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## TELLING NUMBERS

### The richer the candidate, the higher the chances of victory

#### SUCCESS RATES AND ASSETS

Value of assets (Rs)	Candidates	Winners	Strike rate (%)
5 cr and above	883	266	30.1%
2 cr-5 cr	678	125	18.4%
50 lakh-2 cr	1,601	112	7%
10 lakh-50 lakh	2,069	27	1.3%
Less than 10 lakh	2,699	9	0.3%

Lok Sabha MP	Party	Seat	Assets (Rs)
<b>THE RICHEST</b>			
Nakul Kamal Nath	Cong	Chhindwara	660 cr
Vasanthakumar H	Cong	Kanniyakumari	417 cr
D K Suresh	Cong	Bangalore Rural	338 cr
<b>THE POOREST</b>			
Goddeti Madhavi	YSRCP	Araku	1.41 lakh
Chandrani Murmu	BJD	Keonjhar	3.4 lakh
Mahant Balak Nath	BJP	Alwar	3.5 lakh

RESULTS OF the Lok Sabha elections suggest that the richer the candidate the brighter the chances of her winning. Nearly a third (30.1%) of candidates with total assets of Rs 5 crore and above won; the success rate of candidates with total assets of less than Rs 10 lakh was, by contrast, a mere 0.3%, according to a report published May 25 by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), a non-partisan NGO working for electoral and political reforms.

The percentage of crorepati MPs has risen steadily from 58% in the 15th Lok Sabha (2009) to 82% in the 16th (2014), and 88% in the 17th Lok Sabha (2019), the report said. The report analysed the assets of 539 (of the total 542) winners in 2019, of whom 475 had total assets of Rs 1 crore or more. These numbers were 443/542 in 2014, and 315/543 in 2009.

The Biju Janata Dal and Communist Party of India (Marxist) have the lowest percentage (67%) of MPs with assets valued at more than Rs 1 crore. The BJD has 12 MPs in the new House; the CPM has 3. Among states and Union Territories, Odisha has the lowest percentage of crorepati winners (67%); as many as 15 states/UTs elected only crorepatris to Lok Sabha

SHIVNARAYAN RAJPUROHIT

#### MOST CROREPATI WINNERS: STATES (MAJOR STATES ONLY)

Maharashtra	100%
Punjab	100%
Delhi	100%
Himachal Pradesh	100%
Arunachal Pradesh	100%
Uttar Pradesh	97%
Bihar	95%
Madhya Pradesh	93%
Karnataka	93%
Jharkhand	93%

#### MOST CROREPATI WINNERS: PARTIES (PARTIES WITH TO SEATS OR MORE ONLY)

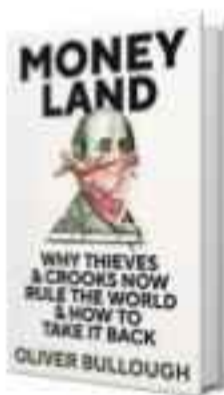
BSP (10)	100%
Shiv Sena (18)	100%
DMK (22)	96%
JD(U) (15)	94%
TMC (20)	91%
BJP (265)	88%
YSRCP (19)	86%
Cong (43)	84%

All data: ADR

## TIP FOR READING LIST

### HAVENS OF THE SUPER RICH

**MONEYLAND: Why Thieves and Crooks Now Rule the World and How to Take It Back** is British journalist Oliver Bullough's story of the mega rich and the overseas tax havens in which they stash their cash — British Virgin Islands, Guernsey, Panama, Liechtenstein, Isle of Man, Cayman Islands, St Vincent and the Grenadines, etc. It is a world created out of "Maltese passports, English libel, American privacy, Panamanian shell companies, Jersey trusts... all add(ed) to-



gether to create a virtual space... (with) laws (from) anywhere that are most suited to those wealthy enough to afford them at any moment in time". The book, says its review in *The New York Times*, "is strong on passion" and a brilliant uncovering of the scope of hidden money — however, "whether that represents an existential threat to democracy remains an unresolved, and crucial, question".

## SIMPLY PUT

# Congress crises, over the years

The present turmoil is one of the most severe in Congress since Independence. There have been many precedents, from the challenge to Nehru's leadership and revolt against Indira to the Rajiv and Rao years

MANOJ CG  
NEW DELHI, MAY 28

THE CONGRESS, which has governed India for most of the seven-odd decades after Independence, is facing an existential crisis after being reduced to double digits in the Lok Sabha for a second consecutive time. A look through history at previous electoral routs and internal crises faced by the party:

#### Nehru vs right wing

In the years immediately after Independence and Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, the Congress faced its first big crisis in the form of a right-wing assertion within. Jawaharlal Nehru had to struggle against the likes of Purushottam Das Tandon, KM Munshi and Narhar Vishnu Gadgil to ensure that his philosophy, particularly of secularism, prevailed within the party. Things came to a head ahead of the AICC session in September 1950 when Tandon announced his decision to contest for Congress president. It was the first open election for the post in independent India.

The other contenders were J B Kripalani and Shankarrao Deo. The leadership of the right wing was attributed to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel although he did not always explicitly exercise it. Tandon got over 1,000 votes more than Kripalani. This upset Nehru to the extent that he even refused to be a member of Tandon's Working Committee. After Patel's death in December, another flashpoint came when Tandon overruled Nehru's wish to induct Rafi Ahmed Kidwai into the CWC. Kidwai resigned from the Congress and joined hands with Kripalani who had by then formed the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party. Kidwai stayed on in the Cabinet for some time but eventually resigned.

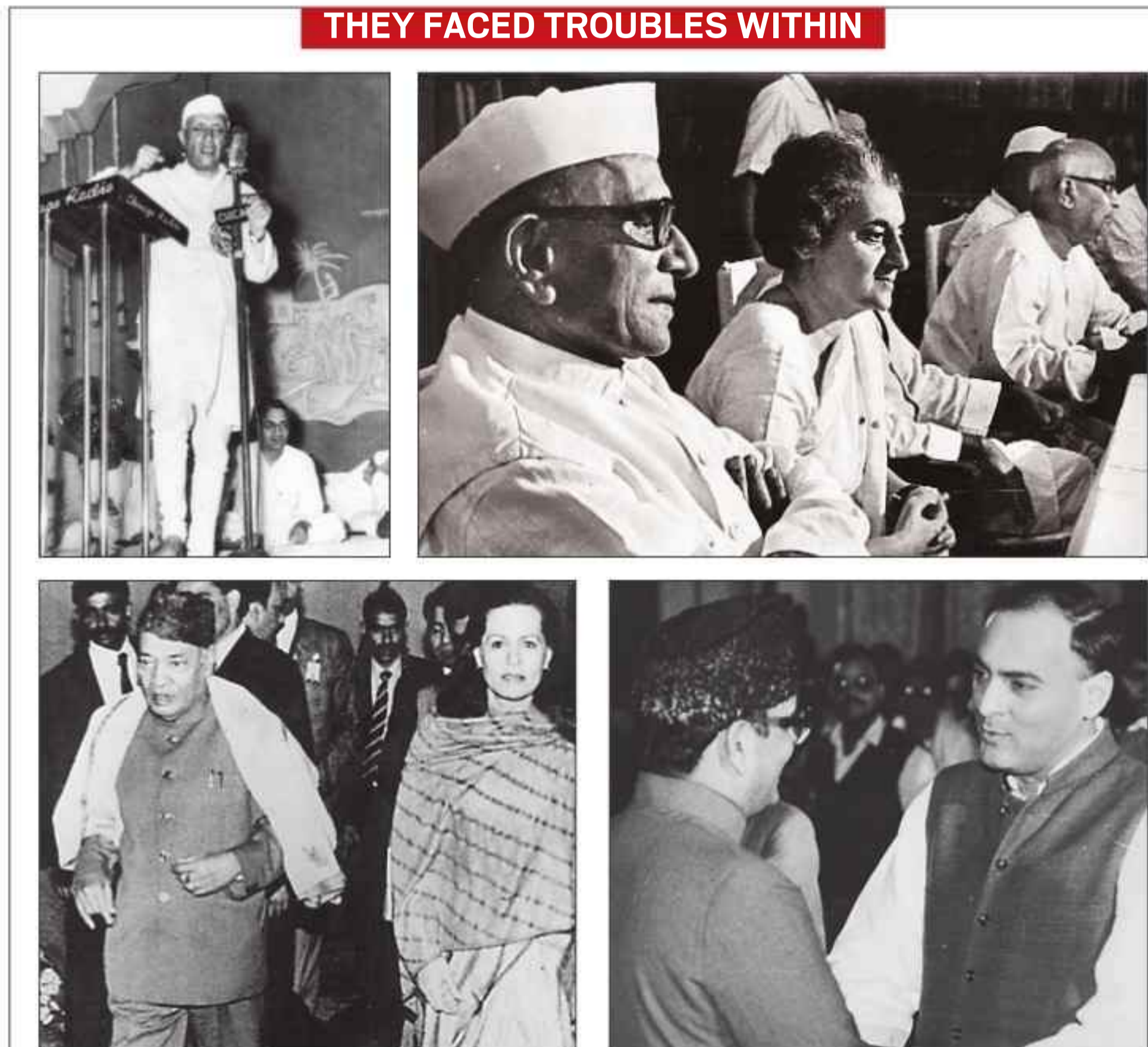
In July 1951, the crisis came to a head again when Nehru resigned from the CWC. With the first general election a year away, Tandon finally relented by resigning, and Nehru was elected the Congress president at the AICC session in Delhi in October.

#### Indira vs Syndicate

The Congress plunged into an even bigger crisis towards the end of the next decade. This time, it was over economic outlook. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, under the influence of Mohan Kumaramangalam and PN Haksar, appeared inclined towards nationalisation of banks and heavy industries. Morarji Desai, on the other hand, favoured the mixed economy model developed through a consensus between the socialist and capitalist streams in the party during the Nehru years. Indira went to the AICC session in Lalbagh in July 1969 where the 'Note on Economic Policy and Programme' was circulated among the delegates, outlining the shift in approach.

This brought a firm reaction from Desai, culminating in a power tussle between Indira and the "Syndicate". The occasion was the election of the President of India the following month. Indira's authority was challenged with the announcement of Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy as the Congress's presidential candidate. She took the challenge head on and backed VV Giri. Slighted, Congress president S Nijalingappa prepared for a showdown, and Indira sought his removal.

Parallel CWC meetings were held, one at the Congress headquarters and the other at the Prime Minister's residence in the first week of November. Days later, Nijalingappa expelled Indira, the Prime Minister, from the Congress. The party officially split. She was forced to adopt a new electoral symbol — the cow-and-calf. In December, both factions held AICC sessions. The Indira faction elected



#### THEY FACED TROUBLES WITHIN

Clockwise from top left: Jawaharlal Nehru faced right-wing assertion and the first open election for party presidency; Indira Gandhi was expelled by S Nijalingappa and later unseated as PM by Morarji Desai; Rajiv Gandhi's party was routed after V P Singh walked out; P V Narasimha Rao lost Sonia Gandhi's trust amid power tussle. Express Archive

Jagjivan Ram as president in the Bombay session on December 28 and 29. The Congress (O) led by the Syndicate even brought a no-confidence motion against Indira's government but it was defeated. She called for elections in 1971 and came back with a two-thirds majority.

#### Emergency and after

Indira's imposition of Emergency in June 1975 was followed by the Congress's heavy defeat in the election, called by Indira after lifting Emergency in 1977. She herself was defeated in Rae Bareilly. The party split again with Jagjivan Ram breaking away. The Congress and Indira spent the next two years in the political wilderness while Prime Minister Desai looked entrenched. Indira and some members of her erstwhile Cabinet were arrested on charges of corruption. But the tide turned in the Congress's favour.

Chandra Shekhar, president of the ruling Janata Party, raised the issue of dual membership of former Jana Sangh members. Those in the government, including Atal Bihari Vajpayee and L K Advani, had to choose between staying in the government and being members of the RSS. Vajpayee and Advani chose the latter and the government collapsed soon. Desai's successor Charan Singh could not run a stable government and Indira powered the Congress back to power in 1980.

#### Historic mandate, then rout

Indira's assassination in 1984 created a massive sympathy wave for the Congress that returned her son Rajiv Gandhi to power

with over 400 seats. But his flirtations with political Hindutva — he persuaded Uttar Pradesh CM Bir Bahadur Singh to open the lock of Babri Masjid and allow religious rites in 1986 — triggered unrest in the party and the Bofors scandal brought it down. V P Singh, who as Finance Minister and later as Defence Minister had raised questions about corruption, walked out of the Congress, and launched Jan Morcha with many disillusioned Congress leaders.

In the 1989 elections, Rajiv was defeated with the Congress reduced to 197 seats. In 1991, he became the second Congress president to be assassinated while in office. The party once again plunged into turmoil but managed to emerge the single largest in the 1991 elections, and P V Narasimha Rao took over as Prime Minister.

#### 1990-2000: troubling decade

The Congress suffered a series of splits during the 1990s. Rao faced difficulties right after taking over, in running the government as well as the party. There was mistrust between him and veterans like Arjun Singh and N D Tiwari. At the Tirupati AICC session in April 1992, Singh won the CWC polls with the highest margin; Sharad Pawar too won. Rao asked the entire newly elected CWC to resign on the pretext that there was not enough representation of women and Dalits. He then reconstituted the CWC and included Singh in the nominated category.

Trouble was far from over. After the demolition of the Babri Masjid, Singh started spreading the view that Rao was not suffi-

ciently secular. A power struggle ensued in which Rao lost the support of Sonia Gandhi because he was not seen as active enough on the question of Rajiv's assassination. The big break came when Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga informed Sonia that the Government of India had not even asked for extradition of people connected with the assassination.

In 1994, the Congress lost in Rao's home state Andhra Pradesh which emboldened his critics. The feud resulted in Singh's ouster from the Cabinet and suspension from the party, and another split. A breakaway faction was formed with N D Tiwari as president and Singh as working president. After running a minority government for five years, the Congress lost power in 1996.

It would take the Congress another eight years to return to power. Rao resigned and AICC treasurer Sitaram Kesri took over, but he was challenged by other senior leaders. The two years following the 1996 defeat saw backroom manoeuvring and intrigue in the Congress. In the 1997 Congress presidential election, Kesri defeated Pawar and Pilot. Two years later, he was booted out of the party after Sonia indicated her willingness to take over.

But soon after Sonia taking over in March 1998, the Congress plunged into another crisis. Just before the 1999 Lok Sabha elections, Sharad Pawar, P A Sangma and Tariq Anwar raised a banner of revolt, and were removed. Before Sonia could consolidate her position, Jitendra Prasad threw a challenge in 2001 when he contested against her for the post of Congress president. Sonia won.

## EXPERTS EXPLAIN

# How regional pride, nationalism made Modi-Shah even stronger on home turf



CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT & SHARIK LALIWALA

THE HOME state of Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, Gujarat, has not disappointed them: like the 2014 Lok Sabha election, this time too, the BJP has won all 26 seats in Gujarat. In fact, the party has increased its vote share in 2019 to 62.2% vis-à-vis 59.1% in 2014.

The BJP's victory margins, too, have improved in all but two seats. Party president Shah, who contested from the VIP seat of Gandhinagar — earlier represented by L K Advani, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Shankarsinh Vaghela and Purushottam Mavalankar — has secured one of the highest victory margins of over 5.5 lakh votes.

The water crisis, coupled with the low prices of the rabi crop, was expected to weigh heavily on the Saurashtra-Kutch region — where the Congress swept the rural constituencies in the 2017 Vidhan Sabha elections — and in parts of North Gujarat such as the Patan, Banaskantha, and Sabarkantha districts. In early 2018, the Gujarat government had advised farmers to not sow summer crops, as the state could not provide water for irrigation.

This predicament only worsened as 2018 came to an end — by December, over 50 talukas had been declared drought-affected. Just before the voting for the Lok Sabha election in late April 2019, Saurashtra's 138 dams had water just over 10% of the reservoir capacity.

But these issues had little effect on the electoral outcome. In fact, the BJP has increased its vote share in the severely drought-affected Saurashtra-Kutch region from 57.79% in 2014 to 59.8% in 2019. In a sense, this reflects a growing awareness among the electorate to treat Lok Sabha and



Vidhan Sabha elections differently. The post-Pulwama air strikes and the asmita (pride) of having a Gujarati Prime Minister and his trusted aide Shah in Parliament, coupled with nationalistic sentiments (especially in a state bordering Pakistan) mattered more in this election than local concerns over drinking and irrigation water, as well as the crisis of jobs.

The Congress has been surprised by the scale of its defeat, especially in Saurashtra-

VOTESHARE (%)		
Party	LS 2019	Assembly 2017
BJP	62.21	51.25
Cong	32.11	43.3

DISTRIBUTION OF VOTES, 2019 (%)			
Party	Rural	Semi-urban	Urban
BJP	61.88	63.06	64.35
Cong	32.05	32.33	32.1

Kutch. Extrapolating 2017 Assembly election data to the 2019 Lok Sabha election, the Congress was expected to win as many as eight Lok Sabha seats. In 2017, the Congress had won 30 out of 54 Assembly segments in the Saurashtra-Kutch region, doubling its tally from the 16 seats it won in 2012 on the back of an urban-rural divide registered due to agrarian distress and the Patidar move-

ment, supported primarily by the Leuva Patels of Saurashtra.

In this election, the Congress trailed in 29 of these 30 Vidhan Sabha constituencies. The BJP has also snatched from the Congress the four Vidhan Sabha constituencies — three in Saurashtra — where bypolls took place.

Gujarat is seeing an increase in the representation of OBCs and intermediate castes (mainly Patels) over the last three Lok Sabha elections despite an absence of a backward caste-oriented regional political actor. For example, Gujarat is sending 10 OBC and seven intermediate caste legislators (out of the total 26) to this Lok Sabha — more or less similar to 2014, when it had 11 OBC and six intermediate caste MPs.

Out of the seven intermediate caste representatives this year, six are Patels. The BJP's drive to attract the OBC communities has been ongoing from quite some time in Gujarat now. Post the 2017 elections, the BJP began to capture MLAs from the Congress, mainly those belonging to the Koli Patel community, an OBC caste of tillers and fisherfolk.

This time, like in 2014, the BJP put up three Koli Patel candidates. This increasing focus on OBCs and Patels has come at the expense of upper castes in Gujarat, who now have only two legislators — the same as in 2014, and half their numbers of 2009 and 2004.

Gujarat has sent six women MPs to Lok Sabha in 2019 — the most since the state was created. Three of these six MPs (50%) belong to political families; a figure higher than the number of dynasts among men, which stands at two (10%). The reliance on women politicians coming from political families reinforces the notion that women serve as proxy figures for other political members of the family.

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## The Indian EXPRESS

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## EASTWARD COURSE

Bay of Bengal outreach is a well-judged attempt to expand regionalism, not let SAARC hold it hostage

IT IS TEMPTING to see Prime Minister Narendra Modi's invitation to the leaders of a Bay of Bengal forum for the inauguration of his second term, as a "snub to Pakistan". After all five years ago, the PM had invited the leaders of the South Asian forum, SAARC, including Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, for his swearing-in ceremony. But the talk of a snub misses the story of the larger regional dynamic that has emerged over the last few years. When he travelled to the Kathmandu summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in Kathmandu at the end of 2014, PM Modi may have figured out that the future of SAARC was bleak. At the summit, Nawaz Sharif pulled out of regional connectivity agreements that were ready for signature. Officials from Islamabad were very much part of the prolonged and painful negotiations to finalise the agreements. Quite clearly, the Pakistan Army in Rawalpindi had pulled the plug at the very last minute.

The fiasco at Kathmandu evidently led the PM to shift the focus to India's sub-regional cooperation within South Asia with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal. PM Modi saw that Pakistan is not ready for regional integration with India and that summits are not going to get the Pakistan horse to drink at the SAARC waters. Instead of holding the rest of the region hostage, India chose to expand regionalism with the BBIN forum. The PM also looked beyond SAARC to revive the moribund BIMSTEC regional forum that brings together five South Asian countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka) and two South East Asian countries (Myanmar and Thailand).

That it is not invited to the PM's oath-taking ceremony on Thursday does not mean Pakistan will disappear from India's foreign policy agenda. During the last few years, Modi has demonstrated his political will for either peace or war with Pakistan. If he travelled to Lahore on short notice at the end of 2015, he was ready to attack a terror camp at Balakot in February 2018. Modi will have an opportunity to engage Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan at a Central Asian summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan next month. Any productive meeting with the Pakistani leadership needs significant preparation and hopefully there are back channel conversations underway. While Pakistan to the west is a big challenge that needs to be carefully managed, the east is full of opportunities — marked by the economic resurgence of Bangladesh and Myanmar that form a bridge to the dynamic region of East Asia. Modi has talked the talk on BIMSTEC in the first term. He must now walk the walk, by committing substantive resources for the strengthening of BIMSTEC and removing the multiple obstacles within India for the rapid economic integration of the Bay of Bengal littoral.

## DISMAL SIGNS

With corporate earnings, investment and exports showing no signs of revival, new government has its task cut out

THE INITIAL SET of corporate results for the fourth quarter of 2018-19 seems to affirm the trend of anaemic economic activity. Revenue growth fell to a six quarter low of 10.7 per cent in Q4FY19, down from 20.1 per cent in the previous quarter, shows rating agency ICRA's analysis of 304 companies. In the case of consumer linked sectors, the slowdown is more severe. These numbers, indicative of a wider economic slowdown, are likely to weigh down GDP estimates for Q4FY19, to be released later this week by the Central Statistics Office (CSO).

Leading economic indicators suggest a broad-based slowdown in household demand. Rural wage growth, in both agricultural and non-agricultural occupations, continues to be subdued. Sales of two-wheelers and FMCG companies have been sluggish. And while bank lending is up, it is unlikely to have compensated for the collapse in the lending by NBFCs, which is likely to have impacted household demand for consumer durables. On the flip side, though, the softening of commodity prices did provide a marginal fillip to earnings. But, despite this, the interest coverage ratio, which essentially measures a firm's ability to repay its interest obligations, declined as interest costs grew at a much faster pace than profits. With corporate earnings, investment as well as exports showing no signs of a revival, the new government clearly has its task cut out.

The challenge of reviving growth in the immediate term is more complicated than is being appreciated. For one, the government has limited fiscal space. In the fourth quarter itself, government spending is likely to have been severely curtailed as it would have struggled to meet the fiscal deficit target owing to a shortfall in tax revenues. This suggests that the new government will now have to scale down its revenue growth projects in the new budget, leaving it with little space for a stimulus. And while the government can deviate from the path of fiscal consolidation, the move is likely to spook the bond market. This suggests that monetary policy may have to do the heavy lifting. As inflation is likely to remain muted for the foreseeable future, the monetary policy committee, which meets in the first week of June, may oblige by cutting rates. But the challenge is to ensure its transmission as lending rates tend to adjust quicker to monetary tightening than loosening.

## MONA LISA'S SMIRK

Germaine Greer thinks Leonardo Da Vinci's work lacks artistic merit. Does it matter if she's right?

IN CERTAIN CIRCLES — jaded college students, academics who don't get invited to TV studios, theatre actors who aspire to but have not yet achieved movie-star celebrity — there is no insult more ironically cutting than calling someone "mainstream". Germaine Greer's criticism of Leonardo Da Vinci's work in general, and the Mona Lisa and Last Supper, in particular, is more sophisticated than that. But only just. The moot question, however, is: Is Greer right?

The Mona Lisa, according to her, is a "half dead woman" and Da Vinci's depiction of Jesus and the apostle's breaking bread before the crucifixion is "sloppy". Greer recalled, speaking at the Hay Festival in Wales, feeling particularly annoyed at the gawking throng around the Mona Lisa at the Louvre, rather than the far superior portrait of Baldassare Castiglione by Raphael. Da Vinci's personality — "he was an entertainer. People loved his company, he was funny, he was spontaneous, he sang and accompanied himself on musical instruments" — not only made him the household name he is, it also "distracted" him from his art.

Greer's disappointment is two-fold: First, that people, philistines that they are, do not seem to see through the vacuity of Mona Lisa's smile. Second, Da Vinci himself is over-rated. Both arguments are made of contemporary figures as well (Shah Rukh Khan can't act, makes the wrong artistic choices). What's different about Greer is that she herself is something of a mainstream academic and writer, more people know her name than have read her books. She is no longer the outsider who, with the *Female Eunuch*, articulated a new and radical feminism. Perhaps people like Da Vinci's work precisely because of its simplicity, in parts, and his sloppiness with religious themes. Perhaps the myth of the man has indeed overtaken the work. And maybe those that manically click selfies at the Louvre are not all accomplished art critics. So what?



AMARTYA SEN

THE EXCITEMENTS OF the recent general elections are over and the results have been finalised. The totality of the lessons from the elections will, of course, take a long time to emerge with full clarity, but a few simple thoughts about the organisation and use of our electoral system seem immediate.

From the British, India has inherited a system of choosing the electoral winner on the basis of plurality — the candidate with most votes — who quite often does not have support from a majority of voters. The BJP won a majority of parliamentary seats, but it received only 37 per cent of the votes. Did the Opposition parties appreciate the difference between majority and plurality adequately?

Given the relative strength of the Bharatiya Janata Party, should there have been more alliances among the Opposition parties? Should the Congress have had more coordinated agreements with other anti-BJP parties, such as the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh? Should there have been an alliance between the Aam Aadmi Party and Congress in Delhi, or between the Congress and Prakash Ambedkar's party in Maharashtra? Should the Rashtriya Janata Dal in Bihar, which did make alliances, have gone a step further in not denying room for the youthful national leader, Kanhaiya Kumar, in Begusarai, without worrying about Kumar being a potential rival to the leadership of the 29-year-old RJD leader, Tejashwi Yadav (a consideration that, it is widely alleged, led the coalition to decide on fatally splitting the anti-BJP vote)? There are many such questions to ask, at the individual as well as aggregative level.

No less importantly, should the coalitions that actually emerged have worked towards an agreed vision, and not been satisfied merely with the fact that the parties are "all anti-BJP"? I have argued elsewhere (in an opinion piece in the *New York Times*, May 25) that while the parties against the BJP were vocal enough on their shared dislike of the party, there was relatively little discussion on the basic ideological differences between the BJP's perspective (particularly the philosophy behind the dominance of a religious identity — in this case, the "Hindu identity"), and the integrated vision of a common identity of Indians across the country (irrespective of religion). Indeed, the rea-

# Judging a victory

Because democracy demands more than the counting of votes

The BJP, the winner, has excellent grounds to be happy with the election results on May 23. And yet, the BJP leadership, and especially its highly talented and exceptionally ambitious top leader, Narendra Modi, have reasons to be disappointed by global reactions to the BJP victory. There has been widespread criticism in the news media across the world (from the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Guardian*, the *Observer*, *Le Monde*, *Die Zeit* and *Haaretz* to the BBC and CNN) of the ways and means of securing BJP's victory, including instigation of hatred and intolerance of groups of Indian citizens, particularly Muslims, who have every right to be treated with respect (as under the Gandhi-Tagore understanding).

soning behind the powerful Gandhi-Tagore-Nehru vision of a united India, which had contributed to keeping India together for decades, received rather little attention. A positive vision can play a constructive and inspiring role, going well beyond negotiated, possibly ad hoc agreements — what can be called, in Hegelian language, "negation of negation."

Turning now to the BJP, the winner, it has excellent grounds to be happy with the election results on May 23. And yet, the BJP leadership, and especially its highly talented and exceptionally ambitious top leader, Narendra Modi, have reasons to be disappointed by global reactions to the BJP victory. There has been widespread criticism in the news media across the world (from the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Guardian*, the *Observer*, *Le Monde*, *Die Zeit* and *Haaretz* to the BBC and CNN) of the ways and means of securing BJP's victory, including instigation of hatred and intolerance of groups of Indian citizens, particularly Muslims, who have every right to be treated with respect (as under the Gandhi-Tagore understanding).

Winning cannot be the only concern in fighting an election. It makes a big difference how the winners are viewed in the post-election world. A well-wisher of the BJP would have had reasons to desire more than just a win for her favourite party.

What about the people at large? India is, in many ways, a successful democracy, which — until recently — had an excellent reputation for treating different political parties with symmetry and equity. However, in the 2019 elections, there have been reasonably convincing allegations of unequal favours received by the ruling party. These concerns have been partly related to the assessment of some of the decisions taken by the Election Commission, but they relate also to the unequal opportunities offered to the different parties by state-owned institutions (for example, state-owned Doordarshan gave the BJP about double the broadcast time in the crucial pre-electoral season, compared with what it offered to the Congress).

If India has to retain — and in fact regain — its past reputation for offering a level playing field to different political parties, these asymmetries would have to be removed, which is particularly important when the favoured

player happens to be the ruling party in office, which appoints the administrative heads of state-owned enterprises, and which also has a bigger role in the appointment of the Election Commission.

Going further, the amassing of assets useable in elections of the different political parties has clearly been extraordinarily unequal in 2019. The BJP had many times more money and resources for electoral use than all its rivals, including the Congress. The need for effective rules and regulations for reducing such huge asymmetries is very strong indeed. This is important not only for the democratic credibility of India, but also for the way the victory of the electoral winners is judged, globally as well as locally.

India does not lack people with moral courage. Even though the resistance to injustice — economic, political, social and cultural — is easiest to articulate during electoral campaigning, the fight for fairness and justice is, in many ways, a continuous phenomenon in our country. But so are the attempts by the government to repress resistance. New restrictions have been imposed on the liberty of speech, which has included the imprisoning of people by branding dissent from the government's super-nationalist beliefs as "sedition". New categories of offence have also been invented, such as being described as an "urban Naxalite" on the basis of utterances that the government determines are dangerous, leading to house arrest or worse. The Indian courts have often intervened to restrain the government, but given the slow speed of legal processes in India, relief — even when it came — has taken a long time. And a number of intellectuals have been murdered for expressing views that the Hindutva movement finds objectionable.

The credit that the ruling party can get for winning the elections is seriously compromised by such repression. The victorious side has to consider what kind of regime it wants to run — and how it is viewed across the world. It is not hard to appreciate that democracy demands more than the counting of votes.

The writer, a Nobel laureate in economics, is Thomas W. Lamont University Professor and professor of economics and philosophy at Harvard University



SHAH ALAM KHAN

IN HIS VICTORY speech at the BJP headquarters following the enormous Lok Sabha mandate, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that there are only two castes in India now — the poor and those who will alleviate poverty. Even before the reverberations of his words died down, a young doctor from Mumbai, Payal Tadvai of the BYL Nair Hospital committed suicide. She was allegedly facing persistent caste-based harassment from her seniors at the hospital. Tadvai had taken admission in the MD gynaecology course in May 2018 through the caste-based quota. Despite what the PM says, caste continues to be the horrific reality of Indian society.

Casteism spills over into our offices, hospitals, factories, business establishments and even educational institutions. Tadvai joins a host of underprivileged scholars who have committed suicide for exactly the same reason — Madari Venkatesh, Rohith Vemula, Senthil Kumar and Pulyala Raju to name just a few. Caste-based discrimination in institutions of higher education needs to be addressed urgently. In March 2010, an MBBS student, Bal Mukund Bharti, a Dalit from UP and a student of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, committed suicide following casteist slurs. Another AIIMS MBBS student, Anil Kumar Meena committed suicide in March 2012 because he felt harassed for his backward background. We are told that Bharti was the first Dalit from his village in 50

## THE SHADOW OF CASTE

Mumbai doctor's suicide highlights, once again, discrimination in medical institutions

Social institutions and systems have rotted under the burden of caste. Educational institutions have been the ivory towers of knowledge for the upper caste and the rich. With affirmative action in the form of caste-based reservations, this hegemony has been challenged to a significant extent, and hence the urgency to bring back "order" through harassment, disgrace and coercion.

years to enter an elite institute like AIIMS. The problem of caste-based discrimination was so acute in AIIMS that, in 2007, a committee was formed under the chairmanship of Sukhadin Thorat to look into the harassment of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) students.

The Thorat Committee report eventually served as a milestone in efforts to identify caste-based discrimination in higher educational institutions. It revealed that about 69 per cent of the SC/ST students reported that they did not receive adequate support from teachers and about half of them cited inaccessibility and indifference as reasons for less contact with teachers. About one-third gave caste background as reason for avoidance by the teachers, and 72 per cent of SC/ST students mentioned some kind of discrimination during teaching sessions. About 76 per cent of students mentioned that their papers were not examined properly and 88 per cent mentioned that they got fewer marks than they expected. About 84 per cent of these students mentioned that evaluation in practical and viva was unfair and 85 per cent of them mentioned that the SC students didn't receive enough time with the examiners, as compared to higher caste students. Besides, a large chunk of SC/ST students experienced social isolation and discrimination during their stay in the hostels at AIIMS. The report also delineated the discrimination felt by SC/ST faculty

members employed at AIIMS, Delhi.

Adjacent to AIIMS is another important teaching hospital, the Vardhman Mahavir Medical College (part of the Safdarjung Hospital). Here, caste-based discrimination was reported by 25 SC students who were failed en masse in physiology. The matter was investigated by the Mungekar Committee in 2012. The committee submitted its report to the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) stating that the hostility of the college authorities towards SC/ST students was so strong that the latter always had to approach the information commission with applications under the Right to Information (RTI). The committee recommended a compensation of Rs 10 lakh for the harassed students, besides recommending suspension of the concerned faculty and administrative staff.

Educational institutions have been the preserves of the upper caste and the rich. With affirmative action in the form of caste-based reservations, this hegemony has been challenged to a significant extent, and hence the urgency to bring back "order" through harassment, disgrace and coercion. Besides legislative orders and punitive action against the perpetrators, a long-term solution would be to capture the social space for more affirmative measures.

The writer is professor of orthopaedics, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi



## MAY 29, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

**MISHRA MURDER CASE**  
A CLOSE EXAMINATION of the evidence secured from key witnesses in the L N Mishra murder case shows that the CBI case is riddled with holes and inconsistencies. For instance, two of the key witnesses put up by the CBI have already withdrawn their testimony. The chargesheet filed by the CBI in the court of a special magistrate in Patna in November 1975, implicating some Anand Marg workers in the murder of Mishra, is based on the statements of two witnesses, Madan Mohan Srivastava alias Visveshwaranand and Vikram. The third material witness is Girjanandan Prasad. Vikram and Girjanandan Prasad have since given

statements that they were tortured into giving statements.

**UP HARTAL**  
ALL COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS came to a halt in Lucknow and other important towns of Uttar Pradesh today as the confrontation between the government and traders escalated. Hartal was observed in 16 major towns including Kanpur, Moradabad, Varanasi and Allahabad, in protest against the police firing. The protesters demanded suspension of the officers responsible, a judicial inquiry into Saturday's incident and abolition of the sales tax promised by the government in its election manifesto.

**NUCLEAR-FREE ZONE**  
WHILE NEW DELHI withheld its official comment on the reported US moves for a nuclear-free zone in South Asia to be guaranteed by the US, the Soviet Union and China, informal soundings in Delhi showed that India will reject the move. *The New York Times* quoted US officials as saying that the US president, Jimmy Carter, is expected to discuss with the Soviet President, Leonid Brezhnev, a proposal to include India and Pakistan in a nuclear-free zone. The proposal has not come as a surprise in Delhi. When the minister of external affairs, A B Vajpayee, visited Washington last month, the US administration had tossed the idea.

# Federalism for the city

In his second term, Prime Minister Modi can ensure better urbanisation through greater devolution of power, and finances, to urban local bodies



**CITIES AT CROSSROADS**  
BY ISHER JUDGE  
AHLUWALIA

AS PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi begins his second term with an even larger political mandate, it is time to reflect on what should be the priorities in fixing our cities. The scale of the challenge is massive whether we look at the availability of clean drinking water, unpolluted air, quality of public transport, traffic management and parking, integrated planning of transport and land use, law and order, management and safe disposal of solid waste that is generated, treatment of waste water and effluents, and affordable housing. In short, the state of public service delivery in our cities is abysmal and what is more, the cities are financially broke and cannot address these problems on their own.

Do cities matter? The short answer is, very much so. Rapid economic growth in any country is associated with a decline in the share of agriculture and increase in the shares of manufacturing and services in its GDP, and this involves greater urbanisation. India's experience in the last two decades has been no different, except that the urbanisation associated with rapid growth has been largely unplanned, much more so than in most other developing countries aspiring to middle-income status. Going forward, as we try to achieve rapid growth which is necessary to provide growing employment opportunities for our young work-force, we need to position our cities as drivers of the structural transformation of the Indian economy.

UN projections suggest that India's urban population will increase from 461 million in 2018 to 877 million in 2050, with India contributing the largest share of global urban population growth from 2018 to 2050. Our cities will have to provide much better quality of life if we want to create a climate which will attract investment. For this, we not only need more and better urban infrastructure but also significantly better institutions, which can manage the infrastructure and deliver public services of high quality.

State governments have the principal responsibility for urban development. But in order to deliver, they can and should ensure that city governments are sufficiently empowered to get the job done. This requires strengthening the finances of these governments, building their capacity to take on the new challenges that urbanisation brings, and providing an enabling environment through legislative and administrative support. Most state governments have been failing in this respect.

In our federal system, a state government has the power to notify when an area is to have a statutory urban local government and what form it would take — a municipal corporation, a municipal council or a nagar panchayat (when an area is in transition from rural to urban). The 74th Constitutional Amendment of 1992 gives the state governments the power to transfer a set of 18 legitimate municipal functions to the municipal governments and also devolve finances to them to enable them to perform these functions and organise the delivery of the public services.

State governments were happy to devolve most, though not all, of the 18 functions to the urban local governments. Town planning — the golden goose — was not typically transferred. Also, action on devolution of funds to urban local governments has been unpredictable and hopelessly inadequate. As one municipal commissioner put it to me, "We do not function as city governments but as urban local bodies. We are



CR Sasikumar

accountable to our residents for service delivery but we are not empowered to deliver the services". State governments have to accept this failure and take corrective action.

A major opportunity to improve municipal finances was lost at the time of the GST-related constitutional amendments in 2016. In moving to a more efficient GST regime, the Centre and the states agreed that GST would be a dual levy on a common base by subsuming most of the consumption taxes imposed by the Centre, states and local governments. Ideally, they should have agreed that GST revenue should be shared among all the three levels of government, since the independent power of local governments to raise their own sources of revenue has now been appropriated by the Centre and states. But the third tier was kept out of the deal. This is in contrast with many countries around the world which have provided their urban local governments access to revenue from goods and services tax and income tax. The Government of India must work towards amending the Constitution to undo the injustice that has been meted out to local governments.

In fiscal devolution, the talk of cooperative federalism stops at the level of the state government. Over the years, the state governments have claimed and successfully obtained a larger share in the joint revenues of the Centre and the states. The Fourteenth Finance Commission increased the share of states in the revenue pool from 32 per cent to 42 per cent. By contrast, municipal revenues/expenditures in India have been stagnating at around 1 per cent of GDP for over a decade. This is much lower, for example, than the municipal revenues/expenditures in Brazil which account for 7.4 per cent of GDP and 6 per cent in South Africa. The 15th Finance Commission has an opportunity to prescribe grants from the Centre to the urban local governments.

In the past decade or so, the Centre has come to recognise that urbanisation is set to accelerate with India's rapid growth. First, the UPA government launched the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) and Rajiv Awas Yojana as centrally sponsored schemes. The NDA government followed up with a number of their own urban development missions like Swachh Bharat, AMRUT, Smart Cities Mission, and Housing for All. These national initiatives have provided some finance and

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work in these elections; instead, the chemistry of inclusive politics will work. The results have proved Amit Shah is right," the story says. It adds that from the Jana Sangh days to the present times the BJP and its leadership have been very much clear about "no compromise on national security". It further asserts that PM Modi follows "the same line and is determined to resolve the problem. However, some hostile forces in the country support terrorism and the 'Tukde-Tukde gang' but the voters have now outrightly rejected all such elements. Now, this is an appropriate time to eliminate such anti-national forces".

## ROLE OF RSS

AN ARTICLE BY the RSS-affiliated Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh's (BMS) president, Saji Narayanan CK, in *Organiser*, highlights the role of the RSS behind BJP's continuation in power under Narendra Modi's leadership. The article reads that it is not an accident of history that a new political leadership under Modi came to power in 2014 and got even more strengthened in the 2019 elections. "It is a manifestation of the national *asmita* (identity) in the field of governance. It was scripted by the culmination of the activities of the Sangh movement working for the

resurgence of India for the last 94 years in various facets of the national life," states the article. It adds that Nehru and his inheritors — who were symbolic of Indians in appearance and Europeans in thinking — failed to shape the destiny of this nation. "It is this background of history that has paved the entry of Shri Narendra Modi in national politics like a tsunami," claims the article.

The article cites two major reasons for the nationalist forces coming back with more strength. "One, the inspiring political leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, two, the silent cadre work of RSS and its associated organisations which have their roots in every nook and corner of India. There is not even a weak substitute for it at present. It gives the indication that the new change will continue in future too," the article claims. The article then goes on to claim that, "The Sangh and its movements are committed to achieve the ultimate glory of this nation. Hence, this God-given political opportunity should not be wasted on petty things".

## IDEA OF BHARAT

IN THE CONTEXT of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to BJP workers and the nation after registering victory in the general elections for the 17th Lok Sabha, an

also nudged the state governments to take up the challenges of urban development, and all this made some difference.

An important point to note is that the national missions could deliver only where the state governments were pro-active in bringing about the change. While being aspirational and providing strategic leadership, these missions put forth only limited funds and rightly expected the state governments to raise the rest by either mobilising their own financial resources or by attracting public-private partnerships. Only a few state governments have been able to come forward to realise the potential offered by the national missions. The missions played an additional role in igniting a competitive spirit among the state governments in the delivery of public services.

A major failing of the national missions has been that they have not addressed the issues of empowerment and devolution to the third tier. A simple solution would be for the Government of India to introduce an incentive grant system whereby states which devolve funds to some desired degree get to top up the financial grant from the Centre. This should be limited to second-tier cities, which are crucial to a new urbanisation thrust. Metropolitan cities need such grants much less, since states can help them raise resources by empowering them to unlock land value. They are also better placed to develop PPPs with viable revenue models to attract private funds.

Prime Minister Modi at the present juncture is in a unique position of having to work with a large number of BJP-controlled state governments. It is a valuable opportunity to grasp the bull by the horns politically, and get the states to go for empowerment of the third tier and also strengthen their finances through assured devolution.

Essentially, co-operative federalism needs to go deeper, below the state level. There are no shortcuts to improving the state of our cities. The state governments need to decentralise, devolve and empower the cities. We, as responsible citizens, need to engage with the government to find collective solutions while at the same time, holding the government accountable.

*The writer is chairperson, ICRIER, Delhi, and former chairperson of the high-powered expert committee on urban infrastructure and services*

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The British people are just as divided as their elected representatives. Constructing a majority does not seem possible through conventional politics."  
— THE INDEPENDENT

# Savarkar, the reformer

His crusade against caste discrimination and untouchability remains under-appreciated



VINAY NALWA

ONE OF THE most influential figures in modern Indian history, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, has often been demonised by his detractors who project him as a Hindu fundamentalist while his supporters often treat him as a Hindutva icon. However, one of the least discussed aspects of Savarkar's life pertains to his efforts as a social reformer, especially against caste discrimination and untouchability.

After undergoing nearly 15 years of torturous imprisonment in the Andamans, Savarkar focused on social reforms after his release. He wanted to eradicate the indigenous practices that were creating differences in Bharatiya society. Savarkar once said, "He who gives up verbosity and acts as per the principle of 'irrespective of whether others do it or not, as far as I am concerned, I will practice reform on a daily basis' alone is a true reformer." ('Hindutvache panchapran' or The Spirit of Hindutva; Samagra Savarkar Vangmaya, edited by SR Date, Vol. 3, p.75).

Savarkar was a strong critic of the caste system and ensured that children of the so-called lower castes attend school. He gave monetary incentives to their parents and distributed slate and chalk to children from these castes. Savarkar said, "Once the children are educated together, they will not observe caste hierarchy in later life. They will not feel the need to observe caste division. In addition, the government should abandon the title 'special schools for low caste children'. This very title creates a feeling of inferiority among children attending the school."

On Hindu festivals like Dussehra and Makar Sakranti, Savarkar would visit houses, accompanied by people from different castes, and distribute traditional sweets. He himself brought up a girl child from a former untouchable community and taught people from untouchable communities to read, write and recite the Gayatri mantra.

In 1930, Savarkar started the first pan-Hindu Ganeshotsav. The festivities would be marked by 'kirtans' rendered by the so-called untouchables. Listeners from the so-called higher castes would garland those who rendered these devotional songs. Public lectures by women and inter-caste dining by women were special features of these festivities. Savarkar was also behind many temple movements of Maharashtra, where the untouchables were encouraged

to pray, recite Sanskrit hymns and conduct "abhishek" of the Vishnu idol.

In 1931, the Patitpavan temple was established in Ratnagiri; it had on its trust, representation from all castes, including those from the erstwhile untouchable caste. Savarkar also organised community meals in some temples. The first community meal for women in Maharashtra was held in the Patitpavan temple on September 21, 1931. Around 75 women were present on the occasion. By 1935, this count had gone up to 400.

On May 1, 1933, Savarkar started a cafe for Hindus of all castes, including untouchables. This was the first pan-Hindu cafe in entire India. He had employed a person from the Mahar caste to serve food there. This was at a time when inter-caste dining was unthinkable.

Criticising the practice of caste being decided by birth, Savarkar said: "There is a belief that heredity, birth in a particular caste decides what qualities a person imbibes... A person who has no qualities of a Brahmin... whose seven generations have not shown any qualities expected of a Brahmin is called a Brahmin because one of his forefathers, maybe 70 generations ago, possessed those qualities. He or she has the privileges of a Brahmin simply because they are born in that family. And a person born to a family considered as a lower caste is an untouchable just because some of his forefathers 70 generations ago had performed a job that was considered lowly. This system of deciding caste by birth is so unjust, damaging and an hindrance to the progress of humanity." Savarkar argued that such a system should be abolished.

Savarkar also talked about the ways to abolish the caste system and untouchability. He said, "To achieve social revolution we first have to strike at the birth-based caste system and bridge the differences between the various castes" (Samagra Savarkar Vangmay; Part 3, page 641). In a letter to his brother Narayanrao on July 6, 1920, Savarkar wrote "I feel the need to rebel against caste discrimination and untouchability as much as I feel the need to fight against foreign occupation of India".

In 1931 Savarkar wrote a song related to the entry of erstwhile untouchables into temples. It can be translated as "Let me see the idol of God, let me worship God." It is said that tears rolled down Savarkar's eyes while he was writing the song.

There are several aspects of this great revolutionary, reformer and visionary which demand greater attention. Being an ideologue of Hindu philosophy is just one aspect of his life.

*The writer has a Phd in sociology and is a fellow at IVSK, Delhi. The views expressed are personal*

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### VOTE TO POWER

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Election is the ideology' (IE, May 28). It raises an important issue, that of authoritarianism sanctioned by democracy. But the answer appears on the opposite page, 'Note to the minority' (IE, May 28). The fact that two such divergent views co-exist, suggests the strength of Indian democracy.

RR Palsokar, Pune

### WHAT AILS THE LEFT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Left drift' (IE, May 27). In view of the Left Front's dwindling vote-share in successive elections and the marked decline in its cadre strength, a political alliance with the secular and democratic parties, including the Congress, was not a "political option but a necessity" for the parties that constitute the front. The failure of the left parties to realise that realpolitik can be different from political theory has made them political non-entities.

SS Paul, Nadia

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Left drift' (IE, May 27). There are more "poor" in India than "Hindus". India remains a fertile ground for class politics. But the left has begun giving priority to caste politics more than class issues. This seems to have divided their base.

Suchak D Patel, Ahmedabad

### TASKS AHEAD

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Agenda No 1' (IE, May 24). Now that the elections are over, the government needs to pull up its socks in economic matters. Of utmost importance are reforms in the labour markets, speeding up asset resolutions in public sector banks, resolving the stress of NBFCs, alleviating farm distress and addressing the economic challenges created by the US-

### LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to [editpage@expressindia.com](mailto:editpage@expressindia.com) or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

Iran turmoil.

Bhoomi Keshwala, via e-mail

### CALL FROM FARMS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Farm opening' (IE, May 28). The welfare schemes offered by the NDA government in recent times, and no viable alternatives put forward by the Opposition, may have restrained people from voting against the BJP. But the party should not take farmers for granted. The government needs to ensure adequate irrigation in the dry season, proper crop insurance schemes and effective marketing mechanisms. It must encourage food processing industries as well as build forward chains with exporters.

Chanchal Nandy, Kolkata