins with this quote from William P. Neville: "There is nothing in the world so much like prayer as music is." India is rich in the practice of religious devotion through music. A BBC journalist who heard Muslims saying their morning prayers in Kashmir thought that the rendering was close to Buddhist chants. The au-

thor's views invite not only respect, they compel acceptance. "Of all the art forms in our world, in my opinion, music is the greatest. I speak of great music—music which penetrates into the very depth of a human being, transcendental music, music which enables one to commune with God."

His essay proceeds with some thoughts on the origin, evolution and the mystery of music, followed by the effects of music on the mind, its inherent power and its relation to medicine. It concludes with a brief description on its nature and significance. He writes chiefly with reference to Western music. "Though familiar with all forms of Western music, my special interest is Western classical music." He is also familiar, but to a lesser extent, with Indian classical music. His remarks that follow apply in general to all music.

Western music arouses his greatest admiration. But he does not neglect devotional music like bhajans in temples and *qawwali*. Evidently, he has not been

exposed to the singing of what passes for *qawwali* in the increasingly degenerate city of Mumbai. Its predecessor Bombay mercilessly mocks at its utter lack of taste. Delhi hosts "Sufi Kathak" performances to the delight of its *nouveau riche*. No wonder Old Delhi, with its culture and fabulous cuisine, despises New Delhi.

What is the impact of music on the patient who is impatiently awaiting full recovery? Music can assist him a lot. "It is not just Western classical music that exerts this effect. In can be any form of music, from any part of the world, so long as it is soothing and has a special appeal for the listener. It is important to ask the patient to concentrate deeply on the music that he or she hears, to listen to every note, to shut out noises from the mind and to banish every thought that may arise in the mind's eye, as promptly as possible. The more intense the focus on the music, the greater the effect. For those who appreciate Indian music, I recommend soothing ragas

played on the sitar by Ravi Shankar or his daughter Anoushka Shankar, the melodious *shehnai* of Ustad Bismillah Khan, or the rhythmic slow ragas of the santoor played by Pandit Shivkumar Sharma. Equally great, and to many even greater, are the beautifully melodious, heart-rending *qawwalis* sung in Urdu or Persian by the Sufis—followers of the mystical Sufi strain of Islam. These *qawwalis* are paeans of devotion and love to the old Sufi saints, to the Prophet Mohammed, but above all to God, music assuredly being the only way to evoke him. Listeners sway, clap and lose themselves in the ecstasy of God."

Music is related to the spirit more than to the senses. In one of the finest passages he has written, the author says: "I have often wondered when listening to great music, be it Western or Indian, what does it all mean, what is its purpose, its significance? Music makes me believe that there is a world beyond the world we inhabit, that the *spirit*, the self, within us is birthless, deathless, and infinite. Music allows us to commune with our inner stream of consciousness and with the Supreme Being. In doing so, music gives meaning to life, a transcendental blessing that enriches, enhances and ennobles the human spirit."

#### **DEATH EXPERIENCE**

The chapter on death is rich with deep insights. Humans dread death. This is where Dr Udwadia brings to bear his experience as a physician. "In

over fifty years of practice as a physician, I have seen so many patients—young and old—who have met death with courage and stoicism, with grace and equanimity, without a trace of manifest fear. Among other features I shall touch upon later, it is the empathy, compassion and the doctor-patient bond that helps to condition a dying patient to accept without undue fear the inevitability of death. Modern medicine is hopelessly tied upon the way of complex machines and sophisticated gadgetry. The physician of today, exposed to the glittering brilliance and capability of modern medicine, concentrates on treating organ systems and ignores or delegates to the background the patient as a whole. I see him stay away from a deathbed, impatient to get to the next bed where he feels he could be of better use. After all, what can the doctor do when death sits at the bedside waiting to take over? I rarely see a doctor holding the hand of a dying patient, sitting by his side, talking to him, consoling him, listening to him, and fortifying him or her gently for what lies ahead. The art and science involving the care of the dying is unfortunately not taught and is learnt and practised by just a few, yet it is one of the core purposes of medicine."

Whatever the advance in medicine, death will triumph. It is a common failing among professionals to ignore anything that lies beyond the narrow field of their discipline. Businessmen are worse. What uplifts Dr Udwadia and this work, perhaps his best, is

his repeated recall of what lies beyond. The physician must not only heal the patient's ailing body; he must also tend to the pain in his heart and the anxieties in his mind. This can be done only if he has good bedside manners.

Now, read this: "As a physician, I have noted quite a few near-death experiences of patients who survived to relate their experiences. The commonest near-death experience recounted by patients who have survived a cardiac arrest is that of travelling at speed through a very dark tunnel and then seeing a light at the very end of the tunnel. The light is first just a point, but it enlarges so they are ultimately totally enveloped within it. I have heard it described as a blinding light of great beauty. One patient, I remember, mentioned that during his passage through the tunnel he witnessed a review of his whole life and life incidents. The experience may last just a few minutes in real time but is described as elaborative, rich and uplifting. The next most common experience recounted is the 'out-of-body experience'."

The author cites the case of one Mr D who recovered from an illness that brought him close to death. "During the time when he very nearly died, he felt that one Mr D was lying on the bed and another Mr D was floating around close to the upper region of a large window. He noticed that after a time his 'double' began to approach him and ultimately merged with his body lying in bed. It was then that he realised that he had recovered. This was my first

encounter with an out-of-body experience, and I have had a few similar experiences reported to me by critically ill patients who were near death and who fortunately recovered. Some experience an inner feeling of tranquillity and peace, devoid of body sensation, insensate, without fear or pain, and surrounded by unconditional love. There was one individual who saw a world of supernatural beauty, beautiful landscapes filled with heavenly music. He felt reluctant to return to the world from which he seemed to have escaped.

"There comes to my mind one patient who reported that he was running at fascinating speed over a beautiful meadow towards his dead grandmother to whom he had been very attached, and who was standing immobile in the far distance. When he came close, the grandmother put her hand out as if asking him to stop—as if to say not now, later. He stopped dead in his track and found himself going back at lightning speed to return to the world.

"Does the mind always relate to the body when a person is believed to be dying? Not necessarily so. At times, a patient appears to be dying, and seems to be physically suffering great agony and torment. On recovery, he may relate that he did not feel any agony, distress, or pain, only a pleasant floating sensation of peace and tranquillity."

This book helps a lot in preparing its reader to face death calmly even as it instructs him superbly in the history of medicine and the joys of music. It is a peerless work. □

# Dissent in the time of intolerance

Anand Patwardhan's films have always dealt with explosive issues.

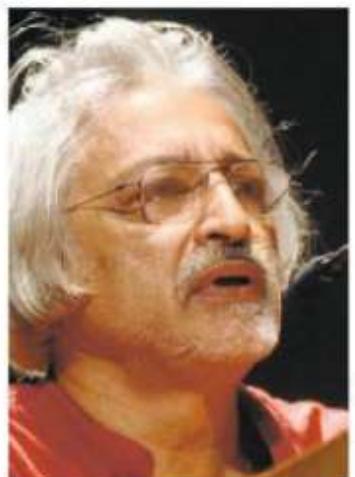
*Reason*, a searing account of the rise of Hindu militancy,  
is not an exception. BY ANUPAMA KATAKAM

ANAND PATWARDHAN'S documentaries are lengthy, intense, bold and uncomfortable. For four decades, the award-winning filmmaker has tackled explosive issues such as the Emergency in the 1970s, communal issues in the 1990s and the rise of the saffron brigade in the early 2000s. Most of Patwardhan's documentaries meet with the same fate: the establishment hates them and uses its might to prevent their release.

Patwardhan's latest film *Reason* (*Vivek* in Hindi) is another masterpiece. An eight-part documentary, *Reason* is a searing account of the rise of Hindu militancy and its sinister manoeuvrings towards the goal of achieving Akhand Bharat or Hindu rashtra. Obviously, the current Bharatiya Janata Party government would not just find it objectionable but would do everything in its capacity to stall the film's release.

*Reason*'s first public Indian screening at a film festival in Kerala in June was blocked by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry on the grounds that it could trigger law and order problems. However, following a petition filed by the festival organisers, the Kerala State Chalachitra Academy, the Kerala High Court overruled the Ministry and allowed the film to be screened but only at this event.

Fortunately, technology has



K. MURALI KUMAR

ANAND PATWARDHAN.

come to Patwardhan's rescue. In the past, once a film was made, he would spend years fighting the Central Board of Film Certification, or censor board, for clearance. In the digital space, Patwardhan has uploaded *Reason* on YouTube, where it can be watched by anyone with access to the Internet. The festival organisers pointed this out to the court, saying that it was already in the public domain and there had not been any law and order problem since its release earlier this year.

The film's message is blunt. The Hindu right wing has become a juggernaut that cannot be stopped. While Patwardhan has made films with bold themes before, he had

never encountered the current dangerous climate of intolerance. Four activists in the past six years have been gunned down because they were outspoken in their critique of Hindutva and the people steering the crusade. Patwardhan is a strong believer in democracy and, therefore, in the freedom of speech and expression. Those who follow his work will know that mindless violence will not stop him from making films. In fact, he dives deep in to the deaths of Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare, M.M. Kalburgi and Gauri Lankesh. The film begins with their assassinations, and they are a common thread throughout the documentary.

Patwardhan explores the deaths of these rationalists; sinister and shadowy organisations such as the Sanatan Sanstha; the suicide of Rohith Vemula; the persecution of dissenters, particularly students; attacks on Dalits; the violence of gau rakshaks; the killing of Mohammed Akhlaq; and the conspiracy behind the 26/11 attacks. Known for filming volatile situations, protests marches, demonstrations, street plays and public gatherings, Patwardhan uses his clever editing skills to patch together a narrative that has a tremendous impact on the viewer.

As in his other films, he uses interviews extensively to understand the rise of Hindu militancy and masculinity. If his *Jung and Aman* (*War*



**HYPER HINDUTVA** is a recurring theme in the documentary.

*and Peace*, 2002) narrated the rise of misplaced nationalism through jingoistic events, *Reason* speaks of the results of following that agenda.

*Reason* premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 2018. The documentary won the award for the best film at the 2018 International Film Festival at Amsterdam. “The jury voted ‘unanimously’ for Patwardhan’s 261-minute film, praising its epic storytelling of the rise of the Far Right in one of the most populated countries of this planet... in a way that acknowledges the complexity of the situation but puts it in a very understandable shape,” a media release from the organisers said.

Patwardhan explains on his web page: “*Reason* takes us to a macrocosm—India, the world’s largest democracy. Its eight chapters are a chilling account of how murder and mind control are being applied to systematically dismantle secular democracy in a country which once aspired not just to liberty, egalite and fraternity, but to lead the post-war world out of its mindless spiral of violence and greed. And yet, the battle for reason is not lost. Even as Brahminism (a priest-ordained caste

hierarchy that withheld knowledge from the working castes) drapes itself in the national flag and sends out its hit squads, resistance has not ended. For every brave rationalist gunned down or driven to suicide, many more take up the mantle. *Reason* is then both a warning and a promise.”

#### A REASON TO WATCH

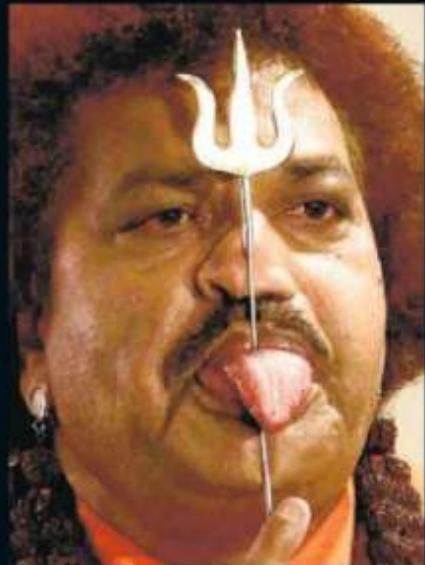
“In the past, Patwardhan’s films were only accessible to those who knew where to find them. Due to the lack of censor board clearance, you would have to seek them out. Although the film-maker tried to put them in the public domain, they would usually be watched by people who were on the same page as him. With the Internet, the reach is unimaginable. This film needs to be publicised. I can only pray he remains safe. It takes guts to do a movie such as this,” said a film critic in Mumbai.

The film can be viewed in 16 episodes on YouTube. Each part is a powerful and deeply disturbing capsule. All episodes begin with a visual of a hidden rider on a motorcycle going through a lonely road at night. It cuts to show four back-to-back profile photographs of Dabholkar,

Pansare, Kalburgi and Gauri Lankesh. The photographs are accompanied by loud gunshots. A dramatic and significant beginning that sets the tone of the documentary.

The film’s first two chapters are about the murders of Dabholkar and Pansare. Patwardhan has rare footage of their lectures and speeches. Both Dabholkar and Pansare often spoke at gatherings to help people understand the evils of superstition and casteism. In one scene, Dabholkar is seen debunking a godman who puts a spear through his tongue by showing the audience how a modified spear is used to do this trick. Patwardhan’s interview with Dabholkar’s wife poignantly brings out the couple’s simple lifestyle that was dedicated to helping weaker and marginalised communities. Similarly, Pansare’s family speaks about his relentless work with farmers and labourers. An interview with a farmer who speaks about “Comrade Pansare” with tears in his eyes is especially poignant.

Hyper Hindutva is a recurring theme through the film. Patwardhan shows youths shouting slogans and working themselves into a rage, proclaiming they will fight for a Hindu



**CONFRONTING ISSUES** of the day. (Left and above) Scenes from the documentary.

rashtra; another man says he has dedicated his life to the Bajrang Dal. The pride in their voices is frightening.

Patwardhan reveals skillful interviewing and editing techniques when he interviews Hindutwadis. He has the ability to provoke them and make them say the most ridiculous things. In one scene, he asks a member of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad who is participating in a procession to memorialise the death of a soldier if he knew the name of any Sangh Parivar member who had fought in the freedom struggle. The youth looks stumped. The episode on the Sanatan Sanstha reveals a dark and dangerous organisation that could be the at the root of saffron terror. Patwardhan questions the fact that in spite of several leads that point to the Sanatan Sanstha being involved in the deaths of the four rationalists, the organisation seems off the radar in the investigation. The footage on Dalit youths in Una in Gujarat being beaten for skinning a cow, or Muslim men being tortured in the episodes on the Dadri (Uttar Pradesh) killing are deeply disturbing. Two men hanging from a tree at the end of the sequence

is a tragic and telling symbol of the current climate of intolerance.

*Reason* also looks at the reasons behind the suicide of the Dalit student leader Rohith Vemula. Interviews with Vemula's associates and friends expose the presence of blatant discrimination towards Dalits and the so-called lower castes in university campuses. But the power of the student movement comes through in the Vemula episode and the next one on Kanhaiya Kumar, the Jawaharlal Nehru University student leader who was arrested in a sedition case.

By dedicating an entire episode to Kanhaiya Kumar, who speaks of the absurdity of the anti-national tag and why dissent is a bad word for the current regime, Patwardhan underlines the fact that democracy is at huge risk with the right wing in power. In several episodes, Patwardhan weaves in political songs sung by Dalits, farmers, social workers and students. Between the songs and the visuals, an effective tool is created to drive home a message.

There have been many conspiracy theories behind the 26/11 attacks on Mumbai and the killing of former Anti-Terrorism Squad chief Hemant

Karkare. Several top officers believe there was a saffron hand behind the attack. Patwardhan explores this angle and the Malegaon and Goa blasts. It is a contentious and difficult issue to depict through film. Yet, he makes an attempt at piecing together the facts.

Some of Patwardhan's other politically charged films are *Waves of Revolution* (1978), *A Time to Rise* (1981), *In the Name of God* (1992), *Father, Son and Holy War* (1995), *A Narmada Diary* (1995) and *War and Peace* (2002). He fought a protracted battle with the censor board over *War and Peace*. The board asked for several cuts, including removing all speeches by politicians. Patwardhan refused and took the matter to court. The court ruled in his favour, and it was allowed for screening on national television a year later. He fought a similar battle for *Father, Son and Holy War*. In the end, a good film and a good filmmaker cannot be kept down. Patwardhan has certainly put himself in the line of danger this time, but crusaders know their works have a larger purpose. *Reason* has that purpose, and hopefully, it will be viewed widely. □

CINEMA

# VOICE OF REASON

H.S. MANJUNATH

Interview with the documentary film-maker Anand Patwardhan.

BY ZIYA US SALAM



HE is as particular about the written word as he is about a frame in his film. Although they rankle and hurt, his films always ignite debate, discussion and dialogue. For the seasoned film-maker Anand Patwardhan, there are no half measures. He calls a spade a spade. One of the more robust voices against the rising tide of Hindutva, his eight-chapter, four-hour-long documentary *Reason* talks of the killing of rationalists such as Narendra Dabholkar and Govind Pansare, attacks on Muslims such as Mohammed Akhlaq and the underlying Brahminical agenda that is at the root of communal violence in contemporary India. In his usual unflustered way, he continues his fight for the soul of India. Excerpts from an interview:

**"Reason" is unsettling and**

**disturbing. It needed judicial intervention to be screened at a film festival in Kerala. How does one explain this?**

It is easy to understand. The undemocratic, majoritarian forces whose past and present journey the film describes are not just in power today but in absolute control of all institutions. There are no checks and balances left in our system, only a few chinks in the armour that can be temporarily breached before these too are sealed.

**The film is a scathing expose of Hindutva terror. Yet, Narendra Modi and Amit Shah ridicule notions of Hindutva terror. They even fielded a terror accused to counter the narrative. Can you throw some light on the origin of Hindutva terror?**

The modus operandi adopted by

the Modi-Shah regime (all others fall in line) is to scream and shout as soon as anyone utters the words "Hindutva terror". Against all evidence, people have long been fed on the idea that Hinduism by its very definition is tolerant and non-violent. The most glaring problem with this understanding is caste. Over thousands of years, orthodox (Brahminical) Hinduism rested on a violently enforced caste system that not only subjugated the weakest but was misogynist. Over the centuries, many reformists and revolutionaries rose against this oppression, from the Buddha to Kabir, Jyotirao Phule, Basava, Periyar E.V. Ramasamy, B.R. Ambedkar and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, to name just a few, but it certainly does not mean that Hindu culture itself became tolerant and non-violent.

If we delve into our history, we can find periods of hope for humanity, for example, the days of the Buddha and his amazing impact on Emperor Asoka. Such moments are not always remembered or celebrated in our history books. As I researched into historical archives while making *Reason*, I came across another, more recent, moment of potential human renaissance. I say potential because the moment was brief and was soon sidelined by the realpolitik of the day. Today, this moment has almost been forgotten.

What took me to the archives was a speech by Comrade Govind Pansare delivered at a memorial meeting that followed the murder of another rationalist, Dr Narendra Dabholkar. Pansare said the same ideology that had killed Mahatma Gandhi killed Dabholkar too. He then added a little-remembered fact. There were seven attempts made by Brahminists on the life of Gandhi. The first was a bomb attack on his motorcade in Pune as early as 1934. Narayan Apte was involved in that attempt. Apte was part of the attack that killed Gandhi in 1948.

In other words, Brahminists had been trying to kill Gandhi for well over a decade. In 1948, Nathuram Godse claimed that Gandhi was killed for favouring Muslims and because he was responsible for Partition and the creation of Pakistan. All Hindutva leaders and even some non-Hindutva players have so often repeated this calumny that it has become the received wisdom of the day. But, as Pansare pointed out, in 1934 neither Partition nor Pakistan had yet been thought of. It was clearly not because Gandhi was seen as an applier of Muslims that his death was ordered. So what was it that so angered the Brahminists apart from the fact that Gandhi had alienated them the day he publicly began to do manual scavenging, shattering the purity/pollution principle that lies at the heart of the caste system?

In the Round Table Conference of 1932, when the British granted Ambedkar's demand for separate electorates for Dalits (just as they had conceded the same for

Muslims), Gandhi argued that this would divide India and begged Ambedkar for more time to convince the upper castes to give up caste discrimination. When all else failed, Gandhi went on a life-threatening hunger strike. It is again the received wisdom that in the talks that followed between Gandhi and Ambedkar, the latter was "blackmailed" by a fasting Gandhi into dropping the idea of separate electorates in exchange for reservation for Dalits (then described as the Depressed Classes).

#### A DIFFERENT STORY

The newspapers of the day tell a different story. Headlines hailing the Poona Pact between Ambedkar and Gandhi quote Ambedkar as saying: "I am grateful to Mahatma: He came to my rescue." Indeed, Bhagwan Das, a close follower of Ambedkar, independently quotes Ambedkar's speech: "I think in all these negotiations, a large part of the credit must be attributed to Mahatma Gandhi himself. I must confess that I was surprised, immensely surprised, when I met him, that there was so much in common between him and me." What was common was that both were fighters against untouchability. What was uncommon was that one came from the sufferer caste and the other from the oppressor caste. While Ambedkar fought for universal rights, Gandhi appealed to the "goodness" in human beings to convince the upper castes to give up their unjust privilege. Gandhi failed miserably. The upper castes did not honour his commitment to eradicate untouchability. More than a decade later, in 1945, an embittered Ambedkar wrote the scathing book *What Gandhi and Congress have done to the Untouchables*.

While the critique certainly applied to most of the Congress party, it was unfair to Gandhi. As early as 1934, Gandhi understood that the promise he had made to Ambedkar, asking for more time to change the upper castes' hearts and minds, had been broken. In despair, Gandhi resigned from the Congress in 1934 to do constructive work, concentrat-

ing in large measure to fighting untouchability.

Rewind to the archives, however, and we see that in 1932, many parts of the country were indeed responding to Gandhi's hunger strike and his call to end untouchability. Temple after temple threw open their doors to Dalits; wells were thrown open in villages that had denied these rights in the past. Gandhi undertook a long train journey across India to fight untouchability, and the film footage of this shows mass support. Later in life, Gandhi would advocate inter-caste marriage as the best way to destroy the caste system. Perhaps, if Ambedkar had continued to view Gandhi as an ally rather than as a rival, their combined might could have wrought a real social revolution in India despite the entrenched presence of caste and class.

But the public renaissance that began in 1932 soon faded from memory as other aspects of the larger freedom movement took centre stage. By the mid 1940s, with Gandhi relegated to the sidelines, India, led by its elite, headed towards the bloodbath of Partition.

**The Hindutva movement uses icons of the past selectively. For instance, it talks of Shivaji, V.D. Savarkar, M.S. Golwalkar and K.B. Hedgewar but stays silent about the great kings of the Gupta dynasty or even the time of mahajanpadas. On the other hand, it has started painting Muslim kings such as Akbar and Tipu Sultan in shades of black. How do you connect the dots?**

*Reason* devotes a whole chapter to the multiplicity of history. Today, Shivaji is seen as a champion of Hindus in Mughal India. Comrade Govind Pansare brought out universalist aspects about Shivaji by pointing out that there were Muslims in Shivaji's army and Hindus on the opposite side, so it was never a religious battlefield. He also highlighted Shivaji as the leader of a multi-caste peasant army. The RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] and the entire Sangh Parivar are bent on distorting history to reflect the glory of the Hindu upper castes. They have even

rewritten the Battle of Haldighati to claim that the warrior-caste Rana Pratap defeated the Mughal Emperor Akbar.

But it is not just the RSS that rewrites history. The job was earlier undertaken by the British too. European Orientalists used Brahminical Sanskrit texts to depict pre-Medieval India as its “Golden Era”. The British, who wanted to fill their army with Indian troops, invented the notion of “martial races” who had valiantly fought “Muslim invaders”. Rajput rulers, who spent most of their time fighting each other, got glorified as champions against Muslim rule; their wives’ act of jumping into the husbands’ funeral fire was glorified as “true love”. After the British, Bollywood took up the task of glorifying the indefensible, as in [Sanjay Leela] Bhansali’s monstrous *Padmavati*.

**Is not the notion of nationalism in this Hindutva narrative just a euphemism for Brahminism? As a line goes in “Reason”, “Brahminism today is draped in the national flag, its storm troopers drawn from amongst those it has dumbed down and made jobless.”**

Absolutely. But it’s not the Brahminism of old with rotund priests with pony tails and sacred threads. It is a more sophisticated version, which fulfils the Brahminist agenda of othering minorities while pretending to be only interested in nationalism. This, despite the record that Hindutva leaders had collaborated with the British government against the mainstream nationalist movement.

**In “Reason”, you talk of rationalists such as Dabholkar and Pansare. How big a risk is it to talk of science and reason when the Prime Minister himself promotes myth and superstition, as happened when he claimed that Ganesha’s was the first plastic surgery?**

There is a mountain of nonsensical blind faith that emerges from the mouths of our politicians, but there is an even bigger mountain of superstition that is constantly churned out on television and social media. It is a miracle that

some sections of our working class have still not succumbed to all that is heaped on them.

**There is a segment on Hemant Karkare in the film. In the light of your research, do you believe he was eliminated? I ask this because a terror accused contesting elections on the BJP ticket in the recent general election made unacceptable comments about his death.**

I read a lot of books on the 26/11 attack, saw court transcripts and personally recorded a lot of TV news even as the attacks were in progress. I can unhesitatingly say that the official version about these incidents just does not add up. There is clearly a cover-up of what actually transpired. No one denies that a Pakistani terror module did in fact attack hotels in the Colaba and Nariman Point area. But what stands revealed is that the United States intelligence agency had shared the exact coordinates of the Pakistani boat that had set out for the attack. It is on record that the Indian intelligence agency did not share this vital information with the Coast Guard or the Navy. Instead, what seems to have occurred was that taking advantage of the impending Pakistani attack, a parallel attack was launched by Hindutva terrorists to eliminate Anti-Terrorism Squad chief Hemant Karkare.

Karkare was in the midst of exposing major Hindutva terror cells. Laptops impounded from Hindutva terrorists had yielded audio-video recordings of terror meetings involving senior politicians, military officers, builders, diamond merchants and other respectable citizens. It was a Pandora’s box which had to be shut down immediately. The 26/11 attacks achieved this. They not only killed Karkare; they diverted the nation’s attention from Hindutva terror.

**The film focusses on cow vigilantism too. Is not cow vigilantism merely an excuse for carrying forward the hate and exclusionist agenda of Golwalkar?**

The chapter “In the Name of

Cow” looks at the killing of Akhlaq in Dadri and the attack on Dalit youths in Una, Gujarat. India is one of the biggest exporters of beef in the world, so it is clear that the attack on beef eaters and tanners is just yet another way to attack Muslims and Dalits.

**Almost every film of yours has run into a controversy, irrespective of the ruling dispensation. What drives you? It is a particularly pertinent question to ask as we live in times when brave voices like those of Dabholkar, Pansare, M.M. Kalburgi and Gauri Lankesh have been silenced.**

I have made films for over four decades. For most of those years, the Congress or, occasionally, other parties were in power. Never were my films welcomed. In all, I won six cases in the High Court and two in the Supreme Court to get my films past the Censor Board and to get them finally telecast on Doordarshan.

Having said this, the worst enemy of freedom of expression is the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party]. Whenever they are in power, the battle becomes harder. *Reason* was selected to be screened at the International Documentary and Short Film Festival of Kerala [IDSFFK]. At the very last minute, the Central government intervened to stop the screening. Luckily, the IDSFFK did not take things lying down. It took the lead, and we rushed to the Kerala High Court. As always, the Central government argued that *Reason* would create “law and order” problems. The court ruled that in that case it was the government’s responsibility not to ban the film but to provide it protection.

Unfortunately, spaces like Kerala, where the local government stood by me, are limited in today’s India. And the means of censorship have become more lethal as the murders of rationalists testify. But I am a perennial optimist. I do not believe that fascism will take root and flourish for long in this country. The penny will drop. My job is to make this happen faster. □

# Neoliberal road to poverty

In 125 villages in Maharashtra, the writer Heramb Kulkarni finds the poor trapped in a cycle of poverty and unemployment. BY LYLÀ BAVADAM

HERAMB KULKARNI is a well-known and respected writer in Maharashtra. Troubled by the condition of his home State, he undertook a personal journey to try and understand the ground reality of poverty. From July 2017 to February 2018, he visited 125 poor villages in 24 rural districts of Maharashtra. His report on what he saw says nothing new—and that in a sense is the tragedy, that things have remained the same. What is important is that what he says is not motivated by any political thought or ambition but stems from his observations and compassionate discussions with poor people. The report, entitled “Exploring the Status of Poverty in Maharashtra” and published by Pune’s Samakaleen Prakashan, affirms one thing above all: that India’s economic liberalisation has not had a trickle-down effect among the majority of the population.

Kulkarni says the idea of the survey germinated in 2016, the year that marked 25 years of India’s shift to economic liberalisation. There were “conflicting reports in the media on whether this had indeed led to a decrease in poverty”, and Kulkarni decided to see for himself. “The study was undertaken purely for my own enlightenment and was not on behalf of any organisation,” he says.

To present a fair representation of the State, he chose mainly districts in Vidarbha and Marathwada. In north Maharashtra, he chose Nan-



**HERAMB KULKARNI.**

BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

durbar and Nashik. In the Konkan, he picked Raigad, Palghar and Thane and in western Maharashtra, Satara and Sangli. Then, he chose the two poorest taluks from each district and picked about five of the poorest villages in these for visiting. In Yavatmal district, however, he visited 13 villages because the district had seen a very large number of suicides by farmers. These 13 villages were selected on the basis of discussions with people who had worked in the area.

Using the focus group discussion style, Kulkarni spoke at length with a variety of people. His was “not a research project in the usual sense of the word”. When he visited a place, he would “request people to informally assemble and then carry out detailed discussions of their lives, earnings and experiences”. In this

way, he touched on their daily lives, and judging by what he has penned down, his sincerity seems to have touched a chord.

The failure of liberalisation to change the lives of the poor is in evidence everywhere. While few families starve in the actual sense of the word, the food they get is neither adequate nor nutritious with only meagre inputs of fresh vegetables and proteins. The creation of employment, trumpeted as one of the benefits of the liberalisation policies, has turned out to be a mirage and “within State” migration for work remains rampant.

Kulkarni writes: “Seasonal employment for sugar cane harvesting, work at the brick kilns and stone quarrying have always been the major drivers of such migration. However, tribals migrating for working at the plantation crops and villagers migrating to cities and towns seem to contribute now an additional five million or so people. Out of necessity, *over a long time, people seem to depend less and less on the government and have managed to find their own approaches for eking out a living* [emphasis added]. They work in their own village as long as some employment is available, and then routinely move to the cities straightaway. The extreme hardships (exploitation, cheating, atrocities, inhuman working conditions, etc.) faced by these migrants in towns and cities have been so completely invis-

ible that these have not even entered the social debates."

Agricultural reform and revival are another liberalisation myth. Kulkarni points out how "shrinking of area under cultivation, decreasing farm income, increasing expenses, falling of employment in agriculture and the decreasing of wages have been operating inexorably to push farmers further into poverty and, tragically, suicide". He says: "One cannot help getting the feeling that the government policy is to downplay the seriousness of the problem by deliberately reporting lower figures in the official data, etc. The same unfortunate story can be heard from most of such suicide-affected families—repeated crop failures leading to depression that ultimately drives the farmer to take his own life."

"Who are the poorest of the poor is a question that I am asked quite often," he writes. "Nomadic tribes seem to constitute one such group that has remained completely untouched by any kind of development. The situation of those belonging to the lower rungs of the social ladder even amongst these castes is particularly tragic. It is impossible even to know the number of people belonging to this class—even the Chief Minister of Maharashtra will be unable to obtain the relevant statistics. How can then any development process ever reach these people about whom such absolutely basic information as the population size itself remains unknown? Even today, these nomads stay in the temporary hutments outside the town that they are currently visiting. Problems are far too numerous—no toilets for women, water gushing into the hutments during monsoon, children forced to beg for food...."

The most disturbing aspect of poverty is the appalling state of availability of health-care services. This is the most serious of the problems that needs urgent attention. The government hospitals and dispensaries function very inefficiently, and costs of availing services of the private medical sector are totally beyond the reach of the poor. As a result, it is impossible for them to face any seri-

ous illness—deaths by thousands is the result. One runs into this stark reality everywhere. One of the main reasons why so many families have to avail loans again and again (and thus getting pushed into the debt-trap) is the high expense of medical treatment of an ailing family member. The biggest factor driving people into poverty seems to be the expenses related to availing medical treatment."

#### RAMPANT CORRUPTION

Kulkarni provides no solutions because that is not what he set out to do. His observations reflect the reality, and he hopes that the pathos of the situation will be powerful enough to force the hand of the administration. But he is not too optimistic either.

"Corruption seems rampant in irrigation projects, road construction projects and (ironically) in the various government schemes meant for benefiting the common people. The Marathwada region seems to be most severely affected by this malady. A young recipient of the 'Chief Minister fellowship' for conducting research, while compiling the lists of eligible beneficiaries of the various schemes, started coming across bigger and bigger scams. Instead of setting matters right, the BDO [Block Development Officer], who was in charge of these matters, berated him for what he had found! This example should provide eloquent testimony to the all-pervasiveness of corruption at the ground level. One cannot help feeling that the quantum of money siphoned off due to corruption is more than adequate to eliminate poverty! One normally cites lack of adequate funds as the reason for many poverty-removal schemes not proving to be successful. However, the real issue is not of the lack of funds, but that of the available funds not being properly used for the intended purpose."

His report notes the "complete failure of the administration... the gramasevaks do not even regularly visit the villages assigned to them. The government officials have become so completely habituated to be-

having callously and with complete impunity that people have lost the will to question them. The governments regularly announce many beneficial schemes with great fanfare but due to such bureaucracy, the implementation is pathetic. The 'group panchayat' system currently in force has its office located in a major village, with several not-so-near villages affiliated to it. As a result, most of the development is restricted only to the main village and the far-off villages suffer from almost total neglect."

Employment and education schemes are also implemented without thought. An example: "A large number of unemployed youths are seen everywhere. Gratuitous advice that they should work is freely provided to them. However, work related to agricultural activities is seasonal.... The real problem is the lack of employment in this remaining period. When I asked a young man from Pandharkawada in Yavatmal district, who was a trained wireman, as to why he did not take up any wiring-related assignments, his despondent reply was: 'In our taluk town alone, there are 122 trained wiremen. How will there be any work for all of them every day?'

In the context of unemployment, Kulkarni raises an issue that is hardly spoken of: "The number of young people dying due to excessive drinking is seen to be disturbingly high in most places. This problem too never seems to figure in discussions about poverty any more."

Kulkarni says he had a "distinct feeling that there are two different Maharanas within the single State of Maharashtra. The rapidly developing Mumbai-Pune-Nashik triangle seems to be totally disconnected from the situation seen in Vidarbha, Marathwada, Palghar, Nandurbar, etc."

Asked what he hoped to achieve by undertaking his tour of poverty-stricken villages, he said: "I hope it will provide a reference or feedback to those organisations, intellectuals, journalists, students and researchers who wish to study the problem of poverty." □

## CIVIL SERVICES

# Blow to reservation

**Lateral entry into the bureaucracy from the corporate sector is likely to generate conflicts of interest, subvert reservation and compromise the independence of the civil services.** BY **DIVYA TRIVEDI**

IN a bid to alter drastically the public administration system, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) plans to recruit specialists from the private sector in various echelons of the bureaucracy. Through a process of “lateral entry”, domain experts holding corporate jobs will be brought in for a few years in posts generally held by public servants. While consultants, advisers and officers on special duty have been assigned roles in Ministries and government departments occasionally, this is the first time that outsiders who need not necessarily have had any experience in governance are sought to be appointed as public servants in large numbers.

Around 400 posts at the Deputy Secretary and Director levels are to be opened up to private sector inductees. Currently, these posts are filled by a systematic Central Staffing Scheme that appoints eligible officers from the participating services, including the Indian Administrative Service (IAS).

According to the votaries of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the government and the media, the move is a “reform” of the “steel frame” bureaucracy to help get rid of “deadwood” which holds the country back from “progress”. Retired bureaucrats say, however, that it is a way to privatise the government and create a revolving door between the private and public sectors. They caution that instead of championing the move, the government should be wary of conflicts of interest that may under-



THE HINDU ARCHIVES

**AMBER DUBEY**, who has served as Partner and Head of KPMG in Aerospace and Defence, has been selected as Joint Secretary for the Ministry of Civil Aviation. He was on a list of nine recruits finalised by the UPSC in April.

mine its authority. According to the narrative built by the BJP, everything that happened before it came to power was marked by corruption, was untenable and impeded the country’s growth.

The idea of lateral entry is not new. In December 2015, Jitendra Singh, Minister of State in the Prime Minister’s Office, told Parliament that there was no proposal to permit lateral entry into the IAS. Instead, the government was addressing the issue of shortage of IAS officers by

other means, he had said. The IAS Officers’ Associations, too, had been cautious about lateral entry and insisted that the process of induction should not be discretionary. A public officer selected to serve the Central or State government should not be appointed without due process being followed, said a retired IAS officer.

In June 2018, however, the DoPT, which is not a recruiting agency but a cadre-controlling authority of the civil service, issued an advertisement for 10 posts of Joint Secretary in various departments of the Union government. The advertisement said that the applicants could have worked with autonomous bodies, private sector companies, consultancies or multinational organisations. They would have an initial term of three years, which might be extended up to five years.

## COURT CASE

The advertisement was challenged in the Supreme Court through a public interest litigation (PIL) petition in order to protect the “independence of the executive”. The petitioner, Dr Chandrapal, a retired Secretary in the Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises, questioned the DoPT’s decision to assume the role of recruiter, which it had never done in the past.

“This lateral entry will bypass the three stages of the UPSC [Union Public Service Commission] civil services exam—preliminary, main exam, and interview and also the present arrangement in which one-

third of the vacancies in Indian civil services is filled by promotion of eligible candidates working in different States' services," the petition said.

His petition pointed out that since the motive of private companies was to make profit, there could be no guarantee that the person coming into the government sector would not also try to ensure profits for private companies and work discreetly for the corporates. "Business houses may use the opportunity to push in their own men. The advantage with the current civil service is that policymakers have long-term interests in government. They also have a tradition of fairness and stake in the government. Private sector individuals brought on contract of three or five years may serve someone else's interest as they would have no long-term stake in the government," stated the petition.

Dr Chandrapal warned that anyone who was close to the incumbent government could get the position, making it difficult for bureaucrats who came through the UPSC. He requested the court to declare the recruitment notice unconstitutional as it was likely to open the gates for the spoils system, driving talented people away from a civil service career.

The selection process was not manifestly politically neutral and would adversely impact the constitutional mandate for affirmative action, the petition said. It pointed out that it would bypass the reservation policy and lead to favouritism. It would compromise the accountability of the government and lead to a potential loss of internal talent and an atrophy of career-based services.

The powers and functions of the UPSC and the State Public Service Commissions are contained in Article 320 of the Constitution, which holds that it is their duty to conduct examinations for appointments to the services of the Union and the services of the State. Article 320 also provides that these commissions must be consulted on all matters relating to the method of recruitment for the civil services and civil posts. Selections to senior positions in the

Union government should be done through the UPSC, a constitutionally mandated institution set up for this purpose, Dr Chandrapal pleaded.

"The court finally told the government that they had to recruit through the UPSC and so we withdrew our plea," Dr Chandrapal told *Frontline*.

#### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

In August 2018, the government announced that it had received more than 6,000 applications for these posts, and in April this year, the UPSC finalised nine recruits.

Amber Dubey was selected as Joint Secretary for the Ministry of Civil Aviation. He had served as Partner and Head of KPMG in Aerospace and Defence and, as such, was a domain expert. But he had also been member and co-chair of the Confederation of Indian Industry, the U.S.-India Business Council, the American Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India, all, essentially, lobbies.

Similarly, Bhushan Kumar, who was appointed as Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Shipping, was working as General Manager of the LNG unit of Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation. He was head of shipping, business development and contracts. He was also reportedly the CEO and MD for a year at Diamond Shipping Services LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Dubai-based Sharaf Group. Sujit Kumar Bajpayee was selected as Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. He used to work

with the NHPC as manager, environment. He was responsible for the overall planning of new hydropower projects, secured clearances for them from the Environment Ministry and supervised the implementation and monitoring of various environmental safeguards stipulated by the government.

The other Joint Secretaries hired through lateral entry were Suman Prasad Singh for Road Transport and Highways, Kakoli Ghosh for Agriculture, Rajeev Saksena for the Department of Economic Affairs, Arun Goel for Commerce, Saurabh Mishra for Financial Services and Dinesh Jayanand Jagdale for New and Renewable Energy.

A data analyst who did not want to be named said: "Not to cast aspersions on individuals, who can be above board... but the fact remains that individuals who worked in corporate houses and were part of lobbies and advocacy groups to push for laxer government norms and controls have now been catapulted to the seat of power from where they can formulate those very norms and controls. After the government stint, that individual will go back to the industry and enjoy those same rules that they formulated. There is a clear conflict of interest right there."

#### **SUBVERTING RESERVATION**

As predicted by Dr Chandrapal in his petition, the government managed to bypass, through lateral entry, reservation for the Scheduled Castes (S.Cs), Scheduled Tribes and the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Experts explained that since the recruits were single-post cadre, reservation did not apply. Had they

A PIL petition pointed out there could be no guarantee that lateral entry recruits would not try to ensure profits for private companies and work discreetly for the corporates.

been considered as a group of nine, there would have been at least two seats for OBCs and one seat for an S.C. candidate. But since they were selected for different departments in single posts, reservation was not applicable. But Dr Chandrapal disagreed with this view. "We are poor people and so we withdrew the petition, but there is still a lot of work that needs to be done there," he said.

Pranjal Kishore, a Delhi-based lawyer, wrote in *The Leaflet*: "A study of the current government's actions over the last few years shows a systematic attempt to dent the policy of reservation. The number of direct recruitments by the UPSC has fallen considerably over the last few years. The number of recruits has fallen from 1,236 in 2014 to 759 in 2018. Now, dozens of bureaucrats are set to enter through the system of lateral entry—which does not provide for reservation. If this trend continues, and it appears it most likely will, then the reservation policy will be severely undermine." The BJP government's agenda has been to privatise governance. Through a policy document, "Three Year Action Agenda", in 2017, the NITI (National Institution for Transforming India) Aayog promoted the idea of lateral entry. It said: "India's choice to build a socialist pattern of production during several post-Independence decades had resulted in the government entering many activities that did not serve any public purpose and were best performed by the private sector."

The Governing Council of the NITI Aayog, under Amitabh Kant and Arvind Panagariya, with Modi as its Chairperson, proposed the system of lateral entry. In a section titled "Civil Service Reform", the NITI Aayog said that policymaking required specialists and that service delivery ought to be outsourced wherever possible. It added that it would have the beneficial side effect of bringing competition to the established career bureaucracy.

Dr Chandrapal said that the repeated dismissing of the services cadre by the adherents of the BJP had made the party a butt of ridicule in Uttar Pradesh bureaucratic

## The recruitment process of the bureaucracy is time-tested, with inherent checks and balances.

circles. "If the IAS cadre is so inefficient, then why have P.K. Mishra and Nripendra Mishra been reappointed as Additional Principal Secretary and Principal Secretary and given Cabinet Minister ranks above and beyond their terms? And was Ajit Doval not recruited through the UPSC?" he asked.

At present, the Central Secretariat Service provides an arrangement for the selection and appointment of eligible officers from 37 participating services such as the Indian Forest Service, the Indian Information Service, the Indian Police Service, the Indian Revenue Service and the Central Engineering Service (Roads and Central Public Works Department). This is an ongoing process where officers are shifted or elevated from one Ministry or department to another through empanelment or on administrative grounds. Circulars are issued twice a year requesting all cadre authorities to nominate eligible officers for deputation. Therein it is indicated that the movement of officers from State level to the Centre and back helps in building up capabilities at the State level and contributes towards developing a national perspective at the decision-making levels in the Union government. While it is no one's case that the bureaucracy is perfect, its recruitment process is robust and time-tested, with inherent checks and balances.

Once lateral entry is available to people from outside the government and implemented in its current form, about 60 per cent of the 650 posts

filled through this process will no longer be available to the cadre from the services. There is serious apprehension that lateral entry might become the norm rather than the exception in the days to come. An IAS aspirant said: "In a country where lakhs of students aspire to join the elite services, I don't understand why the government would want to keep snubbing them, unless its only agenda is to hire people of a particular ideology. In this way, it can ensure that everyone will fall in line and not question the decisions it takes."

The post of Joint Secretary is an important senior management post in the bureaucracy and the people holding it coordinate with other Ministries on policy matters, court cases, and implementation of the government's programmes and schemes. They also deal with agencies such as the Central Vigilance Commission, the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Comptroller and Auditor General. Officers who have served for more than 20 years in the various services are appointed through a stringent process. Officers of the IAS serve at all levels of the bureaucracy, from the village and district level to the State before coming to the Centre. They bring to the table a unique depth of experience from the ground level up and are therefore considered suited to the task of policy formulation.

The elitism and stranglehold of the IAS on the bureaucracy is being cited as a reason for introducing lateral entry. If that were indeed the problem, it could be addressed by inducting individuals from the other services. There is no need to open up the government to private participation, say retired IAS officers.

In the past too, individuals such as Manmohan Singh, M.S. Swaminathan and Montek Singh Ahluwalia were appointed laterally as Secretaries. But they were all individuals with heft who could influence policy. Retired officers feel that at the level of the Joint Secretary and lower down the line, lateral entry recruits might become rubber stamps for crony capitalism, either willingly or inadvertently. □

# science notebook

## Global call to tackle air pollution

**COUNTRIES** across the world must urgently adopt emissions controls and air monitoring systems for the worst pollutants if they are to grapple with the growing problem of air pollution causing millions of deaths each year, five national academies have said in a global call for action. The Academies of Sciences and Medicine from South Africa, Brazil, Germany, and the United States issued a joint statement, which they presented at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, calling for intensified funding and action under a new global compact to tackle air pollution.

Air pollution causes some seven million premature deaths every year and has also been linked to climate change. If we were to reduce short-lived pollutants, such as methane and black carbon, we could reduce global warming by up to 0.5°C over the next few decades, simultaneously avoiding 2.4 million premature deaths, the release said.



R.V. MOORTHY

**A DELHI POLICE** Traffic Constable wearing a face mask on a smoggy day in February.

According to the academies, the biggest contributors to air pollution are fossil fuel and biomass combustion used for power generation, cooking, transport and agriculture. Air pollution from fossil fuels is particularly adverse for humans as it contains large amounts of particulate matter, which enter the body and damage its organs. With the global economic costs of disease caused by air pollution across 176 countries in 2015 es-

timated to be \$138 million, the academies call for this preventable problem to be addressed in tandem with climate change mitigation and sustainable development.

The academies note that existing international agreements, including the Montreal Protocol, the U.N. Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, and the World Health Assembly Resolution on Air Pollution address different aspects of air pollution, but none includes a comprehensive plan for air pollution control. The academies recommend that all countries make air pollution reduction a priority by placing emission controls on industry and embracing clean fuels. The academies therefore propose the adoption of a new Global Compact on Air Pollution and Health. The Compact would recognise the right to clean air, ensure sustained engagement to tackle air pollution at the highest level, and make pollution control a priority in all development strategies and all business planning in every city and country.

## Human sperm viable in space

**THERE** was no substantive difference between the range of sperm characteristics observed in frozen sperm samples exposed to microgravity and in those maintained in ground conditions, according to a study reported at the 35th Annual Meeting of the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology. The study was carried out by Montserrat Boada of Dexeus Women's Health in Barcelona, Spain, and associates. Microgravity engineers from the Polytechnic University of Barcelona were associated with study.

This, the study said, opened the possibility of safely transporting male gametes to space and of creating a human sperm bank outside the earth.

While the effects of microgravity on the cardiovascular, musculo-skeletal and central nervous systems are well known and tested in space

flight, Montserrat Boada pointed out that relatively little was known about the effects of different gravitational environments on human sperm and eggs. "Some studies suggest a significant decrease in the motility of human fresh sperm samples," she said, "but nothing has been reported on the possible effects of gravitational differences on frozen human gametes, in which state they would be transported to space."

The study was performed using a small aerobatic training aircraft (CAP10), which can provide short-duration hypogravity exposure, totalling 160 seconds of microgravity. Overall, 10 sperm samples obtained from 10 healthy donors were analysed after exposure to the different microgravities found in space and ground gravity. The sperm analysis comprised the full range of measurements currently

performed for fertility testing. According to Montserrat Boada, there was 100 per cent concordance in the DNA fragmentation rate and vitality, and 90 per cent concordance in sperm concentration and motility. These minor differences, she added, "were more probably related to heterogeneity of the sperm sample than to the effect of exposure to different gravity conditions." This preliminary study will be followed up with validating the results and then move on to larger sperm samples, longer periods of microgravity and even fresh sperm, she said.

Monserrat Boada observed that one reason for using frozen sperm in this study was the known effect of radiation on fresh sperm. "Radiation impairs the quality and viability of human sperm," she said, "and these effects are expected to be greater on fresh sperm than on frozen samples, which are cryopreserved in special cryostraws and transported in cryotanks."

## Painkiller ban to save vultures likely

THE Government of India banned "Diclofenac and its formulations for veterinary use" in July 2008 with a view to conserving vultures and, in July 2015, allowed use of the drug as a single-dose injection for humans only. According to wildlife veterinarians, the key cause of vulture deaths is food poisoning. The birds were feeding on dead animals that had been administered the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) diclofenac as painkiller. When the gyps species fed on these carcasses, they faced acute renal failure and died.

Vultures are among the top predators and are enlisted in the critically endangered category in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. In a related new development, the Government of India is also likely to ban the analogue NSAID aceclofenac for veterinary use, given its potential to kill vultures, according to K.K. Aggarwal, who reported this development on the medical news website emedinexus.com. According to him, the

Drugs Consultative Committee of the Union Health Ministry had considered this issue in its 56th meeting held on June 1 in New Delhi.

A research note submitted by Vibhu Prakash, Principal Scientist and Deputy Director, Vulture Conservation

Breeding Centre (VCBC), Panchkula, Haryana, on "Metabolism of Aceclofenac in cattle to Vulture-killing Diclofenac", had apparently served as the basis for this move. The VCBC had requested prohibition on veterinary use of aceclofenac as well. In a 2016 research study, Toby Heath Calligan (of the Royal Society for Protection of Birds) and others found that nearly all of the aceclofenac administered to cattle in the recommended dose was very rapidly metabolised into diclofenac. The study pointed out that at least 12 other NSAIDs, besides diclofenac, were available for veterinary use in South Asia, and aceclofenac was one of them.



REUTERS

### WHITE-RUMPED VULTURES.

(VCBC), Panchkula, Haryana, on "Metabolism of Aceclofenac in cattle to Vulture-killing Diclofenac", had apparently served as the basis for this move. The VCBC had requested prohibition on veterinary use of aceclofenac as well. In a 2016 research study, Toby Heath Calligan (of the Royal Society for Protection of Birds) and others found that nearly all of the aceclofenac administered to cattle in the recommended dose was very rapidly metabolised into diclofenac. The study pointed out that at least 12 other NSAIDs, besides diclofenac, were available for veterinary use in South Asia, and aceclofenac was one of them.

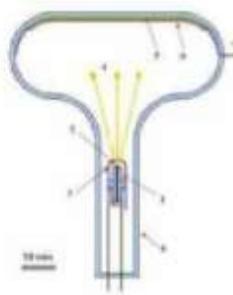
## An alternative to LED lamps

**RESEARCHERS** from the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology (MIPT) and the Lebedev Physical Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences have designed and tested a prototype cathodoluminescent lamp for general lighting that could unleash a lamp revolution. The new lamp, which relies on the phenomenon of field emission, is more reliable, durable and luminous than its analogues available worldwide. The development has been reported in the "Journal of Vacuum Science & Technology B".

While LED lamps have become commonplace, they are not the only clean and power-saving alternative to incandescent lamps. Cathodoluminescent lamps rely on the same principle as old TVs, using cathode-ray tubes. A negatively charged electrode, or cathode, at one end of a vacuum tube serves as an electron gun. A potential difference of up to 10 kilovolts accelerates the emitted electrons towards a flat positively charged phosphor-coated electrode—the anode—at the opposite end of the tube. This electron bombardment results in light. Such lamps can emit light at any wavelength, from the red to ultraviolet (UV), depending on which fluorescent material is used.

Cathodoluminescent UV light bulbs contain no mercury and are generally cleaner in service and upon disposal. "Cathodoluminescent lamps could be used in medicine, like for operating room decontamination, UV irradiation of throat and tonsils, and dental filling curing," commented Mikhail Danilkin of the Lebedev Physical Institute. Another important advantage of the new lamp over LEDs and fluorescent bulbs is that it does not rely on so-called critical raw materials, which include gallium, indium and some rare-earth elements, whose supply is limited and irreplaceable in health, defence, aerospace and other key industries.

However, designing an efficient, long-lasting and technologically advanced cathode that could be mass-produced and sold at an affordable price has proved challenging. While there are ongoing efforts in Japan and the U.S., this Russian study marks the first successful attempt at this. "Our field emission cathode is made of ordinary carbon," said Professor Evgenii Sheshin of the MIPT, who led the research team. "But this carbon is not used merely as a chemical but rather as a structure. We found a way to fashion a structure from carbon fibres that is resistant to ion bombardment, outputs a high emission current and is affordable in production." The MIPT research group has also developed a compact power source for its cathodoluminescent lamp. The source is fitted around the glass light bulb with almost no effect on its size. The luminous power is up to 250 lumens, about the output of a 25-watt incandescent lamp, but the power consumption is only 5.5 watts. The technical characteristics and prototype test data reported in the paper suggest that if mass-produced, these new bulbs could compete with LED lamps.



Cathodoluminescent lamp:  
 (1) cathode modulator unit,  
 (2) cathode, (3) modulator,  
 (4) emitted electrons,  
 (5) phosphor, (6) aluminum  
 mirror serving as anode,  
 (7) anode output, (8) glass  
 vacuum tube.

## datacard

# UNTAPPED AREA

Inadequate production and falling yield per hectare amid rising demand have resulted in strong growth in rubber imports in recent years. By Ramesh Chakrapani

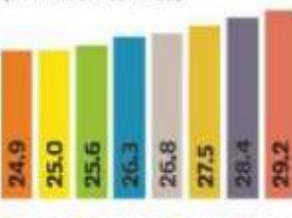
## World production (natural and synthetic)

(in million tonnes)



## World consumption (natural and synthetic)

(in million tonnes)



## India's natural rubber exports & imports

(in tonnes)

2011-12	2,14,443	27,145
2012-13	2,62,753	30,594
2013-14	3,60,263	5,398
2014-15	4,42,130	1,002
2015-16	4,58,374	865
2016-17	4,26,188	20,920
2017-18	4,69,760	5,072

India's natural rubber imports have been high in recent years, staying above the 4,00,000-tonne mark, on the back of rising consumption, which has hovered around the one-million-tonne level, according to data from the Rubber Board.

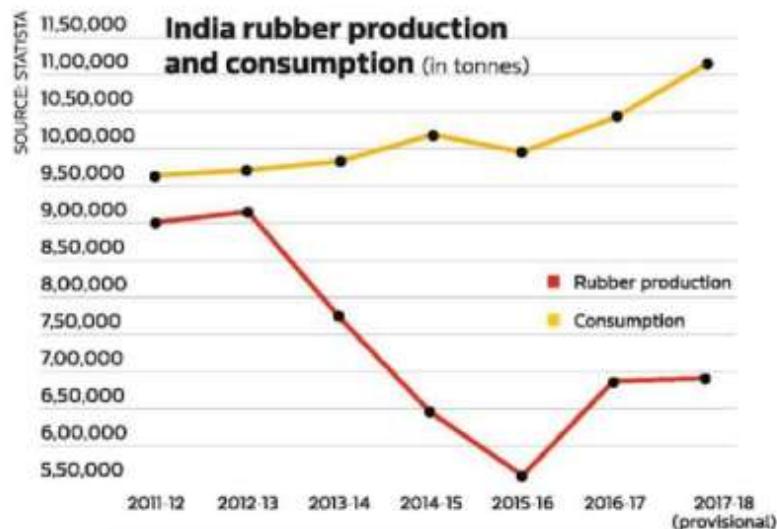
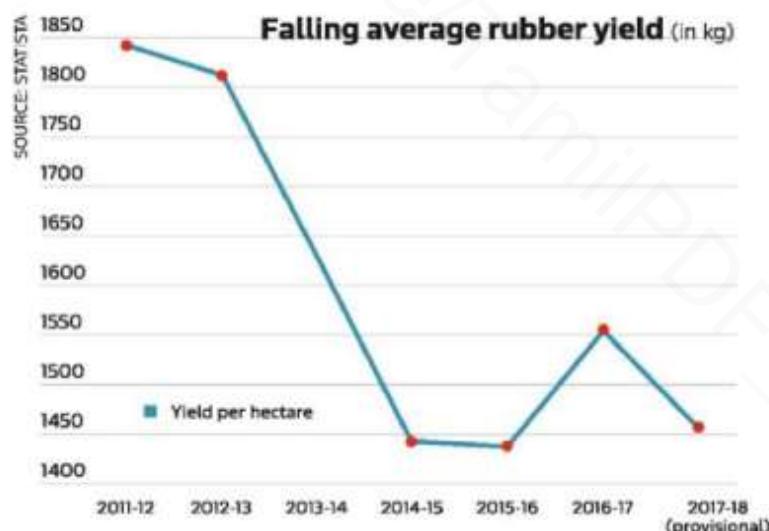
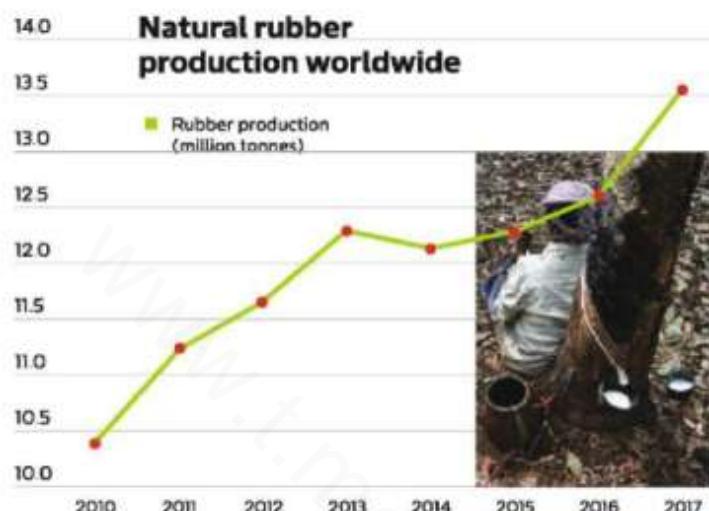
Domestic production has not been able to meet the demand despite a significant rise in tappable area, mainly on account of falling average yield per hectare.

The area under cultivation rose from 7,78,400 hectares in 2013-14 to 820,900 hectares in 2017-18 (provisional estimates), while the tappable area rose from 5,18,100 hectares to 6,12,000 hectares. However, production fell from 7,74,000 tonnes in 2013-14 to 6,94,000 tonnes in 2017-18 (provisional estimates), while the average yield per hectare fell from 1,629 kilograms to 1,458 kg.

Consumption in India rose from 981,520 tonnes in 2013-14 to 11,12,210 tonnes in 2017-18 (provisional estimates) and imports too posted healthy gains, growing from 3,60,263 tonnes to 4,69,760 tonnes.

The top 10 consumers in 2018 were China, India, the United States, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brazil, Vietnam and Germany.

Global consumption of rubber (both natural and synthetic) increased by 1.9 per cent to 29.2 million tonnes in 2018 from 28.4 million tonnes in 2017. The ratio of natural rubber to synthetic rubber consumed in 2018 was 47:53.



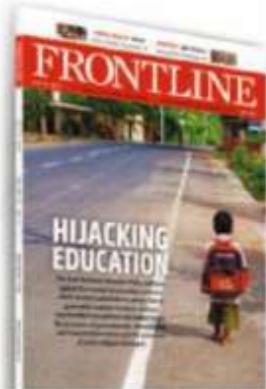
## The global rubber scene

- Total world production of rubber touched 29.1 million tonnes in 2018, rising 2.0% from 28.6 million tonnes in 2017.
- 2018 total global consumption rose by 1.9% to 29.2 million tonnes from 28.4 million tonnes in 2017.
- The ratio of natural rubber (NR) to synthetic rubber (SR) produced in 2018 was 48:52.
- The ratio of NR to SR consumed in 2018 was 47:53.
- China, India, U.S., Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brazil, Vietnam, and Germany were the top 10 consumers in 2018.
- Global imports rose by 0.4% to 23.0 million tonnes in 2018 from 22.9 million tonnes in 2017.
- Global exports remained at 22.0 million tonnes in 2018.



## LETTERS

### Education



IT appears that the government set out the policy for the merger of schools keeping in mind only the aspirations of students from urban areas ("Merger muddle", July 19). One wonders whether the benefits of merging schools were explained to the parents of schoolgoing children in interior villages. Did the government depute a team to these villages to check the distance between old and merged schools and whether parents were willing to let their children travel that distance, and whether these schools have proper infrastructure? The merger move has apparently deprived children of their right to free and compulsory education as guaranteed in the Constitution.

**ASHOK K. NIHALANI**  
PUNE, MAHARASHTRA

### Water crisis

SEVERAL States, including Tamil Nadu, are reeling under a severe water shortage due to successive failures of the monsoon or less than normal rainfall ("Chennai's thirst", July 19). The worth of water is realised only when it is in short supply. The government and the civic bodies should manage the supply of available water better by preventing leakage, pilferage and waste.

Chennai should go in for enhanced desalination in view of uncertain monsoons. Groundwater should be recharged through suitable rainwater harvesting devices. Every house in urban areas should have rainwater harvesting arrangements. Consumers should be aware of the worth of water and use it carefully.

**D.B.N. MURTHY**  
BENGALURU

### Sri Lanka

IT is strange that in a moment of crisis the political leaders in Sri Lanka are working at cross purposes to fish in troubled waters (Cover Story, July 5). Whatever be the goal of the perpetrators of the Easter Sunday blasts, they have caused enormous injustice to mainstream Sri Lankan Muslims. Terrorism has only helped in giving added muscle power to the hardliners in the Sinhala community.

One positive aspect of the situation is that Christians, the direct victims of the bloody mayhem, have shown remarkable restraint and composure. We in India cannot afford to remain impervious to the cascading impact of the viciously hardening social identities in our backyard.

**AYYASSERI RAVEENDRANATH**  
ARANMULA, KERALA

### EVMs

IT is not surprising that the opposition cried foul after the BJP's overwhelming victory ("In EVMs do we trust?", July 5). Unable to digest it, the opposition questions electronic voting machines. It has forgotten that these same EVMs brought victory to the Congress in the Assembly elections in three States in the Hindi heartland and gave Rahul Gandhi a resounding victory in Wayanad. The decline in the electoral fortunes of the CPI(M), for instance, is certainly not due to manipulation of EVMs.

If the opposition suspects a deep conspiracy between Modi and the Election Commission (E.C.), it must at least put its faith in the Supreme Court, which rejected the plea for 100 per cent VVPAT verification on the grounds that it could not come in the way of people electing their government.

**KANGAYAM R. NARASIMHAN**  
CHENNAI

### Jammu & Kashmir

IF the BJP tries to make political capital out of the Amarnath yatra, it will be fishing in troubled waters ("Operation Kashmir", June 21). The BJP uses the yatra episode as a political tool to engender further polarisation in the State.

Any idea of repealing Articles 370 and 35A should be nipped in the bud as the

situation in the Kashmir Valley is already volatile and may worsen. The PDP, the National Conference and the Congress have protested against the delimitation exercise in the State and termed it a violation of basic democratic norms. The BJP has squarely blamed the Congress' "appeasement politics" for the plight of the Kashmir Pandits. This is far from truth.

Never before have the Army and the E.C. been so misused, with the E.C. dancing to the tune of the ruling dispensation. Ultimately, the sole aim of the BJP in Jammu and Kashmir is to capture power at any cost.

**S. MURALI**

VELLORE, TAMIL NADU

### Congress party

THE Congress party is now a divided house and its electoral defeat has eroded its credibility ("Time to introspect", June 21). It is sad that Rahul Gandhi's inability to rejuvenate the party and win elections has created a possible vacuum in national politics. His decision to quit as the party chief has only aggravated the crisis in the State units where the Congress is in power.

In the given situation, a new leader may not be able to change the fortunes of the party overnight. The party should understand the reasons for its failure and rectify its mistakes before its stock falls further.

**K.R. SRINIVASAN**

SECUNDERABAD, TELANGANA

### Tamil Nadu

IT is sad that inter-caste or inter-religious marriages evoke negative reactions in society ("A closed chapter?", June 21). There should be an end to the stigma that has unfortunately attached to such marriages.

**P. SENTHIL SARAVANA DURAI**

MUMBAI

### CORRECTION

On the last page of the article "Staging our times" (July 19), there are two references to the assassinated journalist Gauri Lankesh. These are actually references to her father, P. Lankesh, who was also a veteran journalist. The error, committed at the editing stage, is regretted.

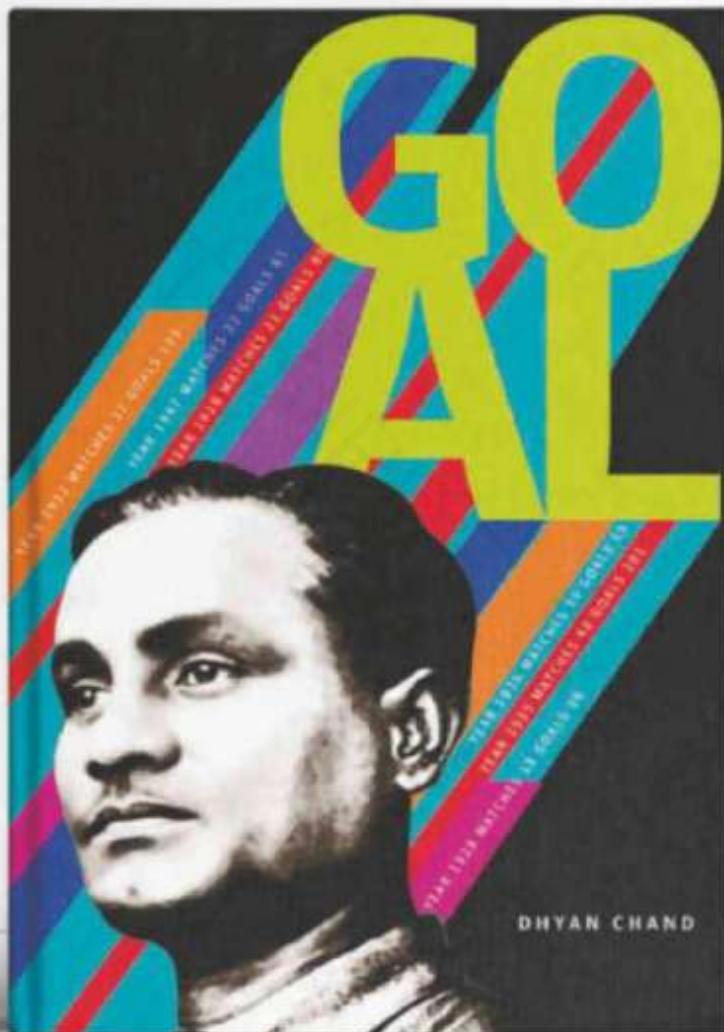
### ANNOUNCEMENT

Letters, whether by surface mail or e-mail, must carry the full postal address and the full name, or the name with initials.

# SPORTSTAR GOAL

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

₹ 299/-



\*Shipping charges extra

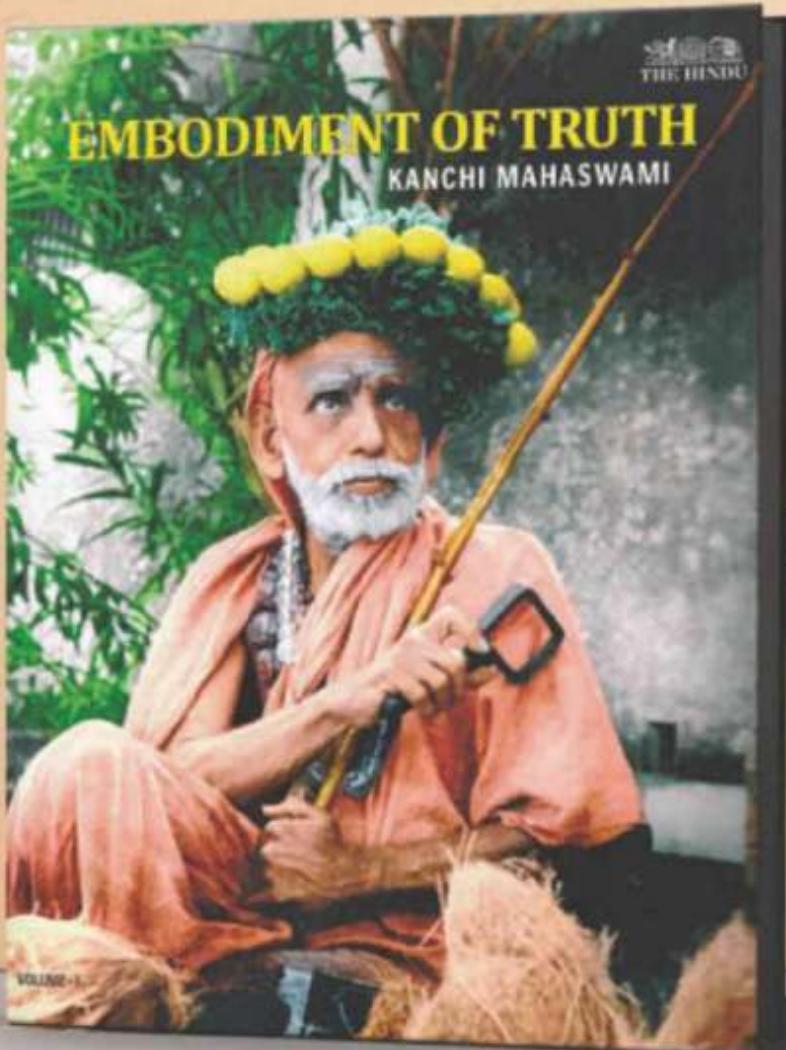


To book your copy,  
Visit: [publications.thehindugroup.com/bookstore/](http://publications.thehindugroup.com/bookstore/)  
For bulk booking, e-mail: [bookstore@thehindu.co.in](mailto:bookstore@thehindu.co.in)  
For any enquiries call: 1800 3000 1878

A SPECIAL PUBLICATION FROM THE HINDU GROUP

# TRANSCENDING TIME

The journey of an Inimitable Sage  
traced through lens and letters



₹399 \*

\*Shipping charges extra | Conditions apply

BOOKSTORE  
COPT ONLINE



To book your copy Visit: [www.thehindu.com/publications](http://www.thehindu.com/publications)

For bulk booking, e-mail: [bookstore@thehindu.co.in](mailto:bookstore@thehindu.co.in)

For any enquiries call: 1800 3000 1878

A SPECIAL PUBLICATION FROM THE HINDU GROUP