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These are Beefy Issues

Kuldip Nayar

THE demolition of the Babri masjid and the ban on cattle sale for slaughter are two sides of the same coin. They reflect the prejudice of the majority community. Both are fouling the air. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, which completed three years in office just a week ago, is blessing the different expressions of Hindutva which is slowly but gradually engulfing the entire country.

It looks as if the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) has started its preparations for the next Lok Sabha elections in 2019. The governance by chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath, shows that the RSS has taken over in more senses than one as the state government has started appointing trusted men at key positions.

New Delhi is no better. The Nehru Memorial Centre is one example where the director has been removed and, in his place, an RSS ideologue has been installed. He is spoiling the very ethos of the organization and supporting the rightist forces

instead of the liberal atmosphere which is attributed to the Nehru Centre. The ongoing scuffles in the Jawaharlal Nehru University have political parties behind them with the same purpose.

The present concentration of the rightist forces seem to be on the beef. Their imbedded arrogance is exhibited by its students' wings in one campus or the other throughout the country. This time it happened at Chennai's Indian Institute of Technology. What is different from the past is its frequency and ferocity of violence. The thrashing of students who eat beef is to re-emphasize their self-righteousness. The liberal atmosphere of the campus is now dependent on the political party that dominates the state in which the educational institution is situated.

Consequently, the BJP influences the Hindi-speaking states in the north. The writ of the Congress and other regional parties runs in the rest of India. This has divided the country mentally and idea-wise. Prime Minister Modi, when he resumed

office, had given the slogan: *sabka saath, sabka vikas*, meaning thereby that we shall be all together and advance further hand-in-hand. But subsequently he and his party, the BJP, appear to have lost the way.

And today, whether they like it or not, their government has come to represent a particular way of thinking—an intolerant India—which has the overtones of *Hindutva*. Probably, the party's think-tank has come to believe that they can win more votes by dividing the society, thanks to the Bajrang Dal and Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad which have begun vitiating the atmosphere. They are holding more and more exercises in different cities where lathis and other weapons are brandished.

This is something similar to the fear of Islamic domination that is being exploited by right-wing parties in the West. We forget that in the democratic structure that we have, everyone is free to eat whatever he or she likes. Nothing can be enforced. In a vast country like India where food and dress change every 50 kilometres, diversity is inevitable. Indeed, this is India's strength. Respecting diversity keeps our different units together in a federal structure which we follow.

The BJP hardliners, who believe that they have come to power because of a fundamental shift in national values, should think again. There is more than a grain of truth in the argument that voters gave them a chance because they had lost faith in the Congress and were looking for an alternative.

The Congress, on its part, will be failing them if it persists with dynastic politics. The party must realise –if it has not done so far—that Rahul Gandhi does not sell. Sonia Gandhi herself will be a far better bet than the other leaders so far available in the party. The disadvantage of being an Italian has disappeared over the years and she is considered as much an Indian as anyone by birth. But the problem is that she has very little chance to head the country because the Congress has lost its shine. No doubt, the BJP has Hinduised politics but that is the dominant thinking which has caught the public imagination at present, thanks to Modi's leadership.

This thinking may not last long since the Indian nation is basically pluralistic. The BJP itself seems to be conscious of this because there is some evidence that it is moving from the right-of-the-centre to the centre. The predicament that plagues the party is that its cadres come from the RSS. Maybe, that is the reason that there is no scam in the government. However one may dislike the RSS ideology, its emphasis on integrity cannot be doubted. Yet, there should be no misgiving on its interference in the governance. Even top bureaucrats are judged how close they are to the *Hindutva* philosophy.

Former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao appointed several officers, who were known to be secular, at key places so that the government reflected a pluralistic way of thinking. He felt personally betrayed when the Babri masjid was demolished because he never thought that things would reach

the point of pulling it down. But the fact remains that he connived at the whole operation. Now the thread has been picked up by a CBI court which has charged L.K. Advani, M.M. Joshi and Uma Bharti with criminal conspiracy.

It would be a great let down if what the judiciary is doing is undone by the dominant political parties. Advani and his associates can appeal to the higher court but if the ruling party does anything which favours the accused, it would amount to mocking at the law. The Congress has asked for the resignation of Uma Bharti who is a minister in the Modi cabinet. If she were to be dropped by Modi, it would send the right kind of message. This is the least that Prime Minister can do to assure the people that the government has no side to take except to support the court.

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An Open Letter to the Prime Minister From a Farmer from Telangana

Dear Shri Narendra Modiji,

I write to you as a citizen of this country. A country I had chosen to live though I had other options, for I dearly love my motherland. At the outset let me state that I am a vegetarian by choice and a farmer by profession.

I wish to ask you a few questions regarding some of the decisions and some of the laws that your government has passed in recent times. As recently as a few days ago, you had passed a bill that bans the slaughter of cows, camels and buffalos. (I do understand the stand of your party with regard to cows, but I was wondering why you had included camels and buffalos!)

With this Law you have made it extremely difficult for farmers to buy or sell cattle. In a normal village fair, at least in our village, farmers buy new cattle and sell their old cattle. Unless they are in distress no one will sell their healthy workable animals. So the question comes as to whether they should sell the old cattle for slaughter houses or not. In many areas, when there is a drought as it is right now rampant in the country, farmers are forced to “do away” with their animals. They could be cattle, they could be sheep, and they could be goats or even donkeys. I would like to now ask this question, when the farmer’s family is hungry, and they can’t have the right to sell their old and young cattle whom they are unable to feed, cattle which they must have bought paying huge sums of money, is it fair to ask them to stop selling these to slaughter houses and

demand that they be sold only to farmers? Which farmer in that situation of drought will be in a position to buy them?

I can understand your government’s concern for “protecting the cattle”. I have an alternative suggestion—Why doesn’t the Government create a Buy Back arrangement with such farmers who are unable to support their cattle or would like to dispose of the “old and feeble” cattle whom they cannot feed or feeding which doesn’t make any economic sense?

As a person with new age ideas on economics I am sure you understand that Economics is the most important aspect of a Nation. Ethics and human sustenance be damned. As we saw in the pursuit of the GDP, your government has brought in a law that will throw millions of farming families on the streets — the new Land Acquisition Ordinance which is now being brought in by the back door via the State laws, wherein the safe guards ensured in the erstwhile UPA’s LARR Act have been wiped off totally. (One of the few good things done by the UPA was this new Act). You have signed Free Trade Agreements and MOUs with various nations, which are going to put farmers already on the verge of committing suicides, closer to bankruptcy. We just saw an example recently, when the Telangana, Karnataka and Andhra farmers who after seeing the bumper prices of Tur Dal last year, have grown a bumper crop of Tur Dal. But when it was time for them to market their produce,

a huge stock of Red gram was dumped into the country from Africa. A result of the MOUs you had signed in your multiple foreign trips in the past couple of years. Needless to say, the farmers who grew Red gram are in the Red now...wonder how many are on the path to commit suicides.

And we also came to know that your government is about to sign a Free Trade Agreement with Australia to allow the dumping of their milk products. Now in a world’s largest milk producing country like India, where millions of small farmers actually made this possible, as against the large “technologically superior” factory farms of “developed nations”, where millions of small farmers eke out a living because of the two to ten cows or buffaloes, what is the need for such an agreement — is something that is beyond my comprehension. Needless to say, the subsidized milk products from the “developed nations” will only add to the woes of the small farmers of this nation. A situation, I hear many dairy co-operatives — the largest of which is in your own “parent state” of Gujarat — are fighting to get stopped.

I suppose this new Law banning the slaughter of Cattle is a move in the “right” direction, to put an end to the livelihoods of the millions of small dairy farmers in this country. As was done by the erstwhile UPA 1 and UPA 2, your government too is bent upon bending over backwards to bring in high tech, low on jobs industry, and give the precious farm lands by forcing it out of farming families, to big time corporate houses, as is envisioned in the multitude of

industrial corridors your government is proposing across India, like the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor, Chennai — Bengaluru Industrial Corridor, Mumbai — Bangalore Economic Corridor, Amritsar—Delhi — Kokata Industrial Corridor and Vizag-Chennai Industrial Corridor to name a few. And all along these ‘corridors’ farm land to the tune of lakhs of acres is to be acquired.

Just one corridor — DMIC is said to be wiping out entire farm land the size of Gujarat. So, I suppose, bringing in cheap imports, forcing farmers to run from pillar to post to even sell their cattle or just tying them up in knots by this and that...is just one way of making them desperate to get out of farming, so it becomes very easy for the government agencies to take away their land and give it to big industry, so that they can make us very important things like “bombers, air planes, cars etc”, most of which will give more work to machines and robots than to ordinary tenth class pass rural youth, as is evident from the job cuts that are happening now in the erstwhile “sun rise” sectors like software and BPOs due to high technology and automation.

So then, is it okay if from being a self sufficient country, we become dependent on food imports? Is it okay if we give our precious water to set up water intensive and highly polluting industries, in a country that is already reeling under perpetual drought? Is it okay if we give priority to jobless growth that is a continuation of the past 25 years’ policies of LPG, that is increasing unemployment as seen even in your three years rule as a PM? A situation that will further deplete our natural resources, pollute our air, so that like the Chinese, we Indians too can wear gas masks as we walk in our streets?

I wish to ask, if the new age India is a ‘Smart India’ which means a high tech country where technology and automation will be the top priority, what will the millions of displaced, destitute farmers, their children, their elderly and their extended families, all of whom depend on that land, do? What is your plan for them? If they are forced to burn their crops due to the falling prices thanks to your FTAs and if they are running from pillar to post unable to sell the cattle they are unable to feed, and if they are constantly having to fight the government to ‘save the little piece of security: their land’, which was handed down to them from generations, what should they do? Commit suicide?

Is that why, despite the farmers’ agitations to stop the entry of GM seeds, your government is pushing ahead with the Genetically Modified

Seeds, which will further impoverish our farmers, making them beg for seeds from the Multi nationals, unable to store their own seeds due to biological contamination and loss of bio diversity? Finally, what will happen to the dear Cows and Cattle that you are desperately trying to protect when they eat this Genetically Modified crop? We heard reports that goats and sheep that grazed on the Bt Cotton died of diseases. So, now when the cattle graze on GM Mustard, and die of disease, who will be punished for that offense? For that matter, for the past so many years, cows are dying eating plastic on the streets, yet no body banned plastic? Or is it that those manufacturing plastic are holier than the cow?

Yours Sincerely,

Saraswati Kavula



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Indian Prime Minister in Europe

D. K. Giri

Prime Minister Modi is on a European tour of four countries — Germany, France, Spain and Russia. His mission is to improve bilateral relations between India and these four countries. It is good thinking and strategy indeed. But, how does he propose to do it is not clear. India has faulted in its foreign policy from the beginning, since the time of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister. The fault lines of India's foreign policy are still not repaired. India focussed on issues, took a commendable moral stand, but not its national interest. India followed for long the same policy with a cliché called 'continuity and change'. Three episodes stand out as big mistakes from which India suffers even now. One was Kashmir, an unfinished business. When Indian army was beating back the Pakistan army—backed tribal invaders, Nehru ordered the Indian army to stop and took the matter to the United Nations. Second, Nehru gave away Tibet, a buffer state, to the Chinese without safeguarding India's or Tibet's interests. India could have had some control over Tibet along with China. Third was the non-alignment; India steered an independent and autonomous course in world politics when the world was divided into two blocs. It was seen to be having the best of both the worlds without transferring any sovereignty. But that was a utopian position, as the world is interdependent in nature. Nehru had to compromise the non-aligned stance of India's foreign policy in supporting Soviet Union in Eastern Europe in exchange of their veto on

Kashmir. Another mistake has been India's understanding of and dealing with Europe, European Union to be precise. When European Union was formed in 1957 as an Economic Community, Nehru dismissed it as a 'capitalist club'. The potential of the community was not grasped by Indians and hence Indian relation with EU has been distant and asymmetric. Given the social and political similarities between the Union of India and the European Union, relations should have been quite close; India would have benefitted from investment and market access. EU turned to China, an authoritarian state and invested heavily there.

India's foreign policy suffered from a big mismatch between economic and political interests. For a long time, since 1947, it centred on security concerns between China and Pakistan, and Russia as an ally. Anyway, the world has changed, now the national interests are defined differently. A senior Indian diplomat in France told us at a private dinner, "earlier our mandate was to look for security and diplomatic support but now it is only trade and investment." Many countries, mainly China did it much before India and invited heavy investment by projecting its demographic dividend — cheaper labour. The European Union and China trade has reached 1 billion USD a day whereas India is far behind accounting for less than 1 per cent of EU's total trade. Let us look at India's relations with each of the countries Modi is visiting.

Germany is the main economic power in Europe today. European Union is largely driven by Germany. India has not benefitted as a trade partner from Germany's robust economy as it did not perceive Germany's role and interest in EU. As a result, trade with Germany is quite low amounting to 17 billion USD whereas China's trade with Germany is 167 billion USD. While Germany is looking for partners — political and security — as Europe's relations with America are on decline, will India reciprocate and become a strong partner. Modi in his speech listed five reasons for a solid partnership between India and Germany. Firstly both countries are geared to innovation and have democratic structures. India is innovating under Modi, so he claimed. Secondly, both India and Germany have global concerns and perspectives. Thirdly, both countries want result-oriented relations. Fourthly, Germany can contribute to skilling Indians. If 800 million youth become skilled, they enormously contribute to the development in the world. Fifthly, India and Germany can collaborate in sports, climate security and economic field. These dimensions of bilateralism listed by Modi sound good. But is India preparing to feed German need and desire for a new international role. Germany so far relied on the Anglo-American axis for the security of Europe. Britain is out of European Union, and America under Trump appears to be less committed to NATO, and worse, is asking for compensation for its commitment to European security so far.

Germany's industries look for transparent and trouble-free working conditions. China ensures a stable and secure industrial atmosphere. Can India with its cacophonous democracy provide a similar work environment? In a democracy, things are slow to change as one has to carry the confidence and convenience of various groups in society. But, surely, democracy and discipline are not antithetical.

During Modi's visit to Spain, his next stop, India and Spain signed as many as seven agreements to improve relations. The MoUs signed related to organ transplantation, cyber security, renewable energy, civil aviation, exchange between Indian Foreign Service Institute and Diplomatic Academy of Spain. Since 1988, no Indian Prime Minister had been to Spain, hence Modi's visit will raise the interest in Spain about India. Spain is the 7th largest trading partner of India among EU countries and the trade between India and Spain is of 5 billion USD. There is a small Indian Diaspora in Spain. It is not comprehensible why Modi chose to visit three countries in European Union and Spain was selected as one. There is not much scope of Spain and India raising their bilateral relations to a higher level. Spain has historical links with Latin American countries, and the diplomatic relation with India is very recent. Spain's economy is not in good shape, with a high rate of unemployment, at times touching 50 per cent.

The Russian leg of the visit seems to be quite important for India. For various reasons, Russia of late has developed closer links with China and Pakistan. Russia has been a traditional ally of India. How will Modi cement this tie and reset the shifting alliances of Russia in Asia.

It is true that Russia became weaker after the disintegration of USSR. But it has revived under the strong leadership of Vladimir Putin who chipped Crimea away from Ukraine and had arrested further fragmentation or drift of Russia. Once again, Russia seems to be playing its ex-super power role at least in military terms. Russian tilt towards China and Pakistan is worrisome for India as long as both these countries carry a hostile attitude towards India.

The main item on the agenda with Russia is the pact on Kundankulam nuclear power plant. The last two reactors are being built with Russian support. The line of credit extended by Russia was an issue in the past, which may be ironed out in this visit. In addition, India is expected to sign 12 agreements covering trade, science and technology, railways, cultural exchange etc. The trade with Russia has dropped to about 8 billion USD from 10 billion USD in 2014. From the news reports, both the countries are hoping to raise it to 30 billion USD in the next five years.

The other highlight of the Modi visit will be that Modi will be the guest of honour at the annual St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. It is a business as well as a political summit drawing business leaders, heads of states, Prime Ministers, deputy Prime Ministers, departmental ministers and so on. This is the first time an Indian Prime Minister is attending the summit. That is of some consequence for India. Around 60 Indian business leaders are attending the summit where India has set up a "make in India" pavilion. It is holding roundtable discussions and an India-Eurasia breakfast. However, Modi will do a lot of tight rope working to retrieve the good old

days between India and Russia.

From Russian side, Putin has assured that 'the trust-based ties' between India and Russia will continue despite many changes that have taken place. He promised that India will become a full member of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Putin also stressed to the Indian media that Russia has special relations with India on delicate areas such as missiles. It has no such relations with any other country in the world. He also asserted that Russia will always stand by India in its fight against terrorism, no matter where it came from. Such platitudes are exchanged in such bilateral summits, but it will be critical for India to retain the goodwill of Russia. India's tilt towards America is understandable, but when America is being soft towards Russia, why should India not make up with Russia.

The final leg of Modi's visit will be to France where there is a new president who got elected last month. A relatively young and inexperienced president Emmanuel Macron will receive Modi. President Macron is just settling down, so there will not be much on the agenda. From French side there will be their usual concern about the ongoing Rafael deal - India is buying 36 twin-engine fighter jets from France for 7.87 billion euro after a protracted controversial negotiation. Modi is meeting the new French President for the first time and is planning to boost strategic ties with France. That is what he tweeted; France is one of our important strategic partners.

Modi's visit abroad is like Indira Gandhi's in the past arousing a lot of media interest and coverage. How

much it helps India draw investment or builds friends is to be seen. Indians are made to believe, especially by BJP government that it is growing fast to be a big power, even a super power. But, with large

pockets of poverty and backwardness persisting, and India's economy not growing as fast as it is claimed, India does not command that recognition yet. The view of India from abroad is that it is a large

country with democratic politics and huge diversity and is trying to hold together. It is still not in the league of biggies like China has made. Modi has to improve India before he tries to project India as a super power.

Indigenous Tribal Communities of Andaman & Nicobar Islands— The Shocking Future of North Sentinel

Chandra Bhal Tripathi

Writing in Forbes recently Jim Dobson has drawn attention to the shocking future of the hitherto untouched and unapproachable North Sentinel Island in these words: "In recent months, fears have begun mounting that plans for a tourism boom beyond neighboring Andaman and Nicobar Islands may... pose a threat to all four Andaman tribes. The plans include the introduction of high-end **human safari** companies and resort developments." *

It is indeed shocking to learn of the stupid action of the Government in trying to open up the North Sentinel Island after the disastrous result of construction of the Grand Trunk Road through the Jarawa territory. Interest in the five indigenous tribal communities of these islands grew after the publication of *The Andaman Islander* by Prof AR Radcliffe-Brown in 1922. The twelve groups inhabiting the island which has the capital town of Port Blair, referred to cumulatively as the Great Andamanese tribe have completely lost their identity—racial features, language, customs, everything—particularly after coming in contact with 'civilization' and the Japanese occupation during World War II when these tribal women were exploited for sex and later they were shifted to the Strait Island. There they are kept as

unauthentic museum specimens in houses built by the administration, depend on Government doles, having lost their zest for life and still having some links with drug smugglers from Myanmar and Thailand. When I visited this island in 1978 their population had dwindled to 29 out of whom only one person was left with Negroid features. As if the experiences with the Great Andamanese tribe were not enough, the administration made foolish attempts to 'develop' the Onge, another small Negrito group living a semi-nomadic life on Little Andaman Island. First, following the Partition of India in 1947 hordes of refugees from East Pakistan were settled on this island creating a constant source of conflict with the indigenous Onge. When I visited this island in April 1978 with Shri Bholu Paswan Shastri, the then Chairman of the newly created Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the Onges numbered only 97 and the evil effects of contact with 'civilization' were already discernible.

The worst was the effort to 'develop' the Jarawa living in a contiguous area spread over two adjoining islands. In the literature this naked tribal community was described as 'ferocious' because when outsiders like the residents of

the penal settlement would poach their limited natural resources the Jarawa would kill them with their poison tipped arrows. In his autobiography VD Savarkar who spent some years in the cellular jail at Port Blair and allegedly apologised to the British in order to get released, has used all kinds of epithets for the Jarawa based only on hearsay. In 1974 a landmark was achieved by the Anthropological Survey of India by establishing the first friendly and limited contact with the Jarawa and the story is narrated in an authentic documentary captioned *Man in Search of Man* and made by the AnSI. The credit for this goes to a non-anthropologist, Sardar Bakhtawar Singh, Deputy Superintendent of Police, originally from Punjab with a sturdy commonsense. Later the administration adopted a policy of friendly contact with the Jarawa once a month on full moon day when a small number of the representatives of the administration would go on a boat and leave cooked rice and bananas on the shore for the Jarawa.

On our return from this tour I drafted a report on the conditions of these three Negrito groups and the Mongoloid Nicobarese containing many practical suggestions which

was approved and sent by the Chairman of the Commission for SC&ST to the then PM and the Home Minister of India. We could not visit the Shompen. The farthest point in their island was just 70 miles from the tip of Sumatra in Indonesia. A visit to the Sentinelese was out of question at that time as the administration had luckily failed to establish any contact with this small Negrito group until then. The babus sitting in air-conditioned rooms in New Delhi had already planned a Grand Trunk Road passing through the Jarawa territory for commercial purposes as well as to cater to tourists wanting to go on a human safari. We in the Commission had opposed the harmful project.

I got two opportunities to revisit A&N Islands in 1982 and 1984 with the Parliamentary Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. On the latter occasion, after the conclusion of the visit of the Parliamentary Committee, I accompanied Prof. LP Vidyarthi of Ranchi University and Dr. TN Pandit, SA of Port Blair Station of AnSI, who were visiting these indigenous communities under a project of the Ministry of Home Affairs, to meet the Jarawa of the Middle Andaman Island. It was a wonderful experience. Until then the 'development experts' had not dared to 'civilise' the Jarawa. The Jarawa males jumped into our boat out of excitement to partake of the gift of cooked rice and banana and allowed us to land on the shore. We had been warned not to wear anything but underwears as the Jarawa would tear off everything unknown to them. Thank God, I could save my spectacles. We were not allowed to go into the interior to see their temporary huts where they stayed during the course of their

wanderings within a limited forested area. We stayed there on the sands for about an hour and left after their initial excitement died down.

I cannot forget the utterly friendly gestures of the Jarawa whom the British and Indian authorities had painted as 'ferocious'. Having lumbosacral spondylysis I got a shock to find that an adult Jarawa had jumped on to my back and wanted me to carry him like a child. Another Jarawa came and sat on my lap. The most unforgettable fact was that a woman brought a small baby, forced it into my arms and wanted me to play with it or love it. In the 'civilised' Indian society women would normally keep an infant away from a complete stranger and apply kaajal on its face to protect it from an evil eye. The male Jarawas tried to pull out hairs from my limbs as they wondered what this unusual growth on our bodies was. They have hairless, muscular and supple bodies which enable them to climb trees and pluck fruits quickly. The modern society at Port Blair was surprised to hear my positive experiences with the Jarawa and ShriPantul, Station Director of All India Radio, Port Blair, requested me to broadcast a talk on my interaction with the Jarawas and other indigenous tribal communities of the area.

I have not followed up the subsequent developments regarding this matter but it seems that these have only been for the worse. There cannot be a greater mockery of the paradigm of development of these indigenous communities, which have attracted anthropologists from the world over, when the rulers treat the Sentinel Islands as a rich potential for tourism. There are so many areas like Uttarakhand and Himachal

Pradesh in the Himalayas and many parts of India which yearn for development as world tourist destinations. Why cannot the uninformed bureaucrats leave these indigenous communities alone and let them develop in accordance with their genius— as envisioned in Nehru's Tribal Panchsheel?

I wish to mention a good missed opportunity for studying the indigenous tribal communities of Andaman & Nicobar Islands that came my way in the form of an offer from the National Geographic in 1997 when I visited their office in Washington DC with my geographer daughter Suprabha based in Denver. The requirements of sustained field work in an unchartered area at the age of 67 and my other commitments back home prevented me from availing of that generous offer that I regret even today. I am glad to know that despite odds some young Indian anthropologists have made good studies of the individual tribal communities of the region.

Acharya Javadekar
A Satyagrahi Socialist



G. P. Pradhan

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Every Year Hundreds of Lives Can be Saved Just in Marriage-Related Accidents

Bharat Dogra

An analysis of a spate of reported marriage related accidents in India during just about one week of May revealed that in about seven separate accidents over 50 people were killed and around 200 were injured. The reported accidents in media are just a small part of the total number of smaller accidents which go unreported or else are reported at a very local level.

On May 10 a long but hurriedly and precariously constructed wall of a marriage hall in Bharatpur (Rajasthan) collapsed, leading to the death of 26 persons and injuries to a higher number of people. The baraat (marriage group from the groom's side) had not yet arrived, or else the mortality in this accident would have been much higher.

Subsequent inquiries revealed that most of the marriage celebration halls in the state suffer from poor safety conditions but are owned or controlled by influential people.

On May 9 a vehicle carrying a baraat group met with an accident in Khargonedistrict (Madhya Pradesh) leading to the death of 9 persons including the groom while several others were injured.

This turned to be a killer day for baraat as in another accident near Sheopur in the same state a tractor trolley carrying a marriage party had an accident, killing six persons. 20 other persons of the marriage party including 9 children were seriously injured.

Another bus returning from Satna in this state was taking baratis back to their home when it got out of control. Three persons died immediately while six were reported to be struggling for survival. About 33 others were injured in the same accident.

Earlier on May 5 near Ambikapur (Chattisgarh) two vehicles, both carrying baratis collided, leading to two immediate deaths and serious injuries to 22 others.

In another accident in Patraatu valley in Jharkhand an overcrowded bus carrying baratis was involved in an accident in which 9 persons were killed and 'several dozen' were injured. A subsequent meeting in the village imposed a fine of Rs. 3 lakh plus on the groom's family. Villagers who spoke at the meeting said that the driver and khalasi (assistant) of the bus were both drunk.

These reports of accidents involving marriage parties within the time span of just one week or so indicate the very high toll of such accidents. The marriage season in India is often concentrated within a few weeks. Hence there is a big demand for marriage halls and vehicles to transport baratis and others during these days. In this situation compromises are often made regarding safety precautions. Even otherwise safety aspects generally get less attention. .

As regulation on the part of

authorities is also low, this increases chances of accidents.

Marriages in India are elaborate and expensive affairs involving a lot of completely avoidable tensions. So people tend to become very tired either from dancing too much or worrying too much. Hence safety can be compromised particularly at the time of return journeys.

Add to this the increasing flow of alcohol in many marriage celebrations. This greatly increases the chances of accidents (as well as ugly scenes) at the time of return journeys in particular.

There is a very absurd but not so uncommon practice of firing guns at the time of marriage celebrations. This sometimes leads to accidental injury or even death.

Some marriage parties carry firecrackers with them as these are used in marriage processions including on busy roads. The transport of a significant stock of firecrackers with marriage parties increases the chance of fire and explosions accidents in vehicles and trains. The use of firecrackers in marriage processions passing on busy roads also increases the risk of accidents.

Any marriage time accident brings great grief very suddenly at a time of celebration and happiness and so can be additionally disruptive and traumatic for all those affected by such an accident. Hence

counseling is badly needed for those affected by such accidents but this is seldom available in India.

On a longer term basis such accidents, even smaller ones, can be particularly difficult and traumatic for the young brides who are typically accused of bringing bad luck with them. Hence help for them is needed from within the community first but later also from authorities if her harassment is prolonged.

Clearly much can be done to reduce the risk of accidents associated with marriages and other such celebratory occasions. On the one hand better regulation of marriage halls, banquet halls, etc. is needed. Safe community buildings with modest facilities should be provided by public authorities and community organizations at a low cost. Serving of liquor at marriages should be prohibited. Essentials of safety in this context should be well

established, well publicised and implemented strictly.

In addition public campaigns are needed to improve the safety while reducing the expenses and tensions of marriage ceremonies in India. All newly married couples and their families should be encouraged to save unnecessary expenses and donate them instead for some worthy cause which would be the best way of blessing and solemnizing the marriage.

Forceful Eviction Without Proper Rehabilitation

A delegation led by former MP, General Secretary, All India Kisan Sabha, Hannan Mollah and comprising of Annie Raja of NFIW, Vimal Bhai and Himshi Singh of NAPM, met the President of India on May 29, 2017, and submitted a citizens' memorandum on the current situation in the Narmada Valley. The delegation raised the issue of brazen attempts by the Government of Madhya Pradesh citing compliance of the 2nd part of the Supreme Court order dated 8 February 2017 and preparing for forceful eviction before 31st July. However, the Government is clearly ignoring the 1st part of the SC order, that is to provide compensation and complete rehabilitation of the Sardar Sarovar Dam affected villages.

As per the orders of Supreme Court, last date for giving compensation and ensuring complete rehabilitation was 8th May 2017. Till now, the State has not done any survey which can list all the project affected families entitled to compensation and rehabilitation as per the rehabilitation policy, which caused many families to be left out from receiving the compensation.

How can a State even think about evicting people without rehabilitation? This is a clear contempt of spirit of court orders and judgments along with the murder of constitutional rights of project-affected families. This will prove to be a disaster as families are still without alternative land, livelihood and liveable rehabilitation sites.

Shri Mollah informed the President that "we have visited the villages of the Narmada Valley as a fact-finding team, which is full of life and culture and is facing the threats of submergence, and displacement in absence of a single satisfactory R&R sites. Our report brings out the dismal conditions of the project affected families, R&R sites, corruption in the payment of compensations and so on. 192 villages, 1 town, 40,000 families and more than 2 lakh people will be affected. If the Government does not take proper action in rehabilitating the Sardar Sarovar Project affected families than the condition of the oustees of Madhya Pradesh will become as bad as the oustees of Gujarat or Maharashtra.

Annie Raja, General Secretary, National Federation of Indian Women said that "if the Sardar Sarovar Dam gates are closed without proper rehabilitation, it will be remembered as the mass murder in the human history. After the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Narmada Valley for Narmada Seva Yatra, the process of intimidation and eviction has taken speed."

Vimal Bhai of Matu Jan Sangathan, explained the environmental impacts in the form of Chlorofluoro Carbon gases due to the submergence of lakhs of trees. He also explained the condition of the rehabilitation sites built years ago, still lacking in basic amenities, cracks on the houses due to black soil and no drinking water availability.

Himshi Singh, National Alliance of Peoples' Movements said that "the Madhya Pradesh Government is manipulating its own statistics of the Action Taken Report- 2008 which gives a count of 31,180 families affected by the Sardar Sarovar Dam

(Continued on Page 15)

Forge Time-Bound Common Minimum Programme

Pannalal Surana

These days, a few activists are suggesting that some sort of united front against the BJP combine must be promoted. True, the Gau-sevaks are resorting to violent attacks on Muslims and Dalits. Hate campaigns are being conducted ferociously. If this roller-coaster is not stopped in time, and if BJP returns to power in 2019, minorities would be persecuted mercilessly, dalits would be more and more harassed. That will disfigure the secular and democratic architecture of our Republic and can endanger national unity.

Any sensitive person will certainly share these apprehensions. But forging an electoral front to defeat BJP does not sound an effective proposition. Over-emphasis on winning an election does not provide good solution for the ills from which our republic is suffering. Hotchpotch conglomeration of ideologically differing parties/groups cannot provide meaningful and effective government. Moreover, use of power cannot solve all problems unless the mentality and habits of the people are not properly cleansed and oriented in a positive, constructive mode, the evil tendencies would not be neutralized effectively.

In my humble opinion, active campaigns along with mass-awakening programmes are to be undertaken vigorously to combat the evil tendencies mentioned above. Straightforward steps must be initiated towards annihilation of caste barriers. Promoting safe environment for women

empowerment should be accorded top priority in the day-to-day activities of progressive parties/groups. India has inherited many traits of mutual understanding and spirit of tolerance. Those should be buttressed by running complementary extra —curricular activities for school-going children. Such many-pronged activities will help create amicable atmosphere for forging united front of political parties to combat aggressive and divisive designs of communal forces.

Indian people generally prefer positive slogans than negative ones. Instead of saying Congress-mukt Bharat or BJP Hatav it is better to say “let us join hands to build genuine democratic and egalitarian Bharat”

It would be better to avoid indulging in controversies over communalism and secularism, let us revive Gandhian slogan of Hindu-Muslim unity.

Struggles against repression and exploitation must be conducted vigorously, but only by peaceful means. Violence must be abjured.

Parties and groups who broadly share this kind of approach may enter into a dialogue to formulate a Common Minimum Programme (CMP). These days, economic issues are relegated to back seat. That is not proper. People can lead their lives meaningfully and participate in democratic political processes only if their primary needs are satisfied properly. The proposed front should agree to accord high

priority to change economic policies that are being pursued by the present ruling combine. Full employment must be accepted as the goal of all economic activities. Secondly, hankering after the foreign capital must be given up. Capitalists are interested in maximizing their profits. Foreign capitalists take away all profits to their mother countries. Their preference for high technology is endangering employment generation. India should aspire to be self-reliant and develop maximum decentralization of economic activities. And commanding heights must be controlled by the State. Agriculture, forestry, fisheries, dairy, etc. must be provided with enough public investment. Remunerative prices be assured to farm products. Cooperative movement must be reinvigorated. Common, free and qualitative education should be provided by the State. Adequate health-care arrangements must be made for the needy and the poor.

The proposed front should spell out time schedule for implementing the CMP.

All individuals and groups who are concerned about protecting our Secular, Democratic Republic may take steps in this direction.

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Realising an Equitable and Prosperous India Needs a Paradigm Shift

K. S. Chalam

The ideal of achieving an equitable society is always an exciting dream for those who are experiencing discrimination based on primordial ideas of inequality. The concepts of equity and justice are organically associated with the long struggle for a just society in Europe particularly after the 14th century. The realisation of an equitable society however, has been around in the Western philosophical moorings starting from Aristotle who wished to 'treat like cases as like' and considered it as a rational approach in a formal sense. He was also referring to formal and proportional equality, the former where individuals are indistinguishable and the latter in relation to a more problematic idea of distribution on the basis of due worth.

The idea of equity is related to justice while equality is connected with equal treatment of people, are basically qualitative in human relations between groups. Equity is considered intrinsically good and therefore egalitarian. Equity is different from identity or sameness. Most of the ideas were originated in the writings and discourses of Western thinkers attained universal recognition after the Reformation movement and French revolution. We Indians seem to have not been concerned about groups attaining equity, but absorbed in individuals' getting liberation or nirvana. Buddha fought against this

otherworldly ontology and appealed to his disciples to seek refuge in the social aggregate, the society. Jyotirao Phule, Mahadev Govind Ranade and Ambedkar of Maharashtra brought the western ideas of equality and justice to Indian soil. But, the metaphysical discourses for which we Indians are proud of for their abstract expositions are less anxious about our real empirical experiences like discrimination, inequity etc., dismissing them as sense experiences with little relevance to attain liberation (see my book 'Economic Reforms and Social Exclusion', Sage). Western thinkers like Locke, Hobbes, Dworokin and others had reasoned about natural rights, equal rights with human concern and respect, while Indian sages and savants during the corresponding period advocated for equality before god in a metaphysical rhetoric.

Debate around Equality

The concept 'equality' appears to be an elusive term for scholars who are interested in its measurement and quantification. It is very easy to say that morally each individual is supposed to get his due and as per human dignity. But, how to operationalise it? Equality of What? Economists who are generally associated with quantification of different phenomena particularly those who had a Welfare Economic orientation from the time of

Bentham, Pigou, Pareto, Kaldor, Amartya Sen and others considered Pareto optimum as that 'exists whenever it is not possible to make somebody better off without making somebody worse off' as the starting point for a debate. This has satisfied the libertarians and some Indian thinkers who consider that a social structure is already ordained as to how the system should function and we cannot meddle with it without disturbing the optimum. Let there be status quo. But, Amartya Sen found the flaw in the argument and said that, 'a society in which some people lead lives of great luxury while others live in acute misery can still be Pareto optimal if the agony of the deprived cannot be reduced without cutting in to the ecstasy of the affluent' and added that a state can be Pareto Optimal and still sickeningly iniquitous'. Sen has supported the system of caste-based reservations in India on the basis of this argument and capability approach in his book 'Inequality Re-Examined' in 1995. Sen in his analysis of 'Equality of What?' lecture has come out with a rational and universally accepted idea of 'basic capability equality' as an answer to the question, as distinguished from that of Utilitarians and Rawls primary goods.

The issue of equity as noted above is connected with Justice. Utilitarians like Bentham, John Stuart Mill who had some influence over the civil servants of the British

India where they had seized of the view that, 'a society is just to the extent that its laws and institutions are helped to promote the greatest happiness of the largest number.' It appeared to be rational and practical. But, problems arise when it comes to the measurement of happiness as utility (ordinal and cardinal) and its application to administer economic, social and political freedoms. It is further accentuated when groups are involved in a capitalist society where gains and losses are disproportional and the same individual may not experience the gains all the time in a group. In order to address this problem and to substantiate the questions of Equality in the USA after Jencks 'Inequality' project study based on educational background of different racial groups in America, John Rawls, the Harvard philosopher published "A Theory of Justice". John Rawls has addressed the issues of justice as fairness in a libertarian society where undue burdens to get greater average utility will be avoided. Each person, Rawls says is to have the maximum liberties compatible with the same liberty for all, under what is called 'the Difference Principle'. It is said that inequalities are permissible only if, 1. They can be expected to work to everyone's advantage, especially to the advantage of the least well off and, 2. The positions, offices, roles, to which the inequalities are open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. By assuming an original position with a veil of ignorance, people often choose the maximum rule of choice. It means that one should choose that alternative whose worst possible outcome will be no worse than the worst possible outcome of another alternative. Here the question of discrimination does not arise as the treatment is fair. However the

libertarians did not agree with it and argued that they should not be allowed to be discriminated or taxed simply because they have property and wanted that their right to property be respected irrespective of what may happen to the poor and disadvantaged in a social organisation.

Measure of Wellbeing

Amartya Sen who has published extensively on 'Common Good' and Welfare Economics has developed ideas relating to Human Development Index to indicate the status of a society in improving the wellbeing of people through three indicators, income, longevity and education. Though it is an aggregate term, the UNDP has been updating its data sets by incorporating inequality adjusted HDI, GEM etc over a period of time that gives sufficient insight into inequalities. One of the important contributions of Sen is his capability approach to argue for entitlements for those who are deprived of the capabilities. Martha Nussbaum has listed 10 capabilities as central to human beings: 1. life, 2. bodily health, 3. senses, 4. imagination and thought, 5. emotions, 6. practical reason, 7. affiliation with groups and society, 8. relations with other species, 9. play, laughter, and leisure and, 10. control over environment, political and material. (The functioning of each capability is given in appendix)

The capability metric has been proposed by capability philosophers as an alternative for, and improvement on, the Rawlsian social primary goods metric, which focuses on general purpose goods, such as income and wealth, opportunities and liberties, and the social basis of self-respect. Sen argued that "the

primary goods approach seems to take little note of the diversity of human beings.... If people were basically very similar, then an index of primary goods might be quite a good way of judging advantage. But, in fact, people seem to have very different needs varying with health, longevity, climatic conditions, location, work conditions, temperament, and even body size.... So, what is being involved is not merely ignoring a few hard cases, but overlooking very widespread and real differences". A person with a disability, however severe, would not have a claim to additional resources grounded in his impairment under Rawls's two principles of justice. Sen argues that Rawls's difference principle would not justify any redistribution to the disabled on grounds of disability. Sen noted that it is possible to argue with capability approach for special treatment of handicapped persons like a pregnant woman where we have institutional support in providing additional inputs to meet the nutritional deficiency. Thus, capability is able to express real deficiencies among people in society with different groups including socially disadvantaged and to overcome the deficiencies, collective action or state policy is needed. However, capability approach has the limitation of measuring certain functionings as noted below.

- What goods and burdens are to be justly distributed (or should be distributed)? Which social goods comprise the object of distributive justice?
- What are the spheres (of justice) into which these resources have to be grouped?
- Who are the recipients of

distribution? Who has a prima facie claim to a fair share?

- What are the commonly cited yet in reality unjustified exceptions to equal distribution?
- Which inequalities are justified?
- Which approach, conception or theory of egalitarian distributive justice is therefore the best?

Social economists are able to address some of the questions noted above in justifying human dignity through capability support. Sen in his latest book on 'The Idea of Justice' brought in the Indian concepts of Niti, Niyaya, the former as just rules and institutions and the latter as its realisation or instrumental justice. However, he has conceded that the idea of justice depends upon the philosophy of justice with which you evaluate transactions. Giving an example of how one flute is distributed among three girls looking at from utilitarian, egalitarian and libertarian orientations.

Are Equity and Prosperity Compatible?

We have in India scholars and activists passing opinions and judgements that unless you have sufficient wealth created with incentives for merit and efficiency, there cannot be equity. It is possible to get the wealth thus accumulated to trickle down to the lower classes once it is full. The arguments and counter arguments made us to realise, of late that the inequity in India is widening (see Appendix Tables). Economics or Political Economy in the classical period starting from Adam Smith, Ricardo, Marx and others to Kuznets, Piketty etc are concerned not only with the wealth of nations, but also its

distribution. Adam Smith has indicated how the self-interest of individuals would lead to division of labour and increase in productivity to make a nation wealthy. Ricardo had contested how during his time the share of national dividend among the three factors of production was inequitable as wages remained stagnant and profits falling. In other words, economists have been concerned with not only the creation of wealth but also its distribution from the beginning. But, there seems to be no ambiguous argument that let wealth be created and it would be distributed later. In fact Marx's thesis of surplus value considers how inequity is built in to the capitalist system in the process of production itself. Therefore, there is no tangible argument that equitable distribution would diminish wealth. But, the neo-classical models of growth through free trade advocated by scholars like Jgadish Bhagwati and others landed us in liberalisation of the economy in 1991 with an expectation that it would enhance our capabilities and reduce inequalities. The Kuznets thesis that 'as an economy develops, inequity will rise and then at a later stage naturally fall back again' has not been proved in many cases as noted by Piketty. This is also true in the case of the socially excluded in India who are now double marginalised after liberalisation.

Indian Economy after 1991

Theories of economic growth and development, the former explaining quantitative expansion of economic variables and the latter elucidating nonquantitative factors such as institutions, culture, and status along with the former idea became popular discourse after 1945. Countries have been categorised as developed,

undeveloped, developing etc., on the basis of certain parameters. Several scholars have made theoretical contributions as to how to break the vicious circle of poverty, break inertia in agriculture, introduce advanced technology in manufacturing etc and reap the returns in terms of increase in GDP. The strategy of export led growth, import substitution, free trade and the so called Washington consensus have been advocated. The IMF, World Bank and other funding agencies persuaded India to abandon the planned growth models and adopt liberalisation and globalisation. India under the leadership of P V Narasimharao was forced to accept the Washington Consensus consisting of 10 commandments to privatise and globalise Indian economy. As noted by the Japanese economists Yujiro Hayami and Yoshisha Godo, in less than ten years the so called Washington consensus under market fundamentalism got replaced with post Washington consensus, advocating greater role to institutions and state sector. However, the damage done to the fundamentals of constitutionally arranged models of development seem to have not been evaluated. It is widely reported now that after more than two decades of liberalisation policies in India, inequalities particularly among the different social groups are widened and social tensions became order of the day.

Against this background, the UNCTAD 2102 report on trade has implications for India. It is reported that the merchandise trade of the world has declined from 5.5 per cent in 2011 to 3.5 percent in 2012. The growth rate has declined sharply from 4.1 per cent in 2010 to 2.7 per cent in 2012, mostly due to

the growth rates of developing countries and China (developed countries confined to less than 2.5 per cent). Financial frauds and weak demand in developed countries have lowered exports from developing countries, including India. Except gold, all mineral

exports have declined during the period. The report has analysed the so-called Kuznets curve indicating that in the beginning inequalities increase and after some time, with increase in productivity, disparities decline; it seems to have failed. On the contrary, Dani Rodrik and

Alesina have proved that inequalities in primary income would hamper growth. It is supported by historical data that the share of wages in the national income of the UK, the USA and Japan was around 60 per cent for a long period to sustain growth.

(Continued from Page 10)

and now drastically reducing the number in the recently issued Gazette, 2017 by 18,346”.

After listening to the delegation, the President of India, Pranab Mukherjee said that he will look into the matter and initiate necessary actions.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan has made an announcement that all the project affected families who have to spend all the money given to them to build their houses will again be given a package of Rs 1,32,000 under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. However, the eligibility guidelines issued by the government are as such that very few PAFs will get the benefits of PMAY.

Adding to the concerns of the delegation, Dr. Sunilam, National Convener, NAPM, added that, “even though the District authorities and Collector understand that the R&R sites are not yet complete but still they are insistent on vacating the valley and there is preparation for a forceful eviction. The Madhya Pradesh government is an anti-farmer and anti-people government, which has the least regard for rule of law and is mired in the corruption on all fronts.”

—Uma

Swati Chaturvedi: *You fought the Emergency. I was not even born then. Is this anything at all like that era?*

Arun Shourie: It’s a decentralised emergency. What we are going towards is a pyramidal decentralised mafia state, where local goons will belabour anyone whom they think is doing something wrong. The central people will look the other way. The central people will provide a rationale for the goondas at the local level. Like “gau rakshaks”, like “love jihad” — this becomes the rationale for me to beat up anybody. It’s not love for the cow but just an instrument for domination.

The one big difference is at that time Mrs [Indira] Gandhi still used the law. Now it is not the law. These people are acting outside the law. This is true fascism because you say what is the law? I am the law. All this action is being done outside the government, worse, things are being done inside the government to choke the existing laws — for instance the Right to Information (RTI) is being choked, the Public Interest Litigation (PIL) is being denigrated unless it’s in your favour. The judiciary is being denigrated, therefore you keep the vacancies going the same way, probably about a hundred vacancies. The judiciary keeps saying, and these people keep denying on one ground or another. And, to hell with the people who suffer because of want of courts.

—The Wire

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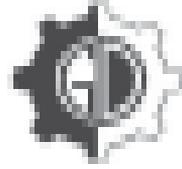
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