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Mastering UPSC Answer writing

FEBRUARY 11

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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2017

As unpredictable as it gets

India's most populous State finally goes to the polls today, beginning a seven-phase process that starts from the western fringe of Uttar Pradesh. In this first phase, 73 Assembly constituencies in 15 districts of western Uttar Pradesh will elect their legislators in what is clearly the most diversely contested region of the State, the only one in which all four parties/frontrunners, the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Samajwadi Party-Congress, the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Rashtriya Lok Dal, fancy their chances. That they all see themselves to be firmly in the hunt indicates the change in western U.P. since the 2014 general election when the BJP registered its biggest margins of leads in Assembly segments. Then, riots in Muzaffarnagar and Shamli districts in 2013 had resulted in communal polarisation in the BJP's favour, supplementing the Narendra Modi wave in the State; the BJP alliance netted 73 of the total 80 Lok Sabha seats. But two years is a long time in politics, and issues such as the demonetisation, the performance of Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, and BSP leader Mayawati's reliance on a new *samikaran* (caste-religion arithmetic) have all changed the nature of the campaign.

This time, reports suggest that many in the landed peasantry among Jats are looking again at the RLD, which till not long ago had been staring at a political decline, as a viable choice. Despite a relatively favourable monsoon and a better agrarian harvest, farmers are now less well-disposed towards the BJP following the demonetisation. The BSP has struck a chord with its traditional support base among Dalits and has fielded a large number of Muslim candidates to consolidate support among the minorities. The SP-Congress alliance seeks to ride a wave of positive support for Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav after his combat with party elders. The BJP has its task cut out to retain its support here, with the effects of the demonetisation hurting traders too. But Mr. Modi's appeal is still strong, especially among the younger voters. The party has tried to use dog-whistle politics — talking of an “anti-Romeo campaign”, for example, as a softer version of its earlier “love jihad” mobilisation — as a polarising tactic, but it is not clear if that will pay off. A more sound strategy has been its reliance on the non-Yadav Other Backward Classes to take on the identity politics of the BSP and the SP. All said, the political landscape in western U.P. remains dynamic, making predictions risky. However, as in the past, the very specific issues of western U.P. may well influence the rest of the State.

Israel's continuing land grab

The passage of legislation by Israel that would legalise nearly 4,000 Jewish settler homes on private Palestinian lands in the West Bank flies in the face of international law and norms. That the vote comes weeks after the UN Security Council demanded that Israel stop all settlement activity in the Occupied Territories, and an international conference attended by more than 70 countries urged both sides in the conflict to resume talks, shows Israel's disregard for international opinion and institutions. The legislation allows the Israeli government to expropriate private Palestinian land if the land-owners are unknown. If known, they will be compensated in cash or kind. However, the legislation, which for the first time since the annexation of East Jerusalem seeks to extend Israeli law to the West Bank, can be overturned by the judiciary. Israel's Attorney-General has said he wouldn't defend the bill in the high court as it is “unconstitutional and violates international law”. However, this is unlikely to stop the ideology-driven settler movement and the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from taking more Palestinian land. Since Israel occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem five decades ago, about 140 settlements have been built in Palestinian territories that house more than 600,000 Jews. Despite frequent international criticism, successive governments have thrown their weight behind the settlement lobby. Mr. Netanyahu, who is dependent on the right-wing coalition parties for his government's survival, has played along. Last month, his government approved plans for 2,500 new settler homes in the West Bank.

Israel still says it is committed to the two-state solution. But how will the two-state solution stay relevant if it continues to grab Palestinian land where an independent Palestinian state is supposed to come up? The Netanyahu government has shown no particular interest in resuming negotiations, while its right-wing allies are boasting of expanding Israeli sovereignty to “Judea and Samaria”, the biblical names for the West Bank. And now Israeli authorities feel emboldened by the election of Donald Trump as U.S. President. He has promised to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a disputed city, slammed the Obama administration for not using its veto powers in the UNSC over the settlement resolution in December 2016, and even praised the controversial security wall Israel has built through Palestinian lands. Mr. Netanyahu, facing pressure from coalition partners, may be hoping to continue the *status quo* of occupation, provided Mr. Trump offers the protection to Tel Aviv that he promised during the campaign. That would make peace yet more distant in West Asia.

Looking beyond our own species

Tamil Nadu's new jallikattu law presents complex constitutional issues on how we treat animals. It raises more questions than answers, some of which are likely to be at the core of the Supreme Court's consideration



SUHRITH PARTHASARATHY

Do animals have rights? If so, how are these rights to be administered, and against whom can they be enforced? If not, do human beings nonetheless owe an obligation to treat animals with care and compassion? Are any of these responsibilities inalienable, and to what extent can our Constitution be extended to include within its mandate a binding duty to ensure the safety and security of animals?

Some of these questions are likely to be at the core of the Supreme Court's consideration, when it hears arguments on the validity of Tamil Nadu's new law that permits the practice of jallikattu in the State. Despite the court's judgment in 2014, in *Animal Welfare Board of India v A. Nagaraja*, where it struck down an earlier effort to legalise jallikattu, its verdict on the fresh challenge is anything but inevitable. The new law presents distinct and complex constitutional problems, and the questions it raises don't have easy answers.

To overcome these hurdles, the Supreme Court may well have to resort to making substantial incursions into a law-making role, at the potential cost of endangering its proper place in India's constitutional structure. But whichever way the decision goes, if the present dispute shows us anything, it is this: that the existing legal regime governing animal welfare in India is woefully inadequate and too easily malleable to accord animals even a reasonable guarantee of dignity and respect. What we need today, therefore, is a more sustained and more intellectually rigorous debate on how best to improve the welfare of our animals.

Rukmini Arundale's efforts

The movement in India for better animal protection laws began soon after Independence. Influenced by the ideologies of the Theosophical Society, the acclaimed dancer Rukmini Devi Arundale, then a nominated member of the Rajya Sabha, introduced a private bill in 1952 that intended to replace the existing colonial era statute of 1890. “Of course, it is as well for us, absolutely right for us, to consider the question of preventing any cruelty to animals, not only because of the animals themselves but much more so... because of the human beings involved in it,” said Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, in response to her bill. “...I entirely agree...that one test of civilisation — a very



The petitioners have to do more than showing the PCA Act stands violated by jallikattu; they will have to prove that it infracts at least one fundamental right

major test — is the growth of this feeling and practice of compassion.”

Ultimately Nehru requested Arundale to withdraw her bill, assuring her that his government would establish a committee to study the subject thoroughly, promising to introduce appropriate legislation at a future date. However, in 1960, when the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (PCA Act) was enacted, some of the fundamental tenets of Arundale's bill were missing — for example, the law created a blanket exception for experiments conducted on animals with a view to securing medical advancement. But notwithstanding those misgivings, the PCA Act, owing largely to Arundale, was still ahead of its times, in that it was based on an underlying belief that it was morally wrong for humans to inflict unnecessary pain on animals.

When, 15 years later, the Australian utilitarian philosopher Peter Singer first published his seminal book, *Animal Liberation*, generally considered the foundational work behind the modern animal welfare movement, his arguments were built on a similar

thesis: that basic principles of ethical behaviour called for an end to the causing of avoidable suffering to animals. Singer argues against what he describes as speciesism, or the idea that human animals, simply by virtue of being human, possess a greater claim over moral rights than non-human animals do. Animals too, much like human beings, can suffer and feel pain, and, therefore, to treat humans as somehow special is akin, he says, to making classifications based on, say, race or sex.

Singer's arguments can be best understood through an example he provides. “If I give a horse a hard slap across its rump with my open hand, the horse may start, but it presumably feels little pain,” he writes in his book. “...If I slap a baby in the same way, however, the baby will cry and presumably does feel pain, for its skin is more sensitive. So it is worse to slap a baby than a horse, if both slaps are administered with equal force. But there must be some kind of blow...that would cause the horse as much pain as we cause a baby by slapping it with our hand.”

If it's wrong to inflict that much pain on a baby, Singer says, there's simply no good reason to inflict an equivalent amount of pain on a horse. To consider otherwise is, in his belief, to act as a speciesist. Now, his interpretations have opponents at both ends of the spectrum. At one extreme end are arguments that treat animals as property, as capable of being freely exploited by humans for selfish purposes; at the other — and these represent more compelling arguments — are the writings of those such as the American philosopher Tom Regan. In his definitive 1983 book, *The Case for Animal Rights*, Regan argues that animals, at least sentient ones, possess basic moral rights, since they possess an inherent value, much like humans.

Therefore, a recognition of their rights requires us to fundamentally change the way we treat them. Some might view Regan's arguments as taking things a step too far. If we were to see rights as concomitant with responsibilities, for instance, the question that begs asking is this: how do we impose duties on animals?

This conflict, on the true nature of animal rights, will likely be at the heart of the arguments to be advanced by both those for and against the new jallikattu law. Although the Supreme Court, in *A. Nagaraja*, appeared to suggest that animals possess a right to life, much like that guaranteed to human beings under Article 21 of the Constitution, the primary reason for the court striking down Tamil Nadu's 2009 law regulating jallikattu

was because the statute was repugnant to the PCA Act.

State vs Centre

Under India's constitutional structure, both the Central and State governments can make laws on animal cruelty, but if the latter's statute is contrary to the former's, such an act must secure the President's assent. And this is precisely the approach adopted by Tamil Nadu in enacting its law last month. This statute, which secured the President's assent on January 31, amends the PCA Act and creates a specific exception for jallikattu. This means that the petitioners in the Supreme Court have to do more than just show that the PCA Act stands violated by jallikattu; they would have to prove that its practice infracts at least one of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

This threshold ought to prove hard to meet. The Constitution's framers, after all, never intended to guarantee to animals any fundamental rights, and, what's more, the bare text of the document hardly permits such a reading. To follow the path set in *A. Nagaraja* would require, therefore, a gargantuan leap in constitutional interpretation; it would necessitate a specific holding that an animal is a legal person.

Such a conclusion may be philosophically justifiable. Indeed, some scholars such as Steven Wise, an American lawyer, have made precisely such an argument. In his book, *Rattling the Cage*, Wise enlists a whole list of artificial entities that are considered legal persons: corporations, ships, partnerships, governments, and so forth. He also points to Indian examples, including a Supreme Court decision that held that the holy book of the Sikhs, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, was a juristic person, as too to the example of Hindu idols that are considered juristic entities. But if Wise's argument were to be extended to the level of constitutional interpretation, were we to treat animals as our equals under Article 14, for instance, the anomalies that this would result in are enormous: not only would this render the jallikattu law unconstitutional, it would also open a Pandora's box where a whole host of otherwise acceptable activities may come under challenge. But, equally, were the court to reject the petitioner's argument, it would only serve to highlight the hollowness of the present animal welfare regime, where a simple legislative amendment is sufficient to topple the core values that ought to underpin a moral society, in which animals are treated with care and compassion.

Best practices elsewhere

The German example might provide us with some solutions. In 2002, Germany amended its Constitution to specifically mandate the state to legislate and protect animal rights within the framework of the constitutional order. This has meant that the federal constitutional court in Germany now has to weigh the dignity of animals against other liberties such as the right to freely practise religion or the right to conduct of medical research. Therefore, now, any legislative exception to animal rights — whether this involves slaughtering for food, or the use of animals for producing dairy — would have to be narrowly tailored, ensuring that animals' welfare is protected to the greatest extent possible.

It's clear that we need something similar in India to make rights of animals more unassailable. For a long time, as Martha Nussbaum, an American philosopher, has observed, the pursuit of global justice has required the inclusion of many people that were previously excluded as “fully equal subjects of justice”: the poor, ethnic, religious and racial minorities, women, the disabled, and immigrants, among others. There is, as she says, no obvious reason why we ought not to look beyond these barriers of our own species. For to continue to subject animals to the disdainful whims of human behaviour is to ignore the basic entitlements of justice.

Suhrith Parthasarathy is an advocate practising at the Madras High Court.

CARTOONSCAPE



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Afraid of helping

The inability to take the initiative while in a crowd and its interesting correlation (“The temptation to go viral”, Feb.10). To put it crudely, the more educated you are, the more out of place you feel in a crowd, especially in small towns, paralysing your ability to take the initiative. Filming a person's or a living being's final moments seems heartless, but it seems to be the trend, an example being the case of a dying dolphin calf where people were taking selfies instead of putting it back in the ocean.

In a way, videos have some value — as evidence for the police. Therefore they can be utilised by the police who should also ensure that a Good Samaritan is not harassed. Felicitations of Good Samaritans by the local police and NGOs can help build confidence as well.

Arjun Gopal,
Bangalore

Man has lost the human touch with the advent of technology. It has become fashionable to go on a videoshooting spree unmindful of the suffering an accident victim

experiences. Most people have lost the sense of enjoying nature when they visit a park or a garden as they are so engrossed in taking photographs. It is the same even when we go to a place of worship. Scores of people can be seen engrossed taking selfies instead of soaking in the spiritual ambience. Though the government is doing a lot to promote the Good Samaritan law, people need to change the way they think. In this, law enforcement agencies need to lend a helping hand.

Duppali Rahul Yadav,
Mahbubnagar, Telangana

Even if someone is willing to take the injured person to a hospital, the time-consuming procedures involved leave one exasperated. Legislation alone cannot bring about social change. The act will gain acceptance if the authorities complete formalities quickly instead of using the situation as a medium to exhibit their might over the ordinary citizen.

Maria George,
Thrissur

One can still help an accident victim even before an ambulance arrives.

You just have to keep ‘ABC’ in mind — clear the airway, restore breathing and restore proper circulation by stopping bleeding. But before starting ‘ABC’, the person must check whether the victim has suffered any neck or spine injury. We must all be aware of the “Golden Hour”, when the chances of saving a person's life are bright.

K.M.K. Murthy,
Secunderabad

Rights for Naga women

Tribal women have been working alongside men at home and outside. To now try and deny them their electoral right reflects the failure of the State government (Editorial — “Bowing down to patriarchy”, Feb.10). Urban Local Bodies have functioned smoothly without any fuss. Rather than have civil society or women rights groups demand affirmative action favouring women, the State government should take it upon itself to lead from the front.

Shivam Dwivedi,
Lucknow

Reservation for women in Nagaland is crucial for their empowerment because there has been no woman

legislator in the State ever since Nagaland attained Statehood in 1963. Between 1969 and 2008, women have hardly made a mark in politics due to electoral vagaries. Crushing societal prejudices and gender discrimination against women, therefore, assumes particular significance in Nagaland.

Ganapathi Bhat,
Akola, Maharashtra

Civility in Parliament

Congressmen have mastered the art of holding Parliament to ransom many a time for frivolous reasons (“Rumpus over PM's raincoat jibe”, Feb.10). The allusion the Prime Minister made can be understood by most people. In fact, Mr. Modi's comments are mild when compared to the strong language the Congress has used in the past.

B.S. Jayaraman,
Coimbatore

Some readers (Letters, Feb.10) are out of touch with reality. Anyone who watches parliamentary sessions which are telecast will have a fair idea of the way in which members of the Congress party conduct themselves in Parliament. It is

ironical that the Congress party, which has used strong language in the past against the BJP and the Prime Minister in Parliament — the “dog” remark is one example — is now upset after a mild jibe. Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is no doubt a distinguished politician but he should have shed his stoic silence when the UPA was consumed by scandals.

S. Srinivasan,
Bangalore

Pakistan's 'crackdown'

The arrest of Jamaat-ud-Dawa leader Hafiz Saeed, while welcome, seems to be a result of Pakistan's desperation to avoid sanctions being imposed by the Trump administration as well as “Chinese pressure” to get their house in order (“An eyewash or a turning point?” Feb.10). There is enough on Hafiz Saeed in the dossiers submitted by India to convict him for the 26/11 attacks. It is in Pakistan's interest to incarcerate Hafiz Saeed as he is also alleged to be involved in propagating radical Islamism. At the moment, the arrest appears to be an eyewash.

Akshay Viswanathan,
Thiruvananthapuram



A thought for today

You can't take over the world
without a good acronym

C S WOOLLEY, UK author

Of Cronyism And Acronymism

UP-coming polls are stimulating
the verbal games people play

Question: In poll-bound UP what is an acronym? Answer: It's when a crony (Rahul) joins an A (Akhilesh) to oppose an M (Modi).

As the curtain goes up on the assembly polls – which many pundits believe will presage the outcome of the general election in 2019 – acronyms are buzzing like bluebottle flies in the state.

An acronym is a word formed by joining the initial letters of other words. So pseudonyms like NaMo and RaGa are abbreviations, or contractions, but not acronyms, while SITA (Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act) is a true acronym, as is Noida, not many of whose residents may know that it stands for New Okhla Industrial Area.

However, it speaks volumes of the moral and ethical health of the nation that the chosen acronym of political acrimony is SCAM, which in its non-acronymic form refers to a money-making swindle and which has long dominated our political vocabulary.

NaMo started the SCAM ball rolling by kicking off with an interpretation of the word to represent Samajwadi, Congress, Akhilesh and Mayawati. Akhilesh was quick to riposte with his own SCAM, which stood for Save Country (from) Amit (Shah and) Modi.

As a junior partner of the SP-Congress poll alliance, Rahul was keen to show that he too was a dab hand at the game and coined another version of SCAM: Seva, Courage, Ability, Modesty. However, he scored a self-goal when the PM pointed out it was news to him that a SCAM by any other name could start with Seva, and bowled a googly with VIKAS: Vidyut, Kanon, And Sadak.

However, the road map to progress can have many a speed-breaker, as suggested by the sarkari scheme called BHIM, which officially stands for Bharat Interface for Money, but which sceptics might translate as Bahut Hangama India Mein, denoting something full of sound and fury signifying nothing.

Indeed, while some voters might find such word-play diverting – as in SCAM standing for Such Clever Acronym Making, which is enough to make one LOL, or Laugh Out Loud – others might dismiss the whole tamasha as a SCAM of a totally different kind: Silly Clowning Angers Many.

Moreover, while politics does often make for strange bedfellows, it might exceed the bounds of decorum if electioneering rhetoric were to include CHINA (Come home, I need action), let alone the even more explicit BURMA (Be undressed and ready, angel).

Such terms of endearment might prompt the public response of a KISS. The conventional KISS reads out as Keep It Simple, Stupid, but which in this case could become Keep it Sanitised, Sexy.

Do It Differently

Toilets are not enough to achieve sanitation,
India must reinvent the waste business

Sunita Narain



The most important programme of this government is Clean India – not just of corruption, but of the muck and filth that is taking over our rivers, our air and our cities. But equally (and more) important is the agreement that this 'cleaning' up is not possible unless we can provide every Indian with toilets that work and toilets that are connected to systems that will safely dispose human excreta, to prevent further pollution of our environment and create another source of bad health. This agenda is therefore, not just about building toilets but about building sanitation systems that are affordable by all. Only when growth is affordable and inclusive can it be sustainable.

But this is where the opportunity also lies in doing things differently. Till now, the paradigm for urban sanitation has been costly. It has been based on the idea that building toilets is enough to clean the country. But the excreta sums of different cities, or what we call the city's "shit-flow" diagram, shows that the situation is grim. Today's cities do not treat or safely dispose the bulk of human excreta generated.

This is because we often confuse toilets with sanitation. But the fact is that toilets are mere receptacles to receive waste; when we flush or pour water, the waste flows into a piped drain, which could be either connected, or not, to a sewage treatment plant (STP). This STP could be working, or not. In the majority of cases, human excreta (our household waste) is not safely disposed but instead discharged, untreated into the nearest river, lake or a drain.

But in all of this, there is an opportunity. Instead of waiting for the underground sewage network to be built, which is expensive, unaffordable and, given the economics of municipalities, frankly unviable – there is another route for excreta to flow. Today, a large share of Indian households with access to sanitation are connected to septic tanks – 40% of urban India, according to the Census 2011. In this case the household flush or pour latrine is connected to a septic tank, which, if it is well constructed, will retain the sludge and discharge the liquid through a soak pit. The faecal sludge can be emptied and conveyed for treatment.

The fact is that this sludge is nutrient-rich. Today, the global nitrogen cycle is being destroyed because we take human excreta, which is rich in nutrients, and dispose it in water. In this case, we can return the human excreta back to land, use it as fertiliser and reverse the sanitation cycle. The faecal sludge, after treatment, can be given to farmers and used as organic compost. Or, it can be treated and mixed with other organic waste – like kitchen waste – and used for biogas, or to manufacture fuel pellets or ethanol.

And it is happening. Governments are beginning to realise that yesterday's system can be re-engineered to work for today and tomorrow. They now recognize the fact that septic tanks are decentralised waste collection systems. Instead of thinking of building an underground sewerage network – that is never built or never completed – it would be best to think of these systems as the future of urban sanitation. After all, we have gone to mobile telephony without the landline. Individual septic tanks could be the way to achieve full sanitation solutions.

So, cities' sanitation plans are beginning to recognize that these systems exist and plan to incorporate them for future improvements. The key is to provide oversight to the building of these systems – the codes exist, but they need to be implemented and structures certified. The most important factor is to provide minimal regulation for the collection and transportation of faecal sludge businesses, so that waste is taken for treatment and not dumped somewhere. And decentralized treatment facilities need to be created by municipalities so that the desludgers have a designated spot to decant in.

This system of waste management is more affordable and sustainable. It provides employment in the business of cleaning waste. It provides sustainable solutions so that waste is not waste – it is a resource. This is our win-win. Our future's solution.

The writer is Director General, Centre for Science and Environment

Where Are Oil Prices Headed?

The answer lies in a combustible mix of Mideast geopolitics and the advent of shale oil

Sunil Sharan



My, hasn't he proven to be a bull in a China shop. A ban here, an order there. America has its head spinning. But one thing he hasn't done is

revoke the US-Iran nuclear deal. Maybe there is some method to his madness. Iran shot off a couple of small missiles, which made President Donald Trump come down hard on it. But once again, no rescinding the deal. What were the Iranians trying to do? Perhaps testing how far he would go.

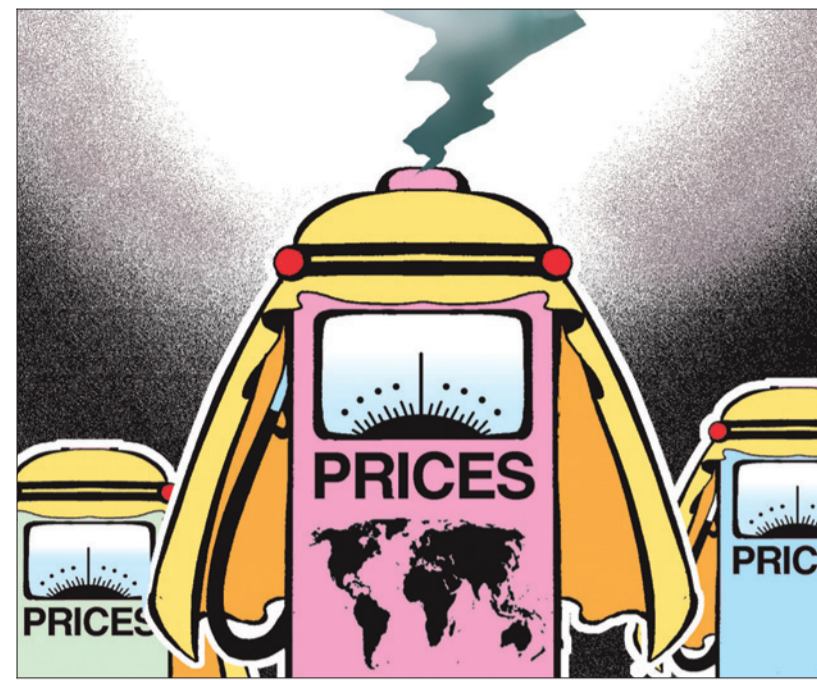
Despite being leaders of only about 13% of the world's Muslims who are Shia, Iran's leadership has been able to give the dominant Sunnis a run for their money. The discovery of shale oil in America allowed President Obama to overturn over half-a-century of American foreign policy – a tight embrace of Saudi Arabia as well as Israel – for a clasp with a country that still regards the US as the Great Satan.

How the US smoked the peace pipe with the Iranians while letting them support the Shia ruler of an overwhelmingly Sunni nation to dispatch his people back to the beginning of time is unfathomable. Iran has roped in Russia for the pitiless strikes, and therein lies the rub for Trump. If he tears up the Iranian deal, will he still be able to romance Putin?

Trump sees Islamic State as a clear and distinct threat. He wants Russia to help him knock out IS. IS is all Sunni. Not a single Shia has been suspected of bombings in the US or Europe since 9/11. In Trump's mind every Syrian refugee, almost invariably Sunni, is a threat.

Trump has also to make nice with Israel. Jared Kushner, his son-in-law and alter ego, is an orthodox Jew, who has, wonder of wonders, been given charge of Israeli-Palestinian relations. Guess who he's going to support? The Saudis have proven to be reliable friends of the Israelis, so they cannot be jettisoned either.

In this combustible mix of the US, Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia lies the



future of the world's oil. The current oil price is \$54 a barrel, double what it was a year ago. Average price for 2016: \$43. Will prices keep rising, hold steady or fall?

The US Energy Administration Agency claims that the country has proven shale oil reserves of about 20 billion barrels, a figure dwarfed by Canadian and Venezuelan oil sands reserves of 350 billion barrels. With Trump approving the Keystone pipeline, expect 800,000 barrels of Canadian oil to gush daily through America in a few years. America is awash in oil.

A huge fall in demand at the world's biggest consumer, the US, made the oil-producing cartel Opec's inventory stack up. And up. Prices fell through the floor. Saudi Arabia which has traditionally called the shots at Opec pushed for a cut. But increasingly Iran, and its ally Iraq, wield more influence.

Finally each got what it was looking for. Opec would reduce its output by 1.2 million

While oil prices remain relatively low, the government must think about deregulating the sector and letting wholesale prices be reflected at the pump. Gouging oil for tax makes the government lazy in mopping up the right kind of money

barrels a day by January 2017, with the Saudis cutting by half a million barrels to 10 million a day. Sanction-starved Iran pushed to increase its quota to 3.8 million a day. Crude jumped to \$50 a barrel.

China is an oil producing wannabe. It has shale oil reserves equivalent to those of the US, and has begun drilling for them in earnest. There then seems to be

a glut of oil in the world.

In case Trump lets the Iran deal be, and with the world economy picking up steadily, oil should hover around \$60 a barrel in 2017. If Trump does not honour the deal, Iran could not be sanctioned, and it would continue producing oil at new levels. Once again, oil should stay the same barring a cataclysmic event such as an attack on Iran.

Would oil go lower than today in the rest of 2017? Unlikely, because Keystone won't kick in for a few years, and so too Chinese oil. With production steady and demand relatively so, expect oil not to dip.

What are the implications for India? The EIA sent a considerable team to India that estimated its shale oil resources at 4 billion barrels, and posted its methodology on its web site. I have not seen any equivalent Indian study. Hydraulic fracturing is a complex process but easily learned. India should forthwith tap its shale resources.

While oil prices remain relatively low, the government must think about deregulating the sector and letting wholesale prices be reflected at the pump. Gouging oil for tax makes for easy money. It also makes the government lazy in mopping up the right kind of money. If we are a tax noncompliant society, whose fault is it? Why isn't tax collection as foolproof as counting votes are?

Finally, New Delhi has done a hash of a job by abandoning old friends like Russia and failing to cultivate new ones like America. All prime ministers want to run foreign policy, but no prime minister since Nehru has wanted to own it like Modi. The minister for foreign affairs has been reduced to being the minister for twitter affairs.

Construction magnates, builders, real estate moguls have taken over a shell-shocked Washington. With Trump, politics is all about personal chemistry. Why not send the external affairs minister to Washington as ambassador? She is quite capable of striking a rapport with the Trumpians. Easy access to American oil and gas, as well as to discovery and drilling knowhow, should top her agenda.

The writer is an energy expert

India in Africa: Morocco's return to the African Union is also a diplomatic victory for New Delhi

Rudroneel Ghosh @ timesgroup.com



In what can be described as a diplomatic victory that New Delhi can quietly take

some credit for, the African Union (AU) last week readmitted Morocco into its fold.

It will be recalled that Morocco was the only African country that wasn't part of AU. It had chosen to withdraw from the pan-African body in 1984 after the latter had recognised the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) as a full member. The SADR is the product of a long-running separatist movement regarding the territory of the Moroccan Sahara – over which Morocco exercises full sovereign authority today. The Moroccan Sahara was earlier a Spanish colonial enclave – rest of Morocco itself was under the French till 1956.

However, in 1975 the Moroccan Sahara was divided between Morocco and Mauritania under the Madrid Accords. Mauritania later relinquished its claims to the territory in 1979. But since 1975, a separatist group called the Polisario Front – backed primarily by Algeria – has carried out an armed struggle for independence of

the Moroccan Sahara. In 1991, a ceasefire was brokered between Morocco and Polisario, allowing for the establishment of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara.

But the terms of the referendum were never fulfilled. In fact, the Polisario Sahrawi camps in Tindouf in western Algeria never permitted a proper census of refugees. As things stand today, Morocco has offered a high degree of autonomy to its Sahara provinces as a solution to this

Africa today has all that is needed to emerge as the next global growth hub – abundant natural resources, a growing middle class, and improving governance structures

long festering issue. And to bolster its proposal, it has undertaken a slew of development projects in the Sahara.

Despite all this, the Moroccan Sahara-SADR issue has continued to weigh down AU as a colonial baggage, preventing African unity. It's in this context that Morocco's return



to AU needs to be seen. That 39 African nations voted in support of Morocco's return to the pan-African body shows the direction in which majority of AU's members want the organisation to proceed. But interestingly this process had actually received a big push in India in 2015. The Third India-Africa Forum Summit held in New Delhi in October of that year saw all African nations, including Morocco – SADR wasn't invited as India has suspended diplomatic recognition of this entity.

In fact, that Summit had seen an intense debate about the inclusion of the term 'colonialism' in the final draft of the Delhi Declaration in view of the Moroccan Sahara-SADR

issue. But thanks to the intervention of Indian interlocutors, consensual language was found to Morocco's satisfaction. The Summit and Morocco's participation in it set the ball rolling for Morocco's eventual return to AU.

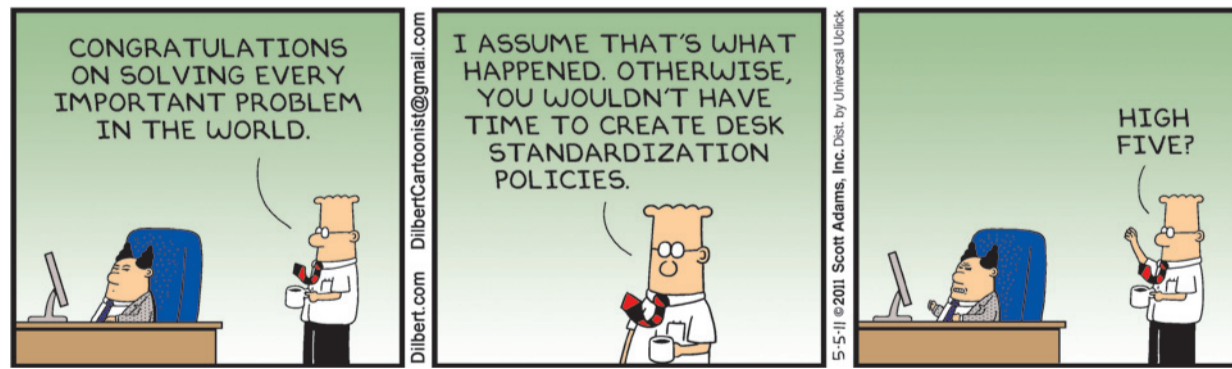
This is welcome on several fronts. First, Africa today has all that is needed to emerge as the next global growth hub – abundant natural resources, a growing middle class, and improving governance structures. However, it continues to be plagued by intra-continental politics and legacy issues. These need to be set aside in favour of greater continental unity to pool resources and boost intra-regional trade. In that sense, Morocco's return to

AU once again makes the African institutional family whole and pushes the case for greater continental cooperation.

Second, Morocco's return to AU will only be an asset to the pan-African body. Not only is Morocco a top African economy, it's also at the forefront of championing South-South cooperation in areas such as agriculture, education, health-care, environment protection, etc. Plus, Morocco has been fighting the scourge of Islamist extremism through intelligence and security cooperation with sister African nations and European partners. It even has an ideological dimension to its counter-terror efforts in the form of a programme that trains foreign imams in moderate Islamic tenets.

Lastly, Africa needs to go beyond its colonial hangover and learn to stand on its own feet. Hitherto Africa was only united on paper. Hopefully, Morocco's return to AU will see Africa united in purpose and practice. As far as India is concerned, Morocco's return to AU gives New Delhi a strong ally in Africa – especially in Francophone Africa – that is willing to open up new opportunities for trade and investments. That's certainly a big win for the Narendra Modi government.

dilbert



A Sikh Prayer, Offered With Humility

Swami Swaroopananda

A prayer is a submission. It is an offering in humility and complete surrender, expressing servitude and love. It is verily a whisper from the soul. It reaches out like the faith of a child who puts his hand into that of his parent and wills to be led. A prayer must 'know' the One Being prayed to. In whose hands are we placing ours? Whom do we trust to lead us?

Often our prayers and conversations with the Divine are requests for something. Generally, our attention is focussed on defining what we want rather than in knowing the Recipient of our prayers. This is akin to writing a long letter knowing neither the receiver nor his address.

spontaneous outpouring of Guru Arjan Dev, Tu ohakuru tuma pagi aradasi, which forms the last part of the fourth stanza of his famed composition, the Sukhmani Sahib.

Ardas means prayer, or prarthana. It is to connect with the Supreme. We pray in order to achieve through that Higher Power what we cannot achieve by ourselves, the limited beings we imagine ourselves to be.

Each of us is born with certain abilities and also with some limitations. We then become bound by these self-imposed concepts – like the thought, "I am the body." Prayer is the way to remove these misconceptions and their hold over us. It is the direct route to tap into the Higher Power.

When we forget the very source of all, then ego, pride and arrogance come into

our lives and create a sense of separateness. From the sense of separateness arises a feeling of incompleteness, followed by desire and hatred; and from hatred are born all our sorrows.

When we remember that everything we have has come from the Divine, there will be no ego. Where there is no ego, there is no sorrow. Even at moments of crisis, we should rejoice at all our blessings.

When we remember God and offer our prayers from the innermost depths of our hearts, it is ardas. This is the best way to express our love for God. In this inspiring ardas, Guru Arjan Dev shows us how to pray.

Tu ohakuru is a submission that is done after worship and kirtan at the Gurudwara. The moment of ardas is also when we submit ourselves to the Divine, when after the earlier worship

through ritual or chant, we prepare to unite with Him in surrender. This beautifully simple ardas constructs an inner environment with the bricks of prayer, gratitude and surrender, founded on the faith that He is the giver, provider, parent, and that we need work only as instruments do, with unconditional trust and devotion.

In the last line Guru Arjan Dev pays homage to Guru Nanak Devji and to the tradition of the Guru-parampara, through which the disciple acknowledges his indebtedness to his Guru and to the source of all wisdom – none other than the Master (Tu ohakuru) acknowledged in the first line.

Swami Swaroopananda, recently appointed worldwide head of Chinmaya Mission, will give discourses on Upadesh Sara and Meditation from Guru Granth Sahib from Feb 13-18 at Chinmaya Mission, 89 Lodi Road.

Sacredspace

Stay Grounded

The people you choose to have around you make all the difference. My family and close friends keep me grounded. You have to have a mind of your own and a strong head on your shoulders.

Virat Kohli

Why does China bat for Masood Azhar?

LT GEN (RETD) SYED ATA HASNAIN

ANYONE who follows strategic issues knows that much can happen in geopolitical and geo-strategic-related affairs which defies rationale. Yet, one thing is clear; nations do not act, engage or support each other unless there is an inherent national interest involved. Seldom do leaderships follow the norm of support based on emotive or historical linkages. A nation as pragmatic and nationalistic as China does not usually make mistakes in this regard as far as the pursuit of national security strategy is concerned. When it comes to China's denial of support to brand Masood Azhar a UN-designated terrorist, this rationale appears to fly in the face of the Masood Azhar affair.

A few facts, to glean the background may be required. Following the attack on the US embassies in Nairobi and Darussalam by the Al-Qaida and other associated groups, the Security Council passed Resolution 1267 or 1267 Regime, in 1999. This Resolution primarily looks at non-kinetic ways of forcing entities, terror groups or their leaders to be proscribed and pressurised with cooperation between members of the UN. It requires unanimity of the Security Council to be brought into effect against any of the above. India has been attempting to have Masood Azhar, the infamous JeM chief proscribed under this but China comes to Pakistan's support each time in denying unanimous approval of the UNSC which is mandatory. India has criticised the UNSC decision, stating that, "Its working methods, based on the principles of unanimity and anonymity, is leading the Committee to adopt a selective approach to combating terrorism." JeM was listed under 1267 Regime as far back as 2001 for its links to the Al-Qaida but labelling eludes Masood Azhar because of China which is the only nation in the UNSC



PLAYING THE GREAT GAME: Chinese President Xi Jinping (L) with Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Islamabad in 2016. Xi launched projects worth \$46 billion. This exceeds US spending in Pakistan. (Top right) JeM chief, Masood Azhar. REUTERS

which is preventing this. Is it in China's national interest to do the above? First and foremost, to put the question differently, is anything in the interest of India and not that of Pakistan automatically in China's national interest? China's strategic academic community does not think so because there has emanated no strident defence of China's stance except from the usual media commentaries. The latest Global Times of China states, "Chinese analysts said they believe India did not provide enough evidence to support its proposals, as evidence is required not only because of the need to maintain the UN's authority, but also because of the complexities in the region". This stance can continue forever.

The conclusions should be obvious.

The only country which can facilitate both, outreach for trade and transportation of energy needs through the continental routes is Pakistan. This realisation has struck a deeper chord in China over the last two years.



China considers its relationship with Pakistan deeply strategic. There have been times China has tried to project a degree of neutrality between India and Pakistan in matters concerning even Jammu and Kashmir. Since the last two years its stance has hardened irrationally in favour of Pakistan. Two things seem to have dictated this. First, is the turn in the Indo-US relationship, which progressively showed emergence of greater strategic understanding and was perceived by China as essentially aimed at it. The larger narrative of India's outreach to Japan and Vietnam also appears to have unnerved China. Second is the indirect effect of the New Great Game in Asia.

It is not the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) alone which is binding China to Pakistan in a more determined

way. The CPEC is just a sub-arm of the larger strategy of outreach by China to go well beyond its borders in order to sustain its growth rate. It is also designed to help develop the backward regions within its territories, including the troubled region of Xinjiang.

In the South-East Asian and East-Asia region in order to have a control over the ocean disputes, China has reached out to Philippines, Laos and Cambodia. It also has the presence of North Korea as a foil should things not go as per plan. In its strategy towards its western boundaries it is Russia who it needs and the relationship has strengthened considerably. Oil and gas from Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are reasonably guaranteed but insufficient to meet its voracious needs. Almost 80 per cent of its energy needs are still supplied through the sea lines of communication (SLOC) which are vulnerable in the event of larger conflict. The only country which can facilitate both, outreach for trade and transportation of energy needs through the continental routes is Pakistan. This realisation has struck a deeper chord in China over the last two years as the US moved closer to its pivot and rebalancing strategy under former President Obama. Donald Trump's approach is still confused and unclear. He does not yet know how he will deal with China. He wishes to be aggressive on the South China Sea dispute and does not wish to leave Afghanistan to the control of Pakistan and the ISI to work with the Taliban and the Haqqanis. So the US may well marginally enhance its presence in Afghanistan. That is not good news for China that wants its strategy of the trade corridors to be without potential of conflict and opposition.

So, Pakistan's strategic importance goes up several notches. As it is, even the casual eye can gauge that without any other factor; just its geographic location is God's greatest gift to Pakistan. It controls access to the ocean and reverse access to the heart of Asia. It

provides the US its only viable logistics route to Afghanistan. China's future development of the western peripheral regions is dependent on the development of the trade corridors through the zone of the New Great Game. In the latter, it is not infrastructure alone but the potential of ideology being infused as a weapon here. The entire New Great Game, which is all about extension of influence to facilitate trade corridors, can be hamstrung by the infusion of Islamic radicalism. The infrastructure will remain unsafe and millions of dollars worth of security systems will have to be deployed to safeguard it. Pakistan's reputation as the core centre of radical Islam precedes it each time.

Through the 1980s, the US and Saudi Arabia defeated the former Soviet Union with the assistance of Pakistan and its ISI. It has tied down India considerably in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and potentially it holds the key to the security of the corridors in the New Great Game zone. All this is through the networks it controls. The extent to which friendly terrorists can assist Pakistan in its future strategy has been insufficiently realised by India.

China has the full measure of appreciation of what Pakistan can and cannot do. The investment in Masood Azhar is not for any love for the ISI's favorite terrorist leader but due to sheer prudence about the insurance China needs for the \$46 billion and much more that will eventually be sunk into these projects.

India's diplomatic efforts may not yet succeed in this sphere but there is no option but to continue these as China is isolated in the UNSC and Pakistan too is feeling the heat. Sometimes narrow diplomatic defeats can actually be converted to eventual victories. That is, only if you understand the nuances.

The writer is a former GOC of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps. He is now associated with the Vivekanand International Foundation.

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

BATHWATER

Throw it out, not the baby. Congress's decision to boycott the PM does itself — and Parliament — a disservice

THE CONGRESS'S HEIGHTENED state of agitation over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's jibe at Manmohan Singh and its decision to boycott the PM in Parliament for the rest of the budget session because of it, only draws attention to its own depleted political arsenal — to the hollow sounds it is making, in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, while replying to the motion of thanks on the presidential address, Modi said that Singh knew the art of bathing while wearing a raincoat. It was a taunt directed at a predecessor whose personal image and reputation, as many have pointed out previously, has seemed remarkably untouched by the several accusations of corruption levelled against his regime. Of course, it could be said that the PM could have used different rhetoric to make his point. It is possible to argue that the parliamentary joust can be more aesthetically appealing than this. But to fulminate, as the Congress has done, against the "derogatory language" and intolerable "disrespect" to a former PM, and to demand that the PM must apologise, withdraw his remarks, or else, is surely to inflate the issue to cover up an absence.

In its tenure as the main party of the Opposition so far, the Congress has seemed to lack strategy and tactic, inside Parliament and outside it, which is not dependent on episodic and noisy eruptions — the sustained and purposeful argument that led to the rollback of the law on land acquisition has seemed more of an exception. The party's recourse now to what must surely be the weapon of last resort in a parliamentary democracy — the boycott of the prime minister — in response to a merely inelegant job, is revealing. It shows that the party does not have a proportionate or graded response to perceived provocation. The question the Congress must ask itself, as a party that has ruled the Centre and has taken in the system, is this: Where does it go from here? Having raised its pitch so high, what more can it do to register its protest at the PM's barb? The Congress must also know that the other, arguably more legitimate, arguments in the Opposition's case — that the PM and finance minister "misinformed" the House on certain aspects of demonetisation, or that the PM did not address or answer questions raised in the debate on the motion of thanks — are getting relegated in its show of petulance.

This episode also underlines a feature of the Modi prime ministership. When he first entered Parliament, the PM bowed in respect, expressed his deference to the institution. Ever since then, however, it has not always seemed that his government upholds parliamentary conventions and boundaries. All too often, as in the PM's Rajya Sabha speech on Wednesday, the belligerence of the electoral arena has been allowed to enter the House, and the spirit of dialogue and engagement forced to take a backseat. Even as his noise shows up the Congress's lack of tactic, constantly looking back over his shoulder, halfway into his tenure, to target the political opponent, does not behave the PM.

DOLLAR DIPLOMACY

Intelligent use of aid to curb Pakistan military's influence will serve US interests in Afghanistan better than sanctions

THE TOP US commander in Afghanistan told Congress this week that coalition forces have reached a stalemate in their efforts to curb Taliban control of the country and stated that Pakistan is one of the biggest hindrances to that effort. "It's very difficult to succeed on the battlefield when your enemy enjoys external support and safe haven," General John Nicholson told the Senate Armed Services Committee. There is a growing chorus of voices in the US taking this position. Influential senator, John McCain, typically asserted "our mission in Afghanistan is immeasurably more difficult, if not impossible, while our enemies possess a safe haven in Pakistan". A recent report authored by a coalition of think-tanks and universities called President Donald Trump's administration to "make it more and more costly for Pakistani leaders to employ a strategy of supporting terrorist proxies to achieve regional strategic goals".

No one knows if Trump will take that counsel, but the numbers that are feeding these frustrations aren't a secret. This past year, Afghan forces suffered over 6,785 dead in combat, and 11,000 wounded — numbers that are staggering. Though Pakistan has repeatedly promised to act against the Taliban, or to push them into peace negotiations, it has continued to facilitate their military operations against US troops. In practical terms, this means the US will likely have to pump in more troops into Afghanistan — an expensive, and unpopular, call. The problem, it is also true, is one of the US's own creation. Fearful of losing influence to China, and of weakening the institutional power of the military in a country it sees as dangerously fragile, the US has been loath to punish Pakistan's perfidy.

Having said that, the Trump administration must consider its choices carefully. Economic aid to Pakistan supports many desirable ends — among them, building up the education sector, primary health and rural development, all of which have contributed to the toxic mix of religious obscurantism and authoritarianism which shape the country's political culture. The need is to use aid intelligently, to diminish the power of Pakistan's military, and enhance the strength of its democratic institutions. In the short term, this may indeed diminish the influence the United States has enjoyed with Pakistan's generals. But then, the influence Washington's dollars bought over the decades, history has demonstrated, has turned out to be dross.

CITY LIMITS

Airports will be named for the urban centres they serve.

That'll be all, thank you

IN A DESPERATE bid to elude the sort of naming controversy which afflicted Chandigarh airport last autumn, the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation is considering a new naming convention which restricts itself to place names. Lucknow Airport should be just that, for instance, and not Chaudhary Charan Singh International Airport. There is an earthy honesty in place names, while names that ring with history agitate natives and confuse visitors. The former can be fractious about which local heroes should be memorialised on airport plaques. The latter just want to know if they're flying into the right city, without having to mug up the local political history.

Perhaps the principle could be extended to city streets and neighbourhoods, to end the menace of political renaming. After Independence, it was natural for all the avenues memorialising Cornwallis, Bentinck and Wellesley to be renamed in favour of the Mahatma and the Congress's chosen few. When geographies change ownership, their physical markers must render the fact visible. But change cannot degenerate into an assault on history, which has been in progress in India, where illustrious names from suddenly suspect dynasties are being wiped out in favour of allegedly more wholesome nomenclature. Perhaps there is value in switching to the American system, which is to name every street in a city using the cardinal points of the compass and the natural numbers alone, with no recourse to history. Of course, America has an advantage in the grid layout favoured by urban planners. Somehow, Crescent 173 doesn't have the same resonance as 5th Avenue.

However, at least it would end the scourge of renaming streets, avenues, alleys — and airports. Or perhaps not. To rename the airport of a city, you could just rename the city. This is not unprecedented, and there is absolutely no protection against such extreme reclassification.



GILLES VERNIERS

AS UTTAR PRADESH goes to the polls, a contest between three strong political forces — two parties and an alliance — is shaping up. On the eve of the polls, the SP has emerged as a strong contender, capable of challenging the BJP, thanks to a three-move political masterstroke by the incumbent chief minister.

First, through the crisis, Akhilesh Yadav presented himself as a dedicated chief minister, who was the victim of the machinations of a cabal of schemers from the party, led by his uncle. Respecting social conventions, he refrained from criticising his father publicly and let his uncle be seen as the villain of the piece. Second, the Election Commission granted Akhilesh Yadav the party symbol, vesting him with authority and legitimacy to seize control of the party. Third, he disposed off most of his uncle's and father's remaining loyalists by allocating a large number of tickets to the Congress. This alliance has turned the election into a three-corner fight, in which the SP stands to gain the most.

Large pre-poll alliances are not new in UP. The SP and the BSP fought together in 1993 and the Congress with the BSP in 1996. The SP-BSP tie-up was an alliance between equals while the latter alliance was to the advantage of the BSP, which contested 296 seats. This is the second time that the Congress is reduced to playing the role of a supporting actor, this time for the SP, even though it obtained more tickets than it could have hoped for, a few weeks ago. This is a role for the Congress in UP that remains quite unnatural for it, which it has adopted by default and with little enthusiasm.

Akhilesh Yadav is now facing the electorate unopposed within his own family; he can concentrate on the goodwill he has built over the past five years, with the bonus that whatever his government has delivered is credited to him personally, and whatever his government has botched up, or failed to deliver, is laid at the door of his uncle and his father, who have both sunk into irrelevance.

Should he win, Akhilesh Yadav would be the first chief minister to serve two consecutive terms in Uttar Pradesh since G.B. Pant in 1952, who won the state's first election as the incumbent chief minister of the erstwhile United Provinces.

Backward, forward

UP campaign shows regional parties are courting cross-sectional appeal and the personality cult

The BSP, in contrast, seems to be trailing, although its opponents as well as commentators often underestimate its strength. Mayawati's popularity among Jats is intact, in part due to the lack of credible alternatives for Dalit voters. The party will be rewarded for fielding a large number of Muslim candidates, even though the Muslim vote is always split between parties.

Muslim voters, in recent years, have been voting strategically in favour of candidates most likely to represent them and win against the BJP. The coordination between voters is local and benefits parties, according to local circumstances. This is why the Muslim vote appears scattered once the data is aggregated, even though it is cohesive on the ground. The BSP, however, seems to have lost its ability to attract votes from other groups, particularly because it has to fight two strong, credible opponents — that was not the case in 2007.

The BJP, in this campaign, has repeated some of the mistakes that cost it the election in Bihar. It has picked insignificant allies, purely on the basis of caste calculations. It still refuses to promote its state leadership, for the fear of seeing an alternative figure to the prime minister emerge from the Hindi belt. Lastly, it started its campaign on the prime minister's development-for-all agenda but has produced a manifesto replete with issues that are irrelevant to the electorate it seeks to win over — the Ram temple, triple talaq and the anti-Romeo squads, a clumsy rehash of the failed "love jihad" campaign. Nonetheless, the BJP remains popular among its upper-caste base and the groups that are not descriptively represented by other parties, essentially the non-dominant OBCs. The youth electorate, which voted massively for Narendra Modi in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, is likely to split its vote, part of which could possibly go to Akhilesh.

Regardless of their outcome, these elections have already confirmed four trends that have recently emerged in state politics. The first is that state elections have turned into a plebiscite for or against individuals, rather than parties or governments — call it the presidentialisation of state politics, in which the local strength of candidates or the party identity matters less than the appeal of

the party leader.

The second trend is that in a competition that is still structured around caste and notably around caste-based distribution of tickets, voters are increasingly strategic in their political choices. Recent studies of electoral behaviour reveal that voters are less and less determined by their ascriptive identity as far as voting is concerned. Young voters, in particular, can change their vote between elections very easily. There are very few pockets of captive voters for any party anymore.

Third, this second development owes partly to the fact that most parties seek to mobilise voters across traditional lines of division, such as caste or religion. Voters reward parties with cross-sectional appeal, which deliver without discriminating on the basis of identity. As a result, the personality of the leader becomes the main element of differentiation among parties. In recent years, the core support base of the BSP — Jats — and the SP — Yadavs and Muslims — has eroded. But this has been more than compensated by their ability to attract votes across groups.

Fourth, in order to develop a cross-sectional appeal, regional parties have changed their discourse and are focused on general interest issues, such as development and social justice. In a context of rising inequalities and frustrated economic aspirations, development trumps identity.

This means that the BJP is increasingly challenged by regional parties on its own terrain — development and personality cult. The distinction in this regard between the BJP and regional parties in power is not as sharp as it is between the BJP and the Congress. The fact that states are better equipped than the Centre to provide tangible development to voters also plays in favour of regional parties.

What we understand as "backward politics" has changed substantially over the past decade, and the analytical tools used to study or cover them — identity, patronage and a consensus on their general governmental incompetence — need to be reviewed and adapted to the present times.

The writer is assistant professor, Ashoka University, and co-director, Trivedi Centre for Political Data. Views expressed are personal

LOVE, UNAPOLOGETICALLY

Our cultural software for romance is the problem. Valentine's Day is a solution



SATYAM VISWANATHAN

FOR A PEOPLE who procreate as prolifically as we do, our cultural discomfort with the mating game is unfortunate. Marriage is India's favourite ritual, and the big fat Indian wedding is now a thing the world over. But the prospect of single people dating, or worse, living together "in sin" is enough to leave most Indians in cold sweat or self-righteous rage. The many wondrous and calamitous experiments with romance and sex that, with a bit of luck, lead to better-informed decisions about who we will mate with in perpetuity, make us deeply uncomfortable.

It's one thing for us to come away from the movies feeling warm and fuzzy about film stars getting cosy as boyfriend and girlfriend. It's quite another for the vast majority of Indians to even imagine the possibility of their children or anyone in their community committing such sacrilege.

In most of India, marriage is still seen as the coming together of families. Even though rapid urbanisation and nuclearisation of the family is challenging this paradigm, the idea that parents of daughters are bride-givers, with a liability to be discarded, has deep roots. Love and sex outside this framework — where single women exercise their freedom to date partners of their choice — severely threatens a patriarchal status quo. Ambiguous consensual relationships between adults, motivated in most of India ("what will people say"). However, once a relationship has the stamp of

socio-legal approval, then no matter if it is the source of all kinds of violence, subservience, loneliness and misery — we couldn't be less bothered. Just don't even think about divorce, because, you know, "what will people say".

Our oppressively conformist society is geared towards denying young people the chance to cultivate healthy, mutually respectful romantic relationships. Popular culture fails miserably in offering sane templates for courtship. A random sampling of our movies would suggest that stalking and sexual harassment are appropriate courtship rituals. "Love marriages" might have aspirational value, but outside of India's biggest cities, gender segregation is ubiquitous and punishments for attempting unions, especially those that cross caste and religious lines, are terrifying. Contraceptive sales peak around Navratri and other festive occasions where social disapproval of gender interaction eases slightly. Physical experimentation without a strong emotional foundation or mutual respect often ends up being the sum total of the "romantic" experience.

Consumer culture can rightly be accused of fuelling many excesses, but giving people an annual occasion to safely express and experience emotions linked to romantic love is not one of them. For the vast majority of young Indians (outside elite enclaves in the metros) Valentine's Day is a valuable enabler — one that offers a rare opportunity and vocabulary through which to respectfully (if awkwardly) express feelings of affection and attraction.

ings of affection and attraction.

Valentine's Day has been made the scapegoat for our disturbingly regressive attitudes towards consensual adult relationships outside narrow social permissibility. By repeatedly attacking a ritual that promotes an individualistic, mutually respectful approach to romance, our self-appointed moral guardians protect a status quo that has normalised an unequal relationship between the sexes.

From weddings rituals such as *kanyadaan*, to post-marriage expectations of *pativrata*, our cultural software around love and marriage is designed to perpetuate hopelessly lopsided gender equations and an internalisation of female subordination.

All too often, manufacturers react with contrition in the face of politically motivated bullying backed by specious moralistic arguments. The frequency with which Hindi movie producers fall in line when facing such intimidation is depressingly familiar. But despite attacks, the popularity of Valentine's Day in India shows no sign of abating. A young population enchanted by consumer culture is often seen as being manipulated, but not in this case. Not when what is at stake is a ritual that facilitates healthier, respectful approaches to romance. Our malignant cultural software around romance is the problem. Valentine's Day is part of the solution.

The writer is a consumer researcher and part of the founding team at Jumo Theatre



FEBRUARY 11, 1977, FORTY YEARS AGO

JANATA MANIFESTO
THE JANATA PARTY announced its election manifesto which it described as a "Gandhian alternative" that assures the people "both bread and liberty". Leaning heavily on Gandhian philosophy, the party promises an "open government in a free society" and assures it "will not misuse the intelligence services and governmental authority for personal or partisan ends". The comprehensive manifesto includes political, economic and social programmes, and lists the omissions and commissions of the Congress government. The major planks of the manifesto include dedication to the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, devolution of power, freeing the

people from fear, restoration of the citizen's fundamental freedoms and the rightful role of the judiciary and taking steps to rid public life of the cancer of corruption. The primacy of agriculture has been emphasised and the party's employment policy is aimed at moving people away from cities to the countryside. The party would also set up a committee to look into complaints of excesses in the family planning drive of the Indira government.

MORARJI ON FREEDOM
MORARJI DESAI, JANATA Party chairman, said the movement against the Mrs Gandhi government was "even more important than

the freedom movement" because "all freedom has now gone". He asked: Does it make any difference if there is an Indian dictator instead of a foreign dictator? Even in British times, there were not so many restrictions as today, he said.

BENGAL POLL DEAL
THE JANATA PARTY and the CPM-led left combination has come to an agreement on adjustments for all the 42 Lok Sabha seats from West Bengal, excepting one. The Janata Party has got 15 seats and the left combination the rest. An official announcement has been held up as the Janata Party is pressing for another seat.

WEEKEND RUMINATIONS

T N NINAN

Next battle: Labour reform

After running the gauntlet on demonetisation, the government may be about to start on another major — no less contentious — gambit: To change the country's laws governing industrial labour. For nearly three years now, one of the primary criticisms directed at the Modi government has been its failure to address this issue, presented by critics as an important reason for manufacturing activity not taking off as hoped. That criticism is about to be blunted, though it is uncertain whether the proposals will get through the Rajya Sabha, where BJP and its allies are still in a minority.

It would be a pity if Parliament does not give its imprimatur, because the proposed changes are what the doctor ordered:

Offering flexibility in operations to the smaller companies, better compensation for the retrenched, a more representative character for trade unions, and a new framework for minimum wages. The proposals have been in the works for the best part of two years, and found brief mention in Arun Jaitley's Budget speech this year. But the Congress has already declared its opposition. We should be prepared for a parliamentary battle in which regional parties might become the swing factor.

If the new laws (compressing 44 existing enactments into four broad "codes" on wages, social security, safety regulations and trade unions) do go through, they will come on top of the changes introduced last year for greater flexibility in the working of the textile and garment sectors, and the amendment of the law on apprentices. This last has put in place a blueprint for the study-cum-work arrangement of the kind that has worked elsewhere: Workers earn while they learn, and the training is linked to the prospect of real employment. This is designed to give a new thrust to the skilling programme, and (it is hoped) increase dramatically the number of apprentices in the system. Among other things, it offers better pay to those who join companies as apprentices.

One proposal that is bound to attract flak was first proposed by Yashwant Sinha in a Budget speech nearly two decades ago: To allow units employing 300 workers (against 100 at present) to shut down operations without having to seek government permission. If approved, this would take the vast majority of companies out of the framework of a ridiculous law that probably has no parallel in any other country. The flip side is also something that was first proposed in the 1990s: Those who get retrenched should get 45 days' wages for every year worked (instead of 15 days currently). Retrenchment becomes easier but much more expensive; so companies will not resort to it lightly.

Other liberalisations proposed include raising the qualifying floor in similar fashion for the application of the Factories Act, for coverage under the law on contractual labour, for the formation of trade unions, and the like. In essence, smaller units will be offered a freer labour market. The logic is that the binary division of the labour market into organised and unorganised segments (with tight rules for the first and none in the second) would give way to more fuzzy categorisations that enable easier transitions. The hope must be that this will change today's situation where 90 per cent of the non-agricultural workforce is in the unorganised sector (defined as having fewer than 10 workers in a unit), in which productivity and, therefore, wages tend to be low.

If this belated but welcome reform measure is not to go the way of the Modi government's initial effort to undo the land acquisition law that the Manmohan Singh government had got enacted in its last leg, Mr Modi's team will have to prepare the ground carefully and not tackle Parliament in its usual, take-no-prisoners style. In the end, it will be a test of whether the prime minister knows how to reach out for support across the floor.

ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA



Anti-establishment conformist's age

We win intellectual argument with Anna movement morphing into AAP. Even if its ideology is flexible, culture & illiberalism are the same

The Anna movement began nearly six years ago with an anti-politician war cry. All that was wrong with the Indian society, polity, economy and society was blamed on our politics and leaders. The word "neta" became a pejorative. He may not wish to be reminded of it now, but bestselling writer Chetan Bhagat coined the leitmotif of the movement: *Mera neta chor hai* (my politician is a thief). The anti-corruption movement soon evolved into a kind of middle-class, urban professional revolt against the "rotten" political class and system.

A good example of its appeal cutting across ideological lines was that we saw well-known RSS people and sympathisers and established Left-liberals — from Baba Ramdev to General V K Singh and Kiran Bedi to Prashant Bhushan, Shabana Azmi, Om Puri and Aamir Khan — turn out to support the movement. Anna Hazare and his storm troopers, led by Arvind Kejriwal, rode the same angry bandwagon. Electoral process was for the corrupt, people voted for a bottle of liquor or ₹500, Parliament was a chamber of rapists and thieves. Power had to be devolved, the system turned inside out. Nothing short of a revolution was now needed.

While Mr Hazare pretended to be Gandhi, and was hailed as such by fawning activists, sundry socialists and TV anchors. He also borrowed Gandhi's weapon: Fasting. But iconography he leaned on wasn't Gandhian. It was, in some ways, un-Gandhian: Bhagat Singh, Subhash Chandra Bose, even Maharana Pratap and, in some striking moments from more contemporary Bollywood: Mr Hazare stretching his arms out at the Ramlila Maidan and chanting Dilip Kumar's line from the film *Karma*, "*Dil diya hai jaan bhi denge, ai watan tere liye*"; or Kiran Bedi, while being taken away in a police bus after courting arrest shouting at the TV cameras: "*Ab tumhare hawale watan saathiyi*". I am not sure if

she was echoing Kaifi Azmi's line from the old, immortal classic *Haqeeqat* (more like her vintage) or the more contemporary rubbish starring Amitabh Bachchan, Akshay Kumar, and Bobby Deol. The message was, a revolution was on to change the "system", and least of all for political power through it.

Now Mr Hazare himself is back where he was, fighting his imaginary demons in the distant isolation of Ralegan Siddhi and occasionally headline-hunting by praising the odd actions of the prime minister or criticising some of Mr Kejriwal's. Ms Bedi, Manish Sisodia, Yogendra Yadav, Prashant Bhushan (he hasn't contested an election personally, yet), Gopal Rai, his articulate spokesperson from an MNC bank, Meera Sanyal, and the reigning empress of Left-activism, Medha Patkar, have all joined electoral politics. As for those who questioned the method and motivations of the Anna movement (this writer included), we can now declare that we won the basic intellectual argument. That to change the system, you have to embrace it, for power to make a difference, you need to wade into electoral politics, even if you call it a cesspool. It follows that the only way to win power is through the ballot and the process is fair, the voter smart, by and large incorruptible.

Having swept Delhi, being poised to make a national mark in Punjab and Goa and now threatening to be a challenger in Gujarat, Mr Kejriwal and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) can no longer claim that politics and elections are all a farce. Isn't this precisely what some of us (a tiny, thick-skinned minority though) were saying in our criticism of the anti-politics pretense of the Anna movement? For clearance of all doubts, here is what we said: Be honest and say what you want is political power. Or, in the language Mr Kejriwal prefers to use with his critics: *Agar rajni-*

ti karni hai, toh khul kar saamne aao.

Whatever AAP's ranking in Punjab and Goa, it is incontrovertible that it's finding traction. That's the sense from Gujarat, too. It is remarkable how, even while seeking political power, AAP has maintained anti-establishmentarianism as the core of its appeal, laced and garnished with ultra-nationalism to rival BJP's (Bhagat Singh is still there) and povertarianism more convincing than the Congress party's. Mr Kejriwal would rarely attack any particular party in his campaigns, but all other parties, in effect all "establishment" politicians. His core brand appeal is still the Grand Disruptor.

That he and his key followers are all young and generally seen as incorruptible (nobody buys Delhi Police and CBI's creative FIRs) gives him a headstart with the large, young voter-base. Some of his other rivals, Sukhbir Singh Badal, Rahul Gandhi, aren't much older, even younger. But they represent politics of entitlement, while he is self-made. He is using the absence of a track record, inexperience, as an advantage, synonymous with innocence: Give us at least one chance, therefore, sounds that much more convincing for younger voters.

He swept Delhi because he vacuumed out the Congress vote. In Punjab, on the other hand, he might get more of his votes from the Akali-BJP combine. Count that as an advantage of being a party with no real ideology, or an evolving one that can be totally fungible with the political needs of a state.

Beyond this, is there much to differentiate AAP from established parties? List all our big complaints with them, besides corruption, age and a dodgy track record: Personality cult, absence of internal democracy, a high-command culture, intolerance of media, deep illiberalism, an supremo-style leader who brooks no dissent. Check which one is not to be found in ample measure in AAP. Its leader is so supremely powerful — and popular — now that he can spend months campaigning outside the state he is sworn to govern (Delhi) and then carry on for nearly a fortnight's recuperation, more or less incommunicado, in a distant city. Rahul Gandhi, on the contrary, is pilloried for taking a week off at year-end, while he has no constitutional responsibility or even political accountability as far as his own party is concerned.

Nearly six years after it began, the Anna movement has now risen as the new pan-national political force with a formidable leader, in search of an ideology he probably believes it doesn't need. It has brought a new dimension to our stalled, boring politics and will make our jobs as political reporters and opinion-writers more fun. So what if some more abuse is a part of it, too.

Postscript: After my *Writings on The Wall* last week noting the rise of AAP in Punjab, I've been besieged with a question: How could you give a "positive" report on AAP after its chief had addressed you in particularly abusive language on social media recently? I have a counter-question: Just because someone abuses me, should I get even by lying about what I see as a reporter? And thereby abuse my readers instead?

It's instructive to read the brilliant memo from Reuters editor-in-chief Steve Adler to his staff on how to cover US President Donald Trump (*Covering Trump the Reuters way, reuters.com*, January 31). His key point: Stay with facts, do not start believing we are part of the story, needs to be remembered, whether you are covering Mr Trump, Narendra Modi, or herein, Mr Kejriwal.

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A well-balanced budget

The government will do well to take forward the idea of a public sector asset rehabilitation agency

COMING on the back of the demonetisation move in early November, the Union Budget was expected to take the government's drive against corruption and unreported wealth further. Indeed, the finance minister spent time talking about the tax non-compliance being widespread in India. A welcome reduction in the corporate and personal income tax rates at the lower income slabs was announced for the first time in many years.

Medium- and small-scale industries are likely to be pleased with the reduction in the tax rate to 25% for companies with a turnover of less than ₹50 crore. Large sized companies would have also liked to enjoy a lower tax rate, especially since the finance minister had talked about a lower rate of corporate taxation in the previous Budget. CII had recommended a lower rate for greater competitiveness of companies located in India. This would, no doubt, find place in next year's budget.

It is commendable that fiscal prudence has been maintained in the Budget and the finance minister has been able to target the fiscal deficit at 3.2% of GDP in FY18 and reduce it further to 3% in the following year. At the same time, the minister has been able to allocate money wherever needed, focusing especially on the rural and infrastructure sectors. Despite the elimination of Plan spending, the Budget has been able to increase capital expenditure by almost 25%.

Allocations to agriculture and the

rural economy have been increased significantly. NABARD has been allocated funds for the creation of a dedicated micro-irrigation fund and a dairy processing and infrastructure fund. A combination of infrastructure creation and reforms in the agriculture sector are expected to achieve the target of doubling farmers' income by 2022. The rural population is expected to benefit from accelerated road building, electrification and sanitation.

Several innovative measures have been announced for the infrastructure sector. Large allocations have been made to roads and Railways while railway stations and airports will be built and operated with the help of the private sector. Allocation has also been made for expanding the reach of high-speed broadband connectivity to take forward the digital economy.

Low-cost and affordable housing is an urgent need in the backdrop of rural-urban migration gathering pace. Many measures have been announced to improve availability of housing, including giving infrastructure status to



CHANDRAJIT BANERJEE

The success of this year's Budget will be judged based on whether it is able to increase direct tax collection by encouraging more people to join the tax net

affordable housing and making changes in capital gains taxation for property. The decline in interest rates post-demonetisation will also help in reviving demand for housing and for the real estate sector in general.

Ultimately, the success of this year's Budget will be judged based on whether it is able to increase direct tax collection by encouraging more people to join the tax net. As mentioned by the finance minister in his Budget speech, only 1.7 crore salaried individuals file returns out of 4.2 crore people employed in the organised sector. However, it is encouraging to note that tax revenues for the government has been increasing steadily. Gross tax revenue as a percentage of GDP has increased from around 10% in FY15 to 11.2% in the revised estimate of FY17.

The government has typically used PSU disinvestment as a means to contain the fiscal deficit. This year, too, there is a substantial amount—₹72,500 crore—expected to be raised from listing and divesting public sector units. It is to be hoped that this is pursued seri-

ously from the beginning of the year. Otherwise, there could be a large shortfall which would result in a slippage in the fiscal deficit. The strategy of using an exchange traded fund (ETF) for raising money has proved to be successful and should be used again. Monetisation of land and other assets of PSUs has been proposed and should be pursued.

The biggest hurdle the economy has been facing in the last few years has been that of restructuring of public sector banks and cleaning up their balance sheets. While the finance minister has made an allocation of ₹10,000 crore for recapitalisation of banks, one had expected a little more detail on how banks will restructure the existing bad assets. The Economic Survey had suggested the creation of a Public Sector Asset Rehabilitation Agency for addressing the issue of bank NPAs. It would be useful for the finance ministry to take this idea forward.

This Budget takes forward the government vision for a clean and transparent economy. It has focused on issues such as encouraging digitisation, spreading the tax net wider and cleaning up political funding to achieve its objective. Attention has also been given to the challenge of job creation on the one hand and preparing a skilled workforce on the other. A much-needed revamp of the higher education sector has also been mooted.

*The author is director-general, CII.
Views are personal*

THE HINDU CURRENT NOTE [GS Sorted]

DATE 11.02.2017

G.S.-01

⇒ **Inequality create public despair**

- Inequality is problem all over the world and that fueling to global movement for equality
- Because inequality > less income to major section > protest towards wealthy section > effect to law and order situation
- Inequality create gap of have and have not > youth having radical mind tend to extremist activity
- Rising inequality > riding of authoritarian rule because in capitalism money of a few person capable to win majority
- Recently trickle down principle not working as much because there are lots of supply of

worker present in market so exploitation can be done with lower salary

G.S.-02

• **Powerful drama to populism**

- After death of the extra populist leader and chief minister of the tamilnadu now leadership issue has been raised for chief minister post
- AIDMK secretary sasiklala and ongoing temporary chief minister o paneerselvam and political drama getting momentum of the power
- According to article 164 [2] if any person not member of the assembly can be chief minister and sasikala has same case
- But in ruling of the supreme court in B.R. kapoor V/s tamilnadu stated that article 164

[2] is not power or eligibility but restriction placed on it.

⇒ **Looking beyond our own species**

- Recent tamilnadu government order for the jallikatu show raise few question about right of animal and importance of the judicial order and impact of its breach by the state government
- Tamilnadu government order to allow jallikatu is against the supreme court award in animal welfare board v/s NAGRAJ in which court ruled out that animal also have right to life under constitution and state government can not amend prevention of animal welfare act.1960
- Animal protection march start with rukmani devi arundale known dancer with animal right protector > she bring private member bill as she was nominated member of rajya sabha > Nehru appreciated her effort and give surety

about passing of prevention of cruelty to animal

- Both state and central government can make law on animal welfare and if state government want to amend prevention of animal cruelty that it should take consideration from president

G.S.-03

• **Sariska national park**

- Sariska national park situated in alwar district of the Rajasthan have great biodiversity in the sense of bird and carnivorous
- Recently man and animal conflict increasing due to pressure of the economic activity and population
- When tiger extinct in sariska leopard have freedom in core area of the forest but after

some time tiger reintroduces from Ranthambhor national park. Leopard forced to conflict with man and this will affect ecological balance of the sariska national park

⇒ **New body for defense procurement**

- Defense procurement become job of the complex integrity structure and sovereignty of country
- The government proposed defense procurement organization to integrate and streamline long and arduous process of defense acquisition
- This organization will work under defense ministry to integrate whole process of the defense acquisition

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- Cabinet committee on security headed by the prime minister also increased procurement power of the defense minister

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