



Values to live by

PM Modi's call for inclusiveness in the Maldives and Sri Lanka is relevant in India too

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Male this month, his first trip abroad after his re-election, he delivered a speech rich in meaningful metaphors to the Maldivian Parliament. He referred to the ties that bind India to the Maldives, and which could be extended to other maritime neighbours in the Indian Ocean as well. Pointing out that the waves that wash the Indian shores are the same as those that reach the shores of the Maldivian island chain, Mr. Modi called them "messengers" of peace, friendship and trust that exist between the two countries. Going beyond geographical proximity, the speech spelt out common interests in maritime cooperation, democracy, pluralism, climate change, and in battling the twin scourges of terrorism and radicalisation. The agreements announced during the visit followed these themes as well: including MoUs on hydrography cooperation and sharing 'white shipping' information, and India's decision to fund a conservation project for Male's Friday Mosque built with coral in 1658. The Prime Minister expressed a resolve for the common fight against terrorism and radicalisation, which he called the "litmus test for today's leadership", and said "state sponsorship of terrorism" remains the biggest threat to all humanity today. On his next stop, for a few hours in Colombo, he spelt out the same message, making a detour after landing to visit the St. Anthony's Shrine in Kochchikade, one of the sites of the Easter Sunday terror attacks that left more than 250 dead.

Mr. Modi's twin visits underlined several initiatives that he had promoted in his first tenure, including his commitment to "Neighbourhood First" and "Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)" for the Indian Ocean Region. Going forward, it is necessary to ensure that these themes receive constant attention through steady communication, and that relations are not allowed to fray as they did in the first few years of that tenure. The next imperative is the delivery of all projects that India has committed to, on time and within the budgets estimated, an area where India's reputation has suffered in the past. Finally, Mr. Modi chose to speak in Male about two important liberal values as common causes: democracy, which he called the Maldives a "glowing example of", and inclusiveness. He repeated his motto, *Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas aur Sabka Vishwas* (together with all, for the development of all and with the trust of all), and his outreach to the mosque in the Maldives and the church in Sri Lanka reinforced the words. These words must be buttressed by the power of example, as India's neighbours will see whether the same values that India hopes to see in its neighbourhood are implemented within the country.

Starting at three

Extending the right to education to younger children would be a welcome step

India's far-sighted Right to Education Act is making slow progress in mainstreaming equity, in the absence of a strong political commitment in several States. The proposal to extend its scope to younger children through early childhood education is, however, wholly positive. The move suggested in the draft National Education Policy to put children three years and older in a stimulating nursery environment is a welcome logical measure. The pedagogical view is that the pre-school phase is crucial to stimulate a child's curiosity and help her prepare for schooling at age six. The NEP proposal to infuse the existing child development schemes, which are primarily nutrition-oriented, with a learning component is in line with this thinking on holistic development. An extension of the RTE would be a big step forward, but in the absence of measures that will deepen equity, the law cannot be transformative. The Centre has to guarantee that in its totality, the Right to Education will encompass all schools bar those catering to minorities. This is necessary to achieve its moral goal of bringing quality schooling to all in the 6-14 age group; adding the early childhood section, now under the Ministry of Women and Child Development, will then be meaningful. Unfortunately, the evidence indicates that only 12.7% schools comply with the law's requirements, and at the pace seen since RTE became law in 2010, it will take decades to achieve full coverage.

Giving all children aged three and above the right to an education can become a reality only if the state is willing to live up to its promise of devoting more financial resources. An expenditure of 6% of GDP on education could have transformed the sector, given the large wealth generated since economic liberalisation. But far less is spent – for instance, 2.7% in 2017-18. The last years have cost millions a brighter future, but the draft NEP provides an opportunity to make amends. Bringing more children into the formal stream needs a well-thought-out road map. The Centre has to play a leadership role to ensure that States, some of which have done a poor job of implementing the RTE Act, are persuaded to implement urgent reform. The NEP's proposal to have well-designed school complexes, where pre-primary to secondary classes will be available, is in itself an ambitious goal that will require mission-mode implementation. Shortcomings in anganwadi centres must be addressed in the expansion plan. State governments will have to fill teacher vacancies and ensure that the training of recruits is aligned to scientific, child-oriented teaching methods. Education reform is vital to prepare for a future in which cutting-edge skills will be necessary for continued economic progress. Changes to the RTE Act that will prepare all children for a more productive schooling phase can help make India's educational system morally fair and more egalitarian.

A summary of fears and possibilities

Why the Narendra Modi government should be cautious about a majoritarian agenda



HARSH MANDER

In the heady first flush of a newly elected government, commentators often compose, as usually unsolicited counsel, optimistic lists of what the government should do in its first 100 days in office.

Ideologically-driven signals

I am in an entirely different frame of mind after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's emphatic victory in India's 2019 midsummer election. Instead of optimism I experience a mounting disquiet. This deepens when I observe Mr. Modi's choices for India's Home Minister and for the Minister for Human Resource Development.

I worry when against a backdrop of violent cow vigilantism, Animal Husbandry and Dairying is separated from the Ministry of Agriculture and carved into a separate ministry stewarded by three Ministers who have a history of hate speech and hard-line Hindutva politics.

The messaging is abundantly clear. The signals are of a much more openly ideologically-driven government than even the first tenure of Mr. Modi, one determined to advance its agenda of hard-line majoritarianism at all costs. This will play out variously in its approach to fraught questions such as citizenship, Kashmir, Hindutva terror, the Ram temple, and dissent. The government will feel mandated to rewrite history, decarinate left-liberal universities, abandon the scientific temper, and amend cow protection laws to

make these more draconian.

A possible line of action

Therefore, my list here is different. It is of what I hope this government will not do, but intensely dread that it will. I do not fear that the letter of India's Constitution will be changed. But what will be torn to fragments would be its practice. I fear, first, an even more frightening rise in hate speech; and the hate violence that this will instigate and encourage. Lynching should not become an indelible part of the broken social contract, pushing Muslims further into underserved ghettos transacting their lives in everyday dread.

I fear that the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam will manufacture statelessness at a scale no country has known. There is no chance of Bangladesh accepting these so-called 'stateless persons'; so, they will continue to live in Assam: some in concentration camp-like detention centres, but most stripped of rights in local communities. This will create a Rohingya-like situation, with widespread social violence and routinised state repression. The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, if passed, will ensure that excluded Bengali Hindus will be absorbed as citizens, thereby barring only Muslims from citizenship. This will create a frightening cleavage between communities, reminiscent of Partition, and will be the most decisive death-blow to the Constitution of which the centre-piece is the idea of equal citizenship to people of every faith.

The suffering to millions of Assam's most disadvantaged peoples will then be spread to other parts of India, beginning with Bengal, where the lethal combination of the NRC and the Citizenship Bill will push many millions of India's Muslims into the vortex of dread



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about their futures as Indian citizens, crushed by merciless and partisan state institutions.

Just as a spurious (and unconstitutional) link of citizenship with religion would be created, another bogus link of religion with terror could be re-established. All cases of Hindutva terror would be white-washed and alleged perpetrators such as Pragya Thakur and killers of rationalists such as M.M. Kalburgi and progressive journalists such as Gauri Lankesh will be freed from any taint, and the arrest of Muslim youth for terror will mount once again.

The three Ministers who head the newly created Animal Husbandry Ministry could design even more stringent laws against cow slaughter, with draconian punishments and the dilution of evidentiary standards. This would further encourage cow vigilante groups to extort and lynch Muslims and Dalits. Impoverished Muslim dairy farmers such as in Mewat and Uttar Pradesh, will be forced to abandon dairying, but will find it hard to survive with any other livelihood. Dalits will struggle to look for work which does not require them to skin cattle. The agrarian economy will flounder further. Tribal, Dalit and Muslim communities will lose access to their only source of cheap protein, as beef eating (and even eating meat of

Back to Kashmir with an open heart

Any delay in holding Assembly elections in the State will only deepen the sense of alienation



V. SUDARSHAN

Before the 2019 general election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted that the problem in Jammu and Kashmir has been kept confined to "two-and-a-half districts" and that the panchayat polls (December 2018) were an indication of the enthusiasm in the State for democratic processes. It is surprising that he has been able to make this claim unchallenged. No one asked him which seven-and-a-half districts in the Valley are shining examples of a problem being satisfactorily solved. It is a kind of 'Alice in Wonderland' syndrome. Given the nature of prime ministerial interviews, often minutely scripted and choreographed, his advisers also seem to be suffering from this syndrome, characterised by a significant distortion of reality. The attempt to put off the Assembly elections till after the Amarnath yatra is a piece of this distortion.

Beyond the lockdown

Consider these developments in the State. On April 4, over a month-and-a-half after the Pulwa-

ma attack (in February), an announcement was made that the National Highway between Baramulla and Udhampur would be closed to civilian traffic for two days a week to facilitate convoy movements. It did not get the attention it deserved in the national media, but many security planners were agast.

The highway is a lifeline for the local population, with many later-al roads and passes through more than two-and-a-half districts. The armed forces are so heavily deployed and the necessity for supplies and replenishments so constant that they use the roads more than two days in a week. If the ban now stands lifted, it was because it is untenable.

A sense of alienation

Like Alice in the Hall of Mirrors, Mr. Modi has presented us an illusion. He has slipped into the habit of telling various interviewers the official version of the way people in J&K are warming up to elections. He told one: "You have seen the peaceful manner in which panchayat elections (December 2018) were conducted in the Valley. It has enthused us and shown the love of common Kashmiris for democracy." To another he pointed out: "Local-level elections were not held for many years in the Srinagar Valley. Earlier governments were obstructions. Right now we



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have conducted elections; 75% of the polling took place and there was not a single incident of violence. Hundreds of people were killed in panchayat elections in West Bengal, but there was not a single incident in Kashmir. Are conditions bad in Bengal or in Kashmir?"

The panchayat polls, held over as many as seven phases, were marked by the absence of the mainstream political parties such as the Congress or the National Conference or the Peoples Democratic Party. It is not prudent to interpret the enthusiasm here and project it on to the Assembly elections.

A parsing of the panchayat poll figures also shows a different reality, marked by astoundingly low polling in many wards, no representatives in hundreds of other wards, overall something that was

buffaloes) will become too high risk an enterprise for poor communities.

The Kashmir Valley would burn with an even more muscular militarist approach to protests. But these smouldering fires could explode into terminal explosions of public rage if the Central government persists with its perilous resolve to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution which accords a special status to Jammu and Kashmir, and Article 35A which flows from this to enable it to sustain the demographic character of the State.

The Central government may use the pathway of legislation to pave the way for the building of a Ram temple in Ayodhya at the very spot where the Babri Masjid was demolished. The communal triumphalism which would accompany this could lead to a rash of anti-Muslim violence in every corner of the country like a raging forest-fire in a dry jungle, as in 1992 after the demolition of the Babri Masjid.

A relook at history

There could be a massive project to rewrite textbooks country-wide, to plant the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's (RSS's) version of history in literally millions of young minds. Ancient India will become a golden land in which every scientific accomplishment of the 21st century was already anticipated and achieved. Brahmanical violence against Dalits and Buddhists will be air-brushed. Medieval India will become homogenised as an era of unmitigated darkness, in which Muslim rulers oppressed their defenceless Hindu subjects and subdued their religion and culture. India's freedom struggle will discover many unknown Hindutva patriots, and others like Sardar Patel, Lal Bahadur Shastri, and even Mahatma Gandhi and B.R.

reiterated more effectively in the Lok Sabha election.

In the parliamentary constituencies of Baramulla, Srinagar and Anantnag, voter turnout dipped while in the Shopian and Pulwama areas there was hardly any enthusiasm. At dozens of booths no one turned out to vote, the most dismal voting figures since the late 1980s. That's how far back Mr. Modi's policies have set the clock. Not the best advertisement for a problem that is confined merely to two-and-a-half districts.

Worse, this low turnout was not the result of separatists trying to enforce a boycott. All of the Hurriyat leaders have been taken out of the reckoning. As there was not much violence, militants were not out in strength in trying to intimidate people from voting. The people were simply not interested in voting. A great sense of alienation and a rejection of democratic process alone explains this abysmal turnout.

Arresting the drift

Though the Prime Minister often says that he has taken the high road of his predecessor Atal Bihari Vajpayee (recall the former Prime Minister's 'Insaniyat, Jamhooriyat, Kashmiriyat' formulation) there is little evidence of this on the ground and in the minds of Kashmiris. Only if the stage is set for an

Ambedkar will be recast as Hindutva icons. Gandhiji's lifelong struggle for Hindu-Muslim unity and his assassination for this reason in the hands of a Hindutva ideologue will be erased from history.

Progressive thought and dissent in universities will die. Dissenting social movements and civil society institutions will be starved of funds and criminalised. Every public institution including the higher civil services (through lateral entry), institutions such as the Lokpal, the Central Bureau of Investigation, the National Investigation Agency, and even the judiciary will be packed with ideological sympathisers. Even the armed forces won't remain unaffected. Labour, land acquisition and environmental laws and banking regulations will all be 'reformed' to benefit selected big business houses. The media will become even more pliant in its abject metamorphosis into cheerleaders of the government, and its majoritarian and pro-business policies.

We can debate the reasons why so many Indian voters chose Mr. Modi. But there can be no doubt that Mr. Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party view the mandate as one for consolidating the master plan of the RSS – the ideological mentor of the BJP – and thereby changing India forever.

My wish-list for the new government, therefore, is not of what it should do, but what it should not do. If any or all of this is what the new Narendra Modi-Amit Shah government actually accomplishes, then the country we give our children will no longer be a place of freedom and justice, or even ordinary kindness. I have very little hope, but I would be overjoyed if I am proved wrong.

Harsh Mander is a human rights worker, writer and teacher

early Assembly election can something be salvaged. By not holding Assembly elections soon, the two-and-a-half district problem is not going to be halved. The bulk of the Indian Army is not deployed in West Bengal because of some trifling two-and-a-half district problem. It is deployed in Kashmir. If the problem was indeed so small, it should have been easy enough to have held the Lok Sabha and the Assembly elections simultaneously in J&K. The results of the Lok Sabha election have confirmed the deep political divisions.

Yet now is the time to hold Assembly elections. It is easy enough to find reasons not to hold polls till an option suitable to New Delhi emerges: it is easy enough to cite the "tourism season" and the Amarnath yatra to put off the decision till November, when the capital shifts to Jammu. And so on. In the 1990s, when Governor's Rule was imposed for nearly seven years, militancy soared. The longer the decision is put off, the more young and educated people, who are already disillusioned with the way things are going in that area, are going to drift towards militancy. Now that the Prime Minister has made a conciliatory start, he should extend the same sense of inclusiveness to the Kashmir Valley, and begin anew.

sudarshan.v@thehindu.co.in

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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GDP over-estimation

The former Chief Economic Adviser's startling revelation (Page 1, June 12) that GDP figures from 2011-17 were overstated – when growth was actually 4.5% – is a severe indictment of both the UPA and the NDA governments, but more the latter. This was apparently done to show that the economy was doing all right when the situation was not as bright as it was made out to be. This flies in the face of the government trumpeting its achievements and claiming that the country was the fastest growing economy. The sour note is that the former CEA took such a long time to come out with this when he should have done so while in office.

V. PADMANABHAN, Bengaluru

■ Mr. Subramanian's argument needs to be

debated in order to come to an acceptable appraisal of the economy. In the recent past, there has been debate on the methodology adopted in estimating growth rate. Contradictory data relating to the growth rate only create confusion and erode our confidence. The unprecedented rise in unemployment, a fall in industrial production and manufacturing and the alarming issue of non-performing assets can all affect the growth engine. The government needs to take appropriate policy measures and in a transparent manner.

V.V.K. SURESH, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh

■ It is often said that if a group of five economists get together, they will each come out with six different opinions. Therefore, Mr. Subramanian's "revelation" should not be a cause for surprise. The irony is that

during his tenure as the CEA, he "failed" to notice this irregularity. That such over-estimation happened under the watch of Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister – also an economist of repute – makes the issue more intriguing. The common man hardly understands the significance of GDP to an economy, leave alone getting to the roots of methodology or changes in it to estimate the GDP. It would be a pity if he is taken for granted and fed with imaginary figures to make him believe that we are a buoyant economy. Any government will only be willing to project a rosy picture of the economy. However, the reputation and credibility of economists would be under stress if they are inclined to tow the line of the government of the day, ignoring prescribed rules of computing economic data, which is also an unethical act. When there are such

variations advanced by different economists, one wonders how the budgeted estimates would prove effective in a large economy such as India's. Instead of attempting to come up with a defence, the government would do well to revisit the tenuous link between the estimate and reality.

V. SUBRAMANIAN, Chennai

The classroom today

The article, "Truth, technology and the teacher" (OpEd page, June 12), should be read by all those who are involved in making the children of India responsible and better citizens. Today, children, especially those of impressionable age, face a difficult time sorting fact from fiction. As for teachers, they are slowly becoming robotic. Smart boards can probably help supplement a teacher's work but cannot make him a smart teacher. It

is no surprise that children are unable to face the real world, as well-grounded and knowledgeable individuals.

N. NAGARAJAN, Secunderabad

■ There is a misconception that educational technology is the panacea for all shortcomings in the achievement of educational goals. Under this false notion, effective teaching can said to be accomplished through the use of technological gadgets, with most private educational institutions vying with one another in advertising their 'smart' classrooms. No doubt technological gadgets such as radio, television, computer and the Internet can enhance learning and be valuable adjuncts to the teacher. But all these can only supplement a teacher's work and cannot supplant him. Ultimately, it is the teacher

who has to plan, decide and use the most effective tool in his or her teaching. Unfortunately, teachers are being marginalised. Finally, even parents who always dream of instant results as far as their children are concerned have more and complete faith in the 'drill master' in coaching centres than the regular classroom teacher.

A. PANNEERSELVAM, Pudukcherry

Great humorist

In the passing of "Crazy" Mohan, Tamil Nadu has lost a redoubtable stage artist. His heart and soul were embedded in theatre first and cinema second. His "clean humour", a brand that will be hard to replicate, struck a deep chord with families.

MANI NATARAJAN, Chennai

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Navigations in Bishkek

The regional aspirations of Central Asian countries contradict India's goals



P. STOB DAN

At the 19th Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, India will have to navigate between two contradictory imperatives. While on the one hand it must act as a willing partner of regional cooperation led by China and Russia, on the other it must avoid being seen as a part of the 'anti-American gang'. It could also be seen as a paradox that India wants to fight against terrorism through a body that includes states that pose the biggest threats to Indian security.

Trade and terrorism

In Bishkek, Russia and Central Asian countries are likely to express "broad support" for China in its escalating tariff fight against the U.S. India is equally concerned about this trade war, but it is unclear whether it will join the others in slamming U.S. protectionism. New Delhi is seemingly confident of dealing with the U.S. without necessarily supporting China. For Chinese President Xi Jinping, whipping up anti-Americanism serves to stave off mounting opposition against his anti-corruption campaign and concentration of power. It is also notable that all SCO members barring India are enthusiastic supporters of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The summit is likely to have a muted agenda. SCO Secretary General Vladimir Norov has hinted at adopting documents to deepen multilateral cooperation and discussing non-conventional issues such as the fight against drug trafficking, cooperation in IT, environmental protection and healthcare. Terrorism is likely to be approached from the angle of improving the situation in Afghanistan and not necessarily of curbing the terrorist elements emanating from Pakistan. China is sure to offer its experiences of dealing with counter-terrorism, and the deradicalisation measures it has taken in Xinjiang. China's achievement in expanding its high-speed rail network to restate Xinjiang comes with enormous economic and security implications for Eurasia. China has also enhanced its military projection capabilities to meet any potential crises beyond its western frontiers.

Kyrgyzstan is the latest to create an



PM Modi and President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the SCO in China in 2018. • AP

international near-border trade centre in Alai district bordering China. If the regional countries switch to adopting the Chinese railway track gauge of 1,435 mm, then China will be successful in uniting Eurasia to challenge a united Europe. As the situation unfolds, China and Russia are adopting a new era of global strategic partnership. Where India fits in is the question.

On the sidelines

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with President Xi on the sidelines of the summit will be critical, especially as Mr. Modi is now being guided by his new External Affairs Minister. This meeting also comes after China's decision to withdraw its technical hold on listing Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The key concern for the two leaders is the impact of the U.S.-China trade war, but judging from the trends, both sides seem to be gearing up for a big settlement of pending bilateral issues.

Mr. Modi's meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin is important to save the S-400 contract deal against Washington's mounting threat to act under CAATSA. India and Russia have an ambitious economic agenda drawn up for 2019, and Mr. Putin might reiterate his invitation to Mr. Modi to be the chief guest at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok in September. It would be a good opportunity for India to explore Russia's Far East region not just for developing economic cooperation but also for exploring the prospects of transferring skilled labourers to offset Chinese demographic threats in the region. Russia is also keen that India joins the Arctic: Territory of Dialogue Forum.

India seems committed to work within the SCO to develop a 'cooperative and sustainable security' framework, to

make the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure more effective, and participate in efforts to bring about stability in Afghanistan. Even though the regional aspirations of Central Asian countries contradict India's goals, these countries back India's proposal for a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. Mr. Modi is certain to bring up India's resolve to fight terrorism by drawing the SCO's attention to the attacks in Pulwama and Sri Lanka. But China would not like India to use the SCO to name and shame Pakistan.

India may stick to its position on BRI, but accelerating progress on the International North-South Transport Corridor, the Chabahar Port, the Ashgabat Agreement and the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway should be very much on the cards.

The Pakistan policy

The India-Pakistan stalemate endures but the environment has changed a little since India's air strikes in Balakot. Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has been less belligerent, but whether the Pakistani military is taking tougher measures to curb anti-India terror groups is not known. Mr. Khan will have to demonstrate clearly if he wants Mr. Modi to give diplomacy a chance should they meet on the margins of the SCO meet. Mr. Modi might chart a new policy course in favour of normalising ties, especially since India has scored a point with Masood Azhar being designated as a global terrorist at the UNSC.

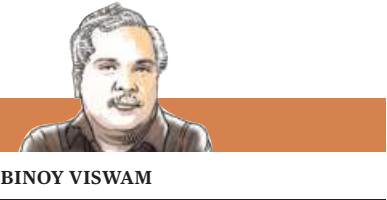
Pakistan places high hopes on the SCO to regulate key regional security issues (Afghanistan and Kashmir) even though the SCO discourages bilateral disputes to be raised. Its other agenda would be to sell the Gwadar Port as a potential passage to landlocked Central Asian states, besides promoting the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor for regional economic integration and security cooperation.

To be sure, none of the institutional-level measures including the joint SCO military exercises have so far entailed any satisfactory results in jointly fighting against terrorism. Nevertheless, the SCO is relevant for India to garner support for reforms of the UNSC to make the latter more representative and effective. India has been lending support to the member countries' candidatures for non-permanent membership of the UNSC for a long time.

Phunchok Stobdan served as India's Ambassador to the Republic of Kyrgyzstan

A mix of all shades of red

It is time for communist parties to start thinking seriously about reunification



BINOY VISWAM

The 2019 Lok Sabha election was undoubtedly a calculated rightist takeover of the country; a victory so massive that its magnitude was beyond the expectations of even some in the Sangh Parivar.

A well-oiled machine

It is important to acknowledge that this victory was no overnight incident. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its various outfits were working assiduously towards this from 2014. About 6,00,000 well-trained *swayamsevak*s were deployed at the grass-roots level. Social media was used to effectively communicate the Sangh Parivar's message. Thousands of WhatsApp groups worked overtime. A section of the print and visual media aided the RSS, its organisations and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). This well-thought-out strategy and well-oiled machine worked – sometimes visibly, sometimes invisibly – and carried the idea of majoritarian politics all over the country – to cities, towns and villages.

The Election Commission (EC) uses the words 'free and fair' to talk about elections, but these words have become meaningless today. The EC was brought to its knees during this election. Money and muscle power also played a very big role in the BJP's victory. Electoral bonds were seen as a way of bringing accountability and transparency in political funding. But the use of electoral bonds has opened the doors to corporate India to influence the political structure. It is estimated that the BJP was the biggest beneficiary of the electoral bond scheme this time; it reportedly bagged 95% of the funds.

Social engineering was the favourite theme in the 2014 election as well as in 2019. This time, this theme was applied at the micro level. Religion and caste factors were used in a very clever manner, while real issues like unemployment, price rise, the chaos caused by demonetisation, the problems in implementing the Goods and Services Tax, and atrocities against Dalits and minorities were not discussed. History has shown us that rulers who fail to fulfil their promises use war and pseudo-nationalism as their road to victory. This



S. JAMES

was true of this election too. The BJP focussed on the air strikes carried out by the Indian Air Force on Balakot as well as on the 2016 surgical strikes. Questions about the Rafale deal were papered over in the name of nationalism and defence preparedness of the country. Truth was the biggest causality in an enormous propaganda warfare.

Disunited Opposition

It was against all this that the Opposition had to fight. Ideologically, politically and organisationally, the BJP camp was well organised, whereas the Opposition camp was disunited. Even though almost all Opposition parties, including the Congress, talked about the necessity to defeat the BJP, none of them took the fight seriously on the battleground. Narrow partisan priorities and individual vanities overshadowed their electoral strategy. The Opposition parties were not concerned about securing the future of secularism in India. That the BJP increased its vote share from 2014 means that these Opposition parties need to seriously introspect. If these parties had been united, they could have won the battle. But due to lack of foresight, they missed the bus.

The Communist Party of India (CPI) had put forth the idea of a broad platform of secular, democratic forces and had campaigned for the same. But most of the secular and democratic political parties failed to understand the significance of such a platform. The experience in Tamil Nadu, where the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam took a commendable position to forge an alliance of like-minded parties, has lessons for the democratic forces.

The call of the CPI for the 'reunification of the Communist movement on a principled basis' has special significance now. Communists accept with humility that they are not such a big force to decide the destiny of the nation

single-handedly. They are aware of the serious setback faced in this election. The CPI and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) together have only five seats in the Lok Sabha, the lowest they have ever had in Parliament. Even in communist strongholds, both parties lost miserably. Naturally they are obliged to look deep into the causes of this shameful defeat. Communists are definitely not going to give up their struggles because of this electoral debacle. They have to be in the thick of things in the days to come – in all the mass struggles.

A glorious history

Communists have ample reason to be proud of their glorious history of struggle and sacrifice. It is the communists who put forth the agenda of complete independence before the freedom movement, for the first time. In free India, it is the communists who fought for the cause of the oppressed in all walks of life. It is the communists who first raised the slogan of bank nationalisation and called for the end of Privy Purse. It is the communists who fought against separatist forces in Jammu and Kashmir, and Punjab, for the unity of India. Hundreds of communists were martyred in those struggles. In Ayodhya, communists built the wall of love for communal harmony. Communists have championed the cause of secularism wherever and whenever communal forces have come out to undermine the Indian concept of unity in diversity. In the ideological fight against fascism, communists have always been in the forefront, even losing people like Govind Pansare. This great movement which was built on the blood, sweat and tears of the toiling masses cannot be brought down by an electoral defeat.

But the communist movement based on the science of Marxism has no right to close its eyes to the reasons for this setback. Ideologically, politically and organisationally it should introspect and it should do so keeping in mind a unified communist movement. More than five decades have passed since the Indian communist movement split. The communists have fought differently, the result of which is now before everyone to evaluate. At this juncture, the downtrodden who regard the red flag as the flag of hope urge all communist parties to think seriously about reunification.

Binoy Viswam is the secretary of the CPI National Council and Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha

SINGLE FILE

Three stalwarts of a State

Karnataka is poorer without A.K. Ramanujan, U.R. Ananthamurthy and Girish Karnad

DEVAKI JAIN



We have lost all three of them: A.K. Ramanujan, U.R. Ananthamurthy and Girish Karnad. These were the three brilliant thinkers and writers of Karnataka. Now Karnad has joined Ramanujan and Ananthamurthy. They all acknowledged the influence

they had on another.

I wonder whether there are other such small groups of writers in other States who are famous all over the world for their brilliance but who are also rooted in their own culture and language. Even if there are, I haven't noticed it. I haven't come across, say, three Tamil or three Bengali literary giants who were known in both English and Tamil, or English and Bengali, and who lived in the same period.

I bring this up because I think Karnataka is special. Its cosmopolitan nature has been built into it for decades. The erstwhile princely State of Mysore encouraged cultural diversity. We had R.K. Narayan (who was born in Madras and brought up in Mysore) and R.K. Laxman (a Mysorean) sending waves across India and the world with their writing and cartoons, respectively, which were so expressive of 'native' India and yet so relatable in the wider world. This princely State also had a modern touch. It had pioneers in building industrial enterprises. M. Visvesvaraya, for example, is well known across India for entrepreneurship. I believe that Mysore had a civilisational sophistication and an open mind to be able to encourage its 'native' civilisation but also open its doors to modernity.

Karnad studied at Oxford University, which is where I first met him. His brilliance meant that he could live and work anywhere in the world. But he chose to come back to Bangalore where he continued to produce excellent plays that built on our own folk literature and had philosophical underpinnings. Not only did he excel in this field, he was equally outstanding in the films in which he acted. He was also an institution-builder, an activist who hated religious chauvinism, and a friend.

I last met Karnad at the memorial meeting for Gauri Lankesh. He had a placard hung around his neck that read in English and Kannada, 'Me Too Urban Naxal'. After the protest, he dropped me home, all the way wearing tubes and carrying his oxygen cylinder.

Karnad's plays always contained in them, without definition or too much underlining, the moral consciousness of Indians. Perhaps I belong to their generation, but I have not come across new geniuses in Karnataka of the kind that we had in these three stalwarts.

Devaki Jain is a feminist writer and economist



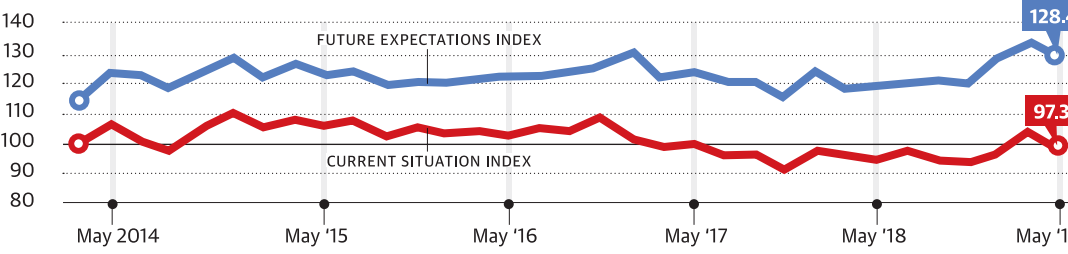
DATA POINT

Back to pessimism

Consumer confidence in various aspects of the economy – economic situation, employment, price levels, income and spending – registered a dip in last month's edition of the RBI's Consumer Confidence Survey*. Much of the decline occurred in segments which registered an uptick in positivity just before the election, in March 2019. By **The Hindu Data Team**

Up and down

The current situation index, which had shown a positive outlook in March 2019 after a gap of two years, relapsed in May to a score below 100 indicating "negative confidence". The future expectations index also slipped from its all-time high in March



Improvement ahead?

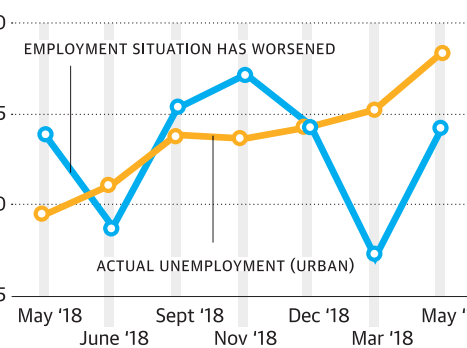
Consumers' perception of the general economic situation, income and spending remained optimistic. The outlook on employment and price levels was low in the past and has now worsened further

| Variable | Current perception | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---------|--------|
| | Mar '19 | May '19 | Change |
| Economic situation | 13.7 | 1.1 | ↓ |
| Employment | 3.9 | -10.5 | ↓ |
| Price level | -72 | -77.3 | ↓ |
| Income | 10.2 | 8.2 | ↓ |
| Spending | 67 | 65.2 | ↓ |
| Consumer Confidence Index | 104.6 | 97.3 | ↓ |

↓ Positive sentiments with sign of deterioration
↓ Negative sentiments with sign of deterioration

Job outlook bleak

Deterioration in sentiments on employment contributed to the overall weakening of consumer confidence. This was in sync with the growth in the urban unemployment rate recorded by CMIE recently



* The survey took into account 5,245 responses across 13 major cities

FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 13, 1969

Industrial security force for public sector plants

Arrangements are now being finalised for the formation of an industrial security force in the public sector industrial plants in the country. Details of the force - including its strength, service conditions and financial implications - are being worked out by the Home and Finance Ministries in consultation with Ministries such as Steel and Heavy Engineering and Industrial Development and Company Affairs which are in charge of the units concerned. It is expected that the force will start operating in the Durgapur steel plant in the first instance. Later it will extend its activities to cover other units. On a rough estimate installations in public sector units in the country excluding railways and defence are worth about Rs. 5,000 crores. The proposed force will be an all-India force.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 13, 1919.

Indian Reform Bill. Mr. Montagu's Speech.

The Maharajah of Bikanir, Lord Pentland and a number of Indians were present in the Gallery to-day [of the House of Commons in London on May 4] when [Secretary of State for India Mr. Edwin] Montagu moved the second reading of the Government of India Bill. Mr. Montagu said: In discharging the highly important task of which he fully realised the responsibility, he desired to avoid entering into details of, the necessarily complicated and technical measure the series of elaborate documents, with which he had provided the House and which he would assume the House had mastered, would obviate much technical disquisition. Recalling the origin of the Bill, Mr. Montagu remarked that it was suggested in some quarters that the Bill arose spontaneously in the minds of the Viceroy and himself, without previous enquiry or consideration under the influence of Mr. Lionel Curtis.

CONCEPTUAL

Condorcet's jury theorem

POLITICS

This refers to a theory which states that the wisdom of the crowds is usually better than that of experts in predicting the future. Decisions made through majority voting, for instance, are better than expert opinion. It is, however, important that a sufficient number of people are asked to participate in the vote to arrive at the right decision. Some believe that the accuracy of predictions can be further improved by limiting the size of the crowd. The theorem is named after French philosopher and mathematician Marquis de Condorcet who outlined it in his 1785 book *Essay on the Application of Analysis to the Probability of Majority Decisions*.

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This temple in Assam helps nurture 'extinct' turtle back to life

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