became their regional head: Although it had

no flights to India! But it got him entry into

IATA which helped him in networking. He has

not missed a single IATA AGM ever. At one of

them, he told Marion Blakley, the US Federal

Aviation Authority chief: "I need to talk to you, don't go anywhere", and Blakely just stood

while he went around the room pumping

hands and pressing flesh. He took his time and

the representative of the most powerful coun-

Minister. It was a coalition government, the

best time for a person like Naresh Goyal to get

things done. The policy was a cap of 49 per

cent FDI in a domestic airline; 100 per cent

for non-resident Indians (NRIs) - and by then

he had become an NRI - but no investment

by any foreign airline directly or indirectly.

That was how he scuttled Singapore

International Airlines (SIA) investment in a

new airline the Tatas wanted to start. It helped

list of politicians who were to be upgraded.

But there are other ways of influencing them.

Once, Sharad Pawar was sitting in an airport

lounge watching cricket. Naresh Goyal has

never played a game in his life. He doesn't

know the first thing about his cricket. Those

that he knew everyone in government. Jet had standing instructions about a short-

In 1996, CM Ibrahim was Civil Aviation

try in the world waited ...

How to be abigot



RAHUL JACOB

from a prayer. The TV anchor Ravish Kumar remarked on the beauty of this tradition, but the principal and senior teachers were matterof-fact about the daily ritual as if they regarded it as a building block of education, as routine as learning to count.

Perhaps that is how it should be, but in this season of inspired mean-spirited campaigning, it still seemed remarkable that we are more likely to learn civics lessons from school children than our leaders. Instead, we have had almost daily lessons in bigotry and inappropriately wrapping oneself in the uniforms of our troops. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has led from the front in speeches such as the one in Latur where he asked first-time voters to dedicate their vote to Pulwama martyrs as well as to those who carried out the Balakot strikes. One is sympathetic for all members of the armed forces when they are invoked so frequently in the heat of a political campaign in a democracy where, unlike in Pakistan, the army does not have a role to play. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Adityanath's comments have been as ugly as ever but nothing he does shocks anymore.

No one should be surprised that the foreign press have momentarily shrugged off their obsession with Donald Trump, Brexit and China and are training their sights on India as never before. Last week, The New York Times ran a front page story on the plight of Muslims in India while Reuters reported that "the head of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist party took his invective against illegal Muslim immigrants to a new level this week as the general election kicked off, promising to throw them into the Bay of Bengal". Gurcharan Das, author of The Difficulty of Being Good, waxes banal in Foreign Affairs magazine, lamenting Modi's lack of purposeful economic reforms. "Had he delivered, I might even have forgiven his distasteful ethno-nationalist politics", writes Das who grandiloquently reminds us he was among the first, er, liberals to endorse Modi in 2014.

Much more significant has been the Supreme Court's intervention in this hate-filled campaign when questioning counsel, for the Election Commission (EC), on when it intended to act. I have sympathy of a sort for the EC given that the violations this election come fast and furious and the ruling party is allegedly responsible for so many, but the exchange between the exercised Supreme Court judges and the EC representative last week must count as among the most unsettling in the history of Indian democracy: "So you are basically saying you are toothless and powerless against hate speeches", the judges said.

Not to be outdone, Rahul Gandhi has jumped in with his juvenile observation that every crook appears to have Modi as a last name. Creditable as the Congress' humanist manifesto is on doing away with such arcane colonial holdovers as the laws on what constitutes sedition, I have not yet come across a sharp rebuttal of the BJP's minority-baiting from its senior leaders. Then again, the frightening campaign Rajiv Gandhi oversaw in the 1984 elections, not long after Sikhs had been massacred by Congress-led mobs on the streets of Delhi, was notorious as well. "Will Your Grocery List, in the Future, include Acid Bulbs, Iron Rods, Daggers?" read one of the advertisement created by Rediffusion.

The enduring problem for India is that while illiberal democracies the world over are hostage to abusive campaigns on WhatsApp and at election rallies, our young popation are both poor under-employed or withou have had an education that is a far cry from the school Ravish Kumar lauded in Bihar, let alone the kind that we have enjoyed in urban India. Our current leaders, meanwhile, are a kind of endlessly diminishing return on democracy. By contrast, I spent part of this spring reading Ramachandra Guha's riveting account of Mahatma Gandhi's evolution into a leader in South Africa. His deep and yet routine connection with Muslims. Christians. Jewish as well as lower caste Hindus is a lesson in cosmopolitanism. As a "Hindu Christian" to borrow L K Advani's ugly terminology from several campaigns ago, watching this frightening election has made me wonder what acts of ritualistic assimilation will be required of us who are not the real kind of Indian. Will being able to sing the wonderfully melodious gavatri mantra be necessary or can I get by arguing that I say "Om" (in voga class twice a week) many times more often than as an agnostic I mouth "Amen". Perhaps it would be better for India if reciting parts of the Constitution every day were used as a foundation for citizenship instead.

morning he he assembly at a primary large and middle school, not far from Begusarai in Bihar, seemed like a rainbow after the endless torrents of abuse for which this election campaign will be long remembered. The boys and girls in blue uniforms were solemnly reciting passages from

the Indian Constitution

as if they were verses

The man who hated to fly

Naresh Goyal would get nervous and pray each time a flight took off. Now, there's no Jet Airways and nowhere to go



ADITI PHADNIS

veryone has their own favourite stories about Naresh Goyal. Here are a few.

NG (as his friends know him) was from Patiala in Punjab. He lost his father very early in life. His mother (whom he called *Beeji*) was an adopted sister of Seth Charan Das, majordomo to the Maharajah of Patiala. She begged Das to take NG, the youngest of four brothers, under his wing. Seth Charan Das was an entrepreneur and visionary. In the late 1960s (1965 to be exact) few used airlines for international travel. At that time, it was Seth Charan Das who offered to become general sales agent (GSA) for

what was then called Middle Eastern Airways.

The GSA was a concept that began in India. Although international airlines like British Airways, Air France and KLM had huge offices, they had no wherewithal to cater to passengers who were coming straight from villages in Punjab, for instance. The GSA recognised and serviced the distribution needs of big international airlines for a commission. GSAs were given territory and an office in Delhi. In those days, Jalandhar was the main hub for Punjab and the KLM and British Airways GSA used to operate from there.

Seth Charan Das was a strategic thinker. In addition to Middle Eastern Airways, he managed to get the GSA-ship of Air France and two other European airlines as well. By the time NG came to him, Seth Charan Das had established a business but needed someone to run it day-to-day. NG was that person.

NG learnt on the job. In the mid 1970s, he got friendly with an Air France manager and became the airline GSA for Goa - but he could sell in Bombay. That was big business and that's how he grew his company. He got Europe and added other airlines to his portfolio. In 1972, he became the all-India GSA for Gulf Air. The Gulf jobs boom was about to start. He rode on the crest of the wave. In the early 1970s, he negotiated with Philippines Airlines and

BRUNCH WITH BS VINEY SINGH | CEO | FABINDIA

Design for change

Singh talks to Manavi Kapur about how he plans to expand the Fabindia brand without diluting its equity

nside the Fabindia Experience Centre in New Delhi's Lajpat Nagar, a café, an interior design studio, retail space and a play centre for kids come together like pieces of a puzzle. I am reminded of a massive Muji store in Plaza Singapura, Singapore. The Japanese brand has a sprawling space that houses various categories of products, a nutrition-centric café and a design studio. IKEA's meatballs at the eatery inside its stores are almost legendary.

Fabindia launched its first experience centre in 2017 in Vasant Kunj - today it has 10 and plans to take this number up to 30 by 2020 — just a year after Viney Singh joined the company as managing director. After 19 years in Unilever, a stint at Reliance Infocomm and 10 years with the Landmark Group, the switch to a crafts-centric

company like Fabindia With a reach wider seems almost out of character. "There's been a huge learning curve, handicraft brand – especially when it 293 stores across 105 comes to learning about Indian cities and 14 Indian crafts, weaves international stores and the products that **– Fabindia has a** we sell." he says.

When John

And in nearly three years, Singh has acquired a remarkable knowledge of Indian weaves and textile traditions that would make any handloom enthusiast envious -Icertainly am. He explains that the Nehru jacket he is wearing features a coarse weave from Amroha in Uttar Pradesh. His shirt has an abstract block-print design. "Personally, I am a huge fan of airakh and ikkat," he says. His wife, Ruma Singh, a wine writer and journalist, has played a significant role in developing the Singhs' yen for food, wine and travel. As has the fact that Singh's father was a tea entrepreneur, working with plantations in Assam, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. "Though my family traces its roots to a small district near Jodhpur in Rajasthan, I have lived in 10 different states in India," says Singh. College took him to Chennai (Loyola

College) and then to than almost anv handloom and Jamshedpur (XLRI). He shuttles between his home in Delhi and Bengaluru, when he's travelling to not Fabindia's craft clusters network like none learning about its busi-

other brands in the market. He believes that it is just a question of widening the basket, offering more to the consumer to choose from. "I think this growth is essential to build the ecosystem," he says.

Fabindia fan base has also lately been disappointed with the prohibitively priced apparel at the store. A tiny embroidery detail on the neck or the hemline often doubles the price of a simple cotton kurta. Even the home décor section that has been a great one-stop-shop for gifts now faces competition from cheaper brands offering similar aesthetic. Since Fabindia is a favourite with expats and foreign tourists, these prices seemed justified for that audience. Today, designers and boutique brands are riding the sustainability and handloom wave and offering products only at a small premium over Fabindia's range. For a customer willing to pay that price, it would only make sense to buy something more unique than Fabindia's massproduced designs.

But since the introduction of the ods and servi

who know him were amused to see him sitting next to Pawar, watching him closely and pretending to follow the game, applauding when Pawar applauded, although he probably didn't know the front of the crease from the back!

Take the time Jet was about to be listed on the stock exchange. It was 2008, Hyderabad was hosting the air show. There was a lavish party at the Falaknuma Palace Hotel. Praful Patel was the Minister for Civil Aviation and there was talk that Jet might get permission to fly to the United States - it was a very big deal.

Just around that time, in a bid to downsize, NG had sacked a whole lot of cabin crew and ground staff. So on the one hand there was this lavish dinner at the Falaknuma, on the other, Jet Airways staff were demonstrating at the Hyderabad Airport and sending petitions to Praful Patel that they had hungry children to feed. The government-run airline Air India was saying piously: "We will never sack anyone the way private airlines do".

Patel, who was at the Falaknuma, was embarrassed and furious. So NG came up with a plan. He looked very serious as he called a press conference later that evening. There he said: "My mother came to me in my dream last night. She said: 'Naresh, what are you doing? These people have families and children. How can you let them go?' So I have decided to take back my orders. Nobody will be sacked."

Of course, over a period of time, those employees were transferred to such remote places that they had no choice but to quit.

The irony is: Naresh Goyal hated to fly. He would get nervous and pray each time a flight took off. Now, there's no Jet Airways and nowhere to go!

> though, has considered its crafts suppliers as shareholders and shared a larger chunk of the profits than many big brands are known to have done. Singh sidesteps the details of these profit-sharing arrangements but says that the company works closely to ensure greater female participation in the handicraft process.

> Singh also refuses to comment on the case that the Khadi and Village Industries Commission filed against Fabindia first in 2015 and then in 2018 for "illegally" using the khadi trademark. In September 2018, Fabindia gave an undertaking that it would stop using the khadi mark on its products. Fabindia now only uses the All India Artisans and Craftworkers Welfare Association's craftmark that certifies its products are completely handmade.

My ajwain croissant is cold now and I struggle with the fork-andknife. Singh notices this and is quick to ask me if I'd like to order something else. I decide to focus my attention on the cold brew iced coffee. Singh is not one to jump to answers to my questions. He takes his time, sometimes even coming back to something I asked at the beginning of our conversation. "One is trying to see how we can strengthen processes within the business and this is where my own learnings have come in quite useful," he says. These largely revolve around business processes and now, marketing. Its loyalty programme, the FabFamily, is an effort to go beyond Fabindia's word-ofmouth marketing route. The ewards can be redeemed on hon ping, but also on curated experiences such as forthcoming crafts tours or heritage holidays. This is also to incentivise customers who complain that Fabindia has no sale period, even when designer brands such as Raw Mango and boutiques like Ogaan do. Fabindia seems to also have given in to this, with its website offering a selection of roducts on discount. But with a reach wider than almost any handloom and handicraft brand – 293 stores across 105 Indian cities and 14 international stores — Fabindia has a network like none other. And Singh now holds the charge to keep Bissell's legacy going and expand it without diluting the brand.

chaat, Singh talks about the That may be true, but a huge

set up Fabindia in 1960,

other

he worked with craftspeople with a certain aesthetic in mind, one that has stayed with Fabindia even as it goes through different seasons of fashion. The block-printed kurtas, its indigo range, the chikankari saris and even its solid cotton shirts all sport a design unity. Singh is quick to add that his design sensibilities were always aligned with Fabindia, even when he was just a customer and not heading its business. "It's been a process of tremendous appreciation of what has gone into building this business and the product categories, especially the work that has gone into creating this brand over the past 60 years," he says.

he grassroots We pause to place

our order at the Fabcafe inside the experience centre. It is almost noon, so we settle for a light brunch. Being a weekend, the space is buzzing with diners, and the boisterous laughter from a table nearby often overpowers Singh's mellow voice. He settles for a tri-grain papdi chaat medley, a healthier alternative to Delhi's popular street delicacy, and I opt for the ajwain croissant breakfast sandwich that has eggs, chicken and sun-dried tomatoes. Fabcafe calls itself an "inspired Indian bistro", with an Indian fusion menu that is made from organic produce. It almost feels like a food version of Fabindia's retail products.

Between mouthfuls of the *papdi*

products have seen some amount of price correction. Singh says that this is also because the volume of products with a lower price point has gone up in the apparel category. The original Left-liberal buyer could well be back at Fabindia. As would the middle-income buver looking for a slightly blingy apparel range for occasion wear. This is also why Fabel, Fabindia's brand for fusion Western wear, was amalgamated into the main apparel category in this month. Nearly 75 per cent of the brand's business comes from the apparel segment.

A larger question about livelihoods and community development haunts the handloom sector in India. A majority of young ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA

weavers don't want to take their family's tradition forward and opt for better paying jobs in the cities instead. Fabindia is trying to keep craft traditions alive through design support, Singh says. "We try to strengthen our relationship with the craftspeople by offering them design support. This makes their designs more contemporary and thus, more marketable," he explains. That's a fairly obvious route to take. The Bissell family,

It's time to choose



PEOPLE LIKE THEM **GEETANJALI KRISHNA**

s we approach phase three of the Lok Sabha election, politicians and their campaigns are trending on social media. Political spoofs and parodies are also hitting new highs. The one I laughed at the most was a parody of a Bollywood song video by Aisi Taisi Democracy. I'm no good at translating, but the gist of it is that in this election season, it is time for us to choose who will s**** us more. I found it funny then, but days later, when I had a chance encounter with Rajendra Kumar, a plumber, I realised that the parody packed quite a vicious little bite.

Kumar has been a plumber for the last 25 years. A little help from his father enabled him to buy a small house in Delhi a few years ago. He earns about ₹30,000 a month, drives a motorcycle and is sending his eldest son to Delhi University and daughter to an expensive private school. All in all, not an uncomfortable situation, one would think.

However, it has taken a mere one month-long illness to turn his life upside down. For a couple of months, the 45year-old had been experiencing pain in his right hip. "As a plumber, much of my work involves crouching and bending but I was able to manage," he said. One morning, however, he woke up to an excruciating pain and couldn't stand up. His alarmed family members rushed him to the nearest hospital. "Three days there, I was ₹46,000 down, but still had no idea what was wrong with me," he said. When his brother inquired if the hospital had any schemes for the needy, he was told that their household income was "too high" for them to qualify for the scheme. Finally, an expensive MRI indicated some degree of spinal spondylosis. The doctor advised physiotherapy and a month's rest.

While Kumar's income allows his family to live comfortably, he has meagre savings. For he supports not only his own family - wife, 20-year-old son and 16-year-old daughter on his income, he

also sends money to his aged mother who lives in a village near Mathura. "My bank balance was wiped out by the initial hospital fees and medicine expenses," he says. His younger brother loaned ₹25,000 but could little afford to part with more

The forced bedrest gave Kumar time to think. "I have realised how vulnerable people like me are," he said. "We depend on daily work for our livelihood, which means that every day off that we take entails the loss of a day's income." Private medical hospitals are prohibitively expensive. Yet, people like Kumar cannot access the government's health and social security schemes as their income is, if there can be any such thing, "too high".

Consequently, Kumar has started accepting work whenever his son can take time off from studying for his college exams. "He's learning fast but I'd never want him to become a plumber like me." he said. No party, he says, has done anything to improve the vulnerabilities of India's vast unorganised sector. "Why should I even vote?" he asks. "People like me will continue to get shortchanged regardless of who's in power ... " he says.

It really is, as the Aisi Taisi Democracy folk so aptly put it, time to choose who will s**** us most.

A trip to Paris... has to wait



PEOPLE LIKE US KISHORE SINGH

y father's library was an eclectic one, its shelves lined with everything from Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf (mandatory reading then for army officers) to literary classics that included Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales and Irving Stone's Lust for Life. I am not sure he'd read them all - surprisingly, we never talked about books at home --but as a voracious reader, I would devour everything I could lay my hands on even if I did not then fully comprehend Dostoevsky or Camus. Yet, one book I never made headway with was Victor Hugo's The Hunchback of Notre-Dame, though not for lack of trying. With the stock of books exhausted, I'd poke

around his study for anything at all to read, but Hugo's love saga was heavy going. I never got past the first few pages, even if Paris was forever imprinted on my mind with the book's lurid cover featuring the eponymous hunchback.

It was a chilly spring day dappled with sunshine some three decades ago that I visited the Notre-Dame. Even though it towered over the skyline. there was something bleak about it. Inside, it was dark and forbidding, and I remember little of its treasures apart from the stained glass. A narrow staircase took us to the cathedral's parapets where, under the watchful eyes of stone gargoyles, the city, with the Seine threading through it, spread sunnily below. Someone amidst us had a camera, we posed for photographs against its ancient walls, the roll was given for developing in a local studio, and so it was, I returned from Paris clutching a handful of photographs.

A little after, I found myself engaged. My fiancée lived in Calcutta (as it was then), telephone connections were few and far in between, and so, in the absence of email, we wrote in long hand to each other. Photographs were requested, and since I had a batch from the Notre-Dame, these were duly dispatched by registered post. I didn't know then that these were shared with her family, who decided they were probably faux studio shots. How would a lowly hack all those years ago have earned the foreign exchange to make his way to the city of romance? Maybe I was a show-off (at best), or a charlatan (at worst). It took surreptitious investigation conducted with the help of the slow Indian Postal Service to establish that the Notre-Dame in the background was as real as the person posing in front of it.

In due course, following our marriage, those photographs came back. 'What was Paris like?" my wife asked. It had been a dream visit, and I was happy to share my memories of it with her, promising we would travel there together. "I want vou to take pictures of me at the same spot," she said. I acquiesced the photographs were put away and never seen again, my wife and I, with or without our children, travelled to places around the world, but Paris never made it to our itinerary.

And now, the Notre-Dame has been scarred by fire, closed for inventorying and repairs, and will probably be shut for years. It has quickened our desire to go to Paris this summer, or perhaps we might wait. For Paris without the Notre-Dame will not be the same — at least (or even) for me.

Weekend Business Standard

Volume VI Number 38 MUMBAI | 20 APRIL 2019

WEEKEND RUMINATIONS

T N NINAN

Down the primrose path

he Association for Democratic Reforms says 230 candidates (14 per cent of the total) in the fray for the third phase of polling have serious criminal cases against them. Why, 14 candidates say that they have court convictions standing against them, while 26 candidates have cases of hate speeches filed against them. Even in such a milieu, the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP's) decision to put up Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur as its parliamentary candidate for Bhopal stands out for its in-your-face disregard for common sensibilities. It has provoked shock, and rightly drawn widespread criticism for the message that it sends out.

The sadhvi has not been convicted, and is out on bail on health grounds. She is not barred by law from being a candidate, but charges have been framed by a court. The BJP says she has been nominated as a response to Congress talk of "Hindu terror", but forgets that its own government in Madhya Pradesh had arrested the sadhvi in a case of murder, not once but twice. She says she has been tortured in police custody, but only the Congress has taken a position in its manifesto against custodial torture; the BJP is silent on the issue.

Her nomination as a party candidate is of a piece with other hardline choices that the BJP has been making in recent times, including the selection of the former leader of a vigilante group, Yogi Adityanath, as chief minister of Uttar Pradesh. Other parties too have made hard-to-defend choices in the past. Manmohan Singh's extraordinary decision in 2006 to re-induct Shibu Soren as a cabinet minister, after the latter was given bail in a murder case, stands out. The BJP's then leader of the opposition in Parliament, L K Advani, had said at the time that "under the UPA, not just politics but even the Cabinet has been criminalised". Viewed in those terms, is the BJP now seeking to criminalise the Lok Sabha? The sadhvi has been quoted as saying: "We will put an end to [terrorists and Congress leaders] and reduce them to ashes." Is that the kind of talk that the country wishes to hear in Parliament?

It is said that, more than failure, it is success that reveals a person. And so it would seem to be with the BJP. In opposition, the party used to stand for law and order, but now it stands by vigilante groups and their members who attack Muslims. Its leaders used to be known once for their measured language, but they have been replaced by rabble-rousers who attract censure for divisive talk and holding out threats to voters. Its talk of "genuine" secularism, as different from what it called "minority appeasement", stands exposed by its own actions while what one hears now is talk of a Hindu rashtra. In opposition, the party rightly criticised partisan capture of autonomous bodies, nomination of Congress party faithful to Constitutional posts, and misuse of the government's investigative powers. But whatever the Congress did, the BJP now does in spades. L K Advani conceptualised Prasar Bharati as an autonomous broadcasting body, but it has become a partisan government mouthpiece. And the selective use of tax and other raids is too blatantly onesided to be accidental.

The BJP is not alone in coarsening public discourse. Rahul Gandhi's constant description of the prime minister as "chor" or thief is clear use of unparliamentary language. His jibe that Narendra Modi is a "darpok" (coward) is laughable, and hardly improves matters with its childishness. Other opposition leaders have not distinguished themselves; Mayawati, Azam Khan and others have all crossed the line. But it is the BJP that has set the unfortunate tone of these elections. As the new pole party in Indian politics, it should have sought to improve political conduct and discourse. Instead, it has chosen to nominate Pragya Thakur. Whatever one might think of the idea of Hindutva, the words and actions of the party that advocates it are no advertisement for it.

Modi out to conquer his 'Jingostan'

Modi-Shah BJP has resurrected dangers and the enemy from the past and built a scary jingoism. It's a great diversionary tactic but history shows it never ends well

n the course of my usual trawling of the Hindi media, I am struck by lyrics from a very distant, faded past. It was Kavi (poet) Pradeep's dire warning to India to watch out for threats from traitors within. These deadly enemies, the song featuring mega star Rajendra Kumar and sung in Manna Dey's stirring voice said, were hiding in our own homes, and menacing us over our walls: Jhaank rahe hain apne dushman, apni hee deewaron se/sambhal ke rehna apne ghar mein chhupe huye gaddaron se". It goes on to warn the patriot in us: Hoshiyar tumko apne Kashmir ki raksha karni hai (awake, for you have to also protect your Kashmir).

This was for Mahesh Kaul's Talag, released and nominated for the Filmfare awards in 1958. Why has this again popped up in the heartland chatter?

You will also find references that Nehru disliked the song so much, as it insinuated that many fellow Indians were enemies, that he banned the song. And of course, facing a war in 1965, Lal Bahadur Shastri lifted the ban. Just see, the argument goes, how relevant is this song again today - when the enemy is at the gates, and millions of traitors hide within our homes. Never mind the facts, of course.

In 60 years, after winning two-and-a-half wars,

dividing Pakistan into two and becoming a \$2.7 trillion economy, you would have thought we were much too secure, prospering and optimistic to bring back paranoias of the past

But, after traversing large parts of India, in the Hindi heartland and the South, I have to report with humility that the contrary is exactly what the BJP under Narendra Modi and Amit Shah has been able to achieve. At a time when India should be feeling at its most secure, SHEKHAR GUPTA internally and externally, they've managed to convince large enough

sections of the voters, especially the tens of millions of young who learn their history from WhatsApp and believe India came out of the dark ages in 2014, that the dangers of their grandparents' era have returned. So, who else can you trust to fight these but a strong, aggressive and fearless leader who doesn't think twice before sending commandos on surgical strikes or jets on bombing missions in enemy territory?

With the situation on the economy and jobs grim and the crisis so palpable that it couldn't be "fixed' with propaganda, we had anticipated Modi-Shah turning this into a "desh khatrey mein hai" national security election. We can now say they're succeeding.



There are three pre-requisites to building a finational security" election. The first, an aggressive, even paranoid redefinition of the national interest. Second, a formidable foreign enemy a true nationalist detests, hates and fears. And most important, a Fifth Column within, consisting of collaborators and sympathisers of the same ene-

my. Then you go out and seek votes against those no one can morally or politically defend. To call this merely politics of polarisation is an understatement. It is enormously more diabolical, and effective.

The key to building such a popular concept of the national interest is a sharp definition of identity. American strategist and Harvard professor Joseph Nye Jr., writing in Foreign Policy, calls the national interest a "slippery concept, used to describe as well as prescribe for-

eign policy". He then goes on to quote Samuel Huntington in the same journal, arguing that "without a secure sense of national identity" you cannot define your national interests.

I bet you have figured where I am headed. But, just in case you haven't, that identity is Hindu and the core of Indian nationalism. What's good for the Hindus is also good for India and vice versa had better be true. If it isn't, it needs fixing. And non-Hindus? Of course, they will benefit similarly. But if they complain, or not conform, they risk being lumped with the Fifth Column, along with liberal bleeding hearts, questioning journalists, activists, "compulsive contrarians" and "urban Naxals". Remember Kavi

ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

campaign. The opposition with Nyay, Rafale, secularism, equality is playing a very different game. It's like one side is marching to martial music while the other is tuning the tanpura. All of those ideas are important as well, but then you see, none of it will be possible unless the nation survives. And since there are such grave dangers lurking, in whose hands would you rather place the nation? A proven, decisive

and strong leader or a "Pappu" who now you see and

Pradeep's warning about traitors hiding in your bed-

This is exactly how Modi-Shah have built this

rooms and kitchens.

now you don't?

While an all-conquering nationalist wave isn't here, it is strong enough to neutralise some of the economic distress and disaffection. In the deepest countryside, you find young, jobless and quite hopeless people saying, yes, we have nothing to do and are hurting, but we can suffer a bit for the nation. It takes some campaign genius to get so many in distant places to succumb to such mass suspension of disbelief. We may find the idea ridiculous and abhorrent. But it won't change the reality.

The other factor is identity. This wave is generally moderated, even blocked, where large sections of the population have a determinant of political identity stronger than the Hindu religion. It can be caste, as with the Vokkaligas in Karnataka and the Yadavs in the heartland and Dalits generally everywhere. It can be language and ethnicity as in the Tamil and Telugu regions. Or religion, as with Muslims and Christians. Wherever some of these factors combine, especially as in Uttar Pradesh, this upsurge can be broken.

This is why the Congress is the biggest loser. Unlike the many regional parties, it doesn't have the hedge of alternative identities. Its Rahul-era idea of fighting hard, even militant nationalism with liberal pacifism is unconvincing, especially given its own record of running a brutally unforgiving hard state. If you think the counter to the BJP's campaign against "enemies and traitors" is abolishing the sedition law, you have no idea what you are up against.

What the Modi-Shah BJP has succeeded in building among large sections of the younger electorate is more than a mere sense of paranoid nationalism. It is now a dangerous jingoism and history tells us it never ends well. The enemies have been defined, and weapons earmarked: Jets and commandos for the Pakistanis, calumny and social media lynching for those within.

The dangers and the enemy Kavi Pradeep identified, and which we thought we had vanquished, have been conveniently resurrected and the Hindi press is the first to see that trend. Sixty years later now, the current mood has been captured by a young poet, although of a different generation and style: Rap.

Check out 'Jingostan' from the recent Ranveer Singh-Alia Bhatt hit Gully Boy: Do hazar atthra hai, desh ko khatra hai/har taraf aag hai, tum aag ke beech ho/zor se chilla do, sab ko dara do, apni zehreeli been baja ke, sabka dhyan kheench lo ... (it's 2018, the nation's in peril/we are all caught in a deadly fire/shout, scream, scare, play your venomous fiddle, divert everybody's attention).

Because, as the rapper concludes: Jingostan is where we now live.

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A campaign of venom and vilification



26 per cent. In the Modi wave of 2014 their votes counted for little as the BJP swept the region, partly as a result of Hindu-Muslim polarisation in the wake of the Muzaffarnagar riots in the previous year. This time it's different; the SP-BSP alliance forged by Akhilesh Yadav and Mayawati —with a 42 per cent vote share neck and neck with the BJP's 43 per cent — is a powerful alternative power centre with the Congress cutting in for third position in the crucial Gangetic heartland. The BJP's it won 71 of 80 seats in the state

election with a Muslim population of about attributing the Modi-is-a-thief label to the achche din have come. But keeping aside our Supreme Court, or lumping "all Modis [Narendra Modi, Nirav Modi and Lalit Modi] are thieves" are examples of Rahul-speak.

The high-pitched BJP narrative of demonising Muslims everywhere is now countered with the spectre of "saffron terror", a phrase attributed to Congress leaders such as P Chidambaram and Digvijaya Singh. This phantom has now come to haunt them in flesh and blood, in the form of Sadhvi Pragya Thakur Singh, an accused terrorist and criminal conspirator fielded by the BID in Bhopa against Digvijaya Singh. The BJP has held the seat since 1989 so a contest was not so much an issue as polarising Hindu votes in Madhva Pradesh where it fears reduced numbers as in UP. The tremors of the BJP's divisive campaign are felt far and wide: In Bengal, Assam and border northeast states where citizenship for Bangladeshi Muslim migrants is an emotive issue, now presented in the guise of righteous Hindu nationalism. In Begusarai in Bihar, where the former student leader and anti-BJP campaigner Kanhaiya Kumar is a prominent candidate for the Communist Party of India. sections of the youth express admiration for him. But as a lengthy on-theground report in the news portal Scroll.in this week suggests that may not be enough. A jobless graduate Sanjit Kumar, like hundreds of his ilk eking out a livelihood, is quoted as saying: "Since we did not get jobs, we can't say

selfish needs, this much we recognise: The country has become strong under Modiji. The army's morale has been raised. If the country is safe, everything is fine, it doesn't matter whether we get jobs or not. Just as Kanhaiya Kumar had made Begusarai proud, Modi had made India proud."

The quote succinctly encapsulates the shift in the BJP's vote-capturing strategy in 2019. Long-evaporated assurances of "Acche din" and "Sabka saath sabka vikas" are replaced with the overriding images "Supreme Leader" and "Resurgent India" after Pulwama-Balakote, necessary to tame enemies, external and internal, such as Pakistan and disloyal minorities. The idea is backed by sufficient academic analysis to show that the BJP's rhetoric spirals at election time in states where it faces a major erosion of its electoral base. Since late 2017, starting with a bruising election in his home state Gujarat, the Modi magic has waned all through 2018. It has won just three out of 13 parliamentary by-elections, and managed to retain power in only five of 22 state legislatures. The vitriolic campaign now in progress, the underlying threat of violence, and the elevation of Sadhvi Pragva as a star candidate are key markers in the BJP's obstacle-strewn march back to New Delhi. Our local kabadiwallah is not far wrong in his assessment

The future of TV

EYE CULTURE TARA LACHAPELLE

TV-entertainment he industry has managed to turn the conventional wisdom regarding market competition on its head. There are more ways than ever to watch TV, yet for many people that won't translate into greater choice or

for, or if they'd rather just

standard fee.

Yankees baseball games will require yet another app. Add in the cost of an internet connection and suddenly an old-school cable bundle doesn't look so bad anymore. (Could it be, two of America's most despised brands, Comcast and the former Time Warner Cable, are vindicated? Nah.)

The only real improvement in consumer choice is the ease of canceling. That can be done online with basically the cl



SUNIL SETHI

66 \mathbf{T} ote kisiko bhi do, kisi tarah wapas to Modi hi aayega"—"We can vote for anyone we like but Modi will somehow manage to come back". This pearl of wisdom, dropped with a sigh of resignation, was delivered by Raees, the neighbourhood raddiwallah who comes from a village near Aligarh and who voted on April 18. For decades Raees and his family have been collecting the detritus of households — old newspapers, empty bottles, other discarded iunk — in the locality and have prospered. From plving their trade on bicvcles and pushcarts they have progressed to motorbikes and announce their availability on Whatsapp messages instead of randomly ringing doorbells on Sunday mornings.

Sixteen seats in western Uttar Pradesh

— is seriously challenged. This has resulted in a campaign to intensify the Hindu-Muslim divide peaking after five years of the BJP's majoritarian politics.

The Election Commission, at the prodding of the Supreme Court, which called it "toothless", has had to impose campaign suspensions against Yogi Adityanath and Maneka Gandhi for their hate speeches against Muslims, all of a piece with the Narendra Modi-Amit Shah duo's insinuations against the community as anti-national, pro-Pakistan "infiltrators". Equally, it has had to restrain leaders across the political spectrum – Mayawati, Azam Khan and Rahul Gandhi for poisonous personal attacks and wild assertions. The most squalid slurs, for instance, references to Jaya Prada's "khaki underwear" or forcing Mayawati "clean officials' shoes" have emanated from the SP's Azam Khan.

have now voted in the first two phases of the And some of the most fatuous, such as

saving mon Three major industry develop- and it's just as easy to sign back up ments during the last week point

keep their money. I'm not The only real

- Disney's left a lot of the ease of

even convinced the price **improvement in**

Netflix's \$12.99-a-month be done online

monthly subscription fee to sign back up

by \$10 to a whopping when there's a

\$49.99. Eight Discovery show you don't

networks were also added want to miss

of more than 275 channels -a

couple hundred more than most

people care to have. Initially it will

require a cable box, just one more

reason TVision looks like a glori-

Now. For live TV such as sports and

guilty-pleasure reality shows,

maybe you subscribe to YouTube

TV at \$50. And Amazon.com's

involvement with the YES Network

fied cable package.

will stay that low for long consumer choice is

room to catch up to canceling. That can

YouTube TV raised its and it's just as easy

Meanwhile, **click of a button**,

introduced

when there's a show you don't want to miss. For example, fans of further in this direction: ■ Walt Disney unveiled Game of Thrones — which returned Disney+. Beginning November 12, Sunday night for its final season could pay the next two months for it will be the exclusive home for a ton of the company's new and old HBO Now and then guit until the content. For superfans of Disney's network's next big series. Cable brands, such as Star Wars, and for packages, by comparison, are notoparents of young kids, the \$6.99riously difficult to get out of and a-month subscription (or \$69.99 require begrudging calls to cusa year) may be well worth it. tomer service. But if canceling is Others will have to decide if it's the streaming industry's biggest

with basically the

yet another app worth signing up selling point, then that's a problem. This is why, to me, Netflix still stands out as the simple, affordable,

good-enough option. (We'll learn how many customers it enticed during the latest period when the company reports results at the close of trading Tuesday.) That said, Disney,

for its part, is exploring how it can take the combined affiliate fees for advantage of bundling opportunithose channels are little more than ties by offering a discount to those who subscribe to all three of its apps: Disney+, Hulu and ESPN+. The company made a move toward this on Monday in announcing

Hulu will buy out AT&T's 9.5 per cent stake in the streaming company for \$1.43 billion. Disney, which owns a majority stake in Hulu, will bill the combo of the three apps as the complete package, ticking the boxes for family content, adult content and sports. In reality, though,

This wasn't the future conthere are still a lot of holes. sumers — nor media companies,

This is also why free, ad-supfor that matter — envisioned. It's a ported services such as Pluto TV total mess, and configuring the ide-(recently acquired by Viacom) are al set of subscriptions can get catching on. Who knew the future expensive. Say you want to watch of TV would mean yearning for the the upcoming Star Wars series. days of ads and bundles? Then again, T-Mobile's TVision goes too The Mandalorian. You'll need to pay \$6.99 a month for Disney+. But far the other way, cramming in to finish out HBO's "Succession," everything but the kitchen sink at cough up another \$15 for HBO quite a steep price.

In a February, I posed the question, "What is TV?" The only concrete answer I have at this point: Frustrating.

may signal that someday New York ©Bloomberg

America's great college boom is winding down



NOAH SMITH

he for-profit college industry is collapsing. The Chronicle of Higher Education reports that during the past five years. more than 1.200 college campuses have been closed — an average of about 20 every month. Of those that shut, 88 per cent were for-profit, and their students amounted to 85 per cent of those affected by the closures.

Enrolment at four-year for-profit colleges is in free fall, dropping 13.7 per cent from fall 2014 to fall 2015, 14.5 per cent the following year, and 7.1 per cent the year after that.

Perhaps the only surprising thing was that it took this long. For-profit colleges have long been plagued by poor performance — a 2012 study by economists Kevin Lang and Russell Weinstein found no earnings premium from attending a for-profit university. Follow-up studies yielded similar results. But the price tag for these colleges

was high, and students were encouraged to four-year public and nonprofit universities - premium for a bachelor's degree has remained take out lots of loans to pay it. The inevitable result was a generation of for-profit college students with poor employment prospects and a mountain of debt.

Meanwhile, a whiff of dubious marketing hung about the industry, with DeVry University being forced to pay a \$100 million settlement for misleading prospective students about the economic benefits of attending.

The winnowing of the for-profit college industry shows that although it can take years for poor quality and high prices to reduce demand in the education sector, eventually it does happen. Fortunately, forprofits only account for a relatively small slice of undergraduate education — perhaps about a tenth. The more important question is whether the carnage among for-profits is a harbinger of similar declines for nonprofit and public colleges.

Enrolment at four-year public and nonprofit colleges has remained essentially unchanged during the past two years. And college enrolment rates overall – which includes the big decline in for-profits and a smaller decline in two-year public schools are essentially constant since 2005. But this conceals some potentially important underlying trends. Hispanic enrolment rates are up since 2010, but white and black enrolment rates have dropped a bit.

Meanwhile, tuition may now be falling at

another potential sign of weakening demand.

If demand for college were weakening, this is probably how it would manifest itself. The number of spots at good schools is rationed by the application process — these schools limit their enrolment in order to maintain their prestige. So falling demand would reduce prices for these colleges, but not the number of people attending. Meanwhile, enrolment would fall at institutions that were less in demand, such as forprofits and two-year colleges.

Why might demand for college be weakening? One reason is that there are simply fewer young people in the country these days.

The reversal of Mexican immigration probably has something to do with that. Meanwhile, falling fertility rates will do even more to thin out the ranks of the young in the decades to come. US universities could make up the difference by allowing in more international students, but President Donald Trump's anti-immigration policies and attitudes have made that difficult; enrolment from overseas is now in decline.

The strengthening labour market might also be pulling a few young Americans away from college, though so far that trend seems to be very slight.

Another possible factor is that prospective college students may be learning to distinguish between the economic opportunities afforded by various college majors. Overall, the earnings

constant or continued to rise, depending on how it's measured. But those overall numbers conceal large differences by field of study.

This may be why college students are avoiding humanities majors. But it could also mean that some prospective college students who don't want to major in fields like science, technology, engineering, math, health or business might avoid college entirely, or be unwilling to attend more expensive schools.

demand for college continues, it could be bad for many regions of the US. For more prestigious universities, falling undergraduate applications need not crush their plans for expansion. Most of the local economic benefit of a university comes from research, not from education. But a number of small towns owe their economic health to modest local colleges whose main activity is teaching; if these shrink or disappear due to falling college demand, the trend of local economic decline could accelerate.

Government programs to make college more affordable for lower-income Americans can help prop up enrolment in these vulnerable areas. But universities also need to help by cutting costs. Addressing administrative bloat and other sources of inefficiency will allow public and nonprofit colleges to make enrolment a more attractive proposition.

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to its lineup, including HGTV and TLC. However. \$1 a month per subscriber, mean-

ing they don't come close to explaining YouTube TV's significant price hike. T-Mobile TVision, a \$100-a-month package

Whatever the reason, if the decline in