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TELLING NUMBERS

NEET 2019: 14 lakh candidates in 154 cities tested in 11 languages; nearly 8 lakh candidates qualified

DELHI HAS the best strike rate of candidates qualifying in the National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test (NEET) 2019, the results of which were declared Wednesday. Of the 30,215 candidates who appeared for the test, 22,638 qualified, a strike rate of 74.92%.

Delhi was followed closely by Haryana (73.41%) and Chandigarh (73.24%), the results showed. However, just a little more than 1,500 candidates took the test in Chandigarh, a small fraction of the numbers in most states. States/UTs that had the best strike rates in this year's test were almost exactly the same as in last year's test.

NEET is conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) for admission to MBBS and BDS courses in medical and dental colleges approved by the Medical Council of India and the Dental Council of India. The test was given throughout the country in May; of the 15.19 lakh candidates who registered, 14.10 lakh appeared, and 7.97 lakh were declared qualified. The number of registrations for the exam in 2019 was 14.52% higher than last year, NTA said in a press release.

MOST SUCCESSFUL STATES/UNION TERRITORIES

State/UT	Appeared	Qualified	% qualified
1 Delhi	30,215	22,638	74.92 (73.73/2)*
2 Haryana	30,649	22,499	73.41 (72.59/3)
3 Chandigarh	1,562	1,144	73.24 (71.81/5)
4 Andhra Pradesh	55,200	39,039	70.72 (72.55/4)
5 Rajasthan	93,149	64,890	69.66 (74.30/1)
6 Punjab	13,783	9,456	68.61 (65.93/8)
7 Telangana	48,996	33,044	67.44 (68.88/6)
8 Kerala	1,10,206	73,385	66.59 (66.74/7)
9 Manipur	5,794	3,672	63.38 (63.17/10)
10 Himachal Pradesh	12,646	8,003	63.28 (61.23/–)

*Figures in parentheses are strike rates in NEET-2018 in per cent, and the position of the state/UT in the country in 2018. Himachal Pradesh was not in the top 10 in 2018; Karnataka, with a strike rate of 63.51%, was the ninth best last year. Number under the category 'Other' not considered.

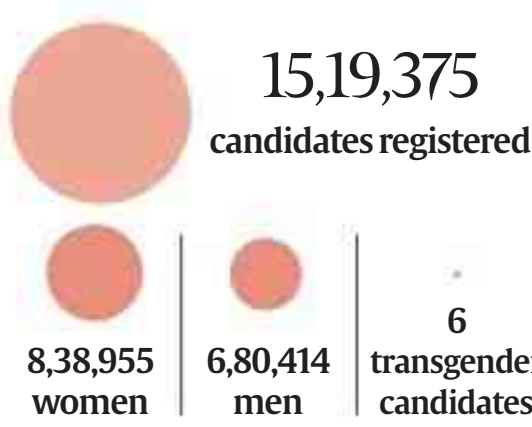### 5 STATES WHERE MOST CANDIDATES APPEARED

1 lakh-plus states made up 49% of total candidates

Maharashtra	2,06,745
Uttar Pradesh	1,44,993
Tamil Nadu	1,23,078
Kerala	1,10,206
Karnataka	1,02,735

ENGLISH, HINDI MOST PREFFERED LANGUAGES

Language	Registered candidates	%age of total
English	12,04,968	79.31
Hindi	1,79,857	11.84
Gujarati	59,395	3.91
Bengali	31,490	2.07
Tamil	31,239	2.06

EXAMINATION NUMBERS

15,19,375 candidates registered

8,38,955 women   6,80,414 men   6 transgender candidates

14,10,755 candidates appeared
7,97,042 candidates qualified
154 cities (16.67% increase from 2018)
11 languages
2,546 centres (12.90% increase from 2018)
1,28,000 invigilators

All data: NTA press release

Two states, two election stories

The results of the Lok Sabha elections in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have shown both the strengths and weaknesses of regional parties. The elections have also demonstrated that the BJP can continue to expect to expand wherever the Congress remains the main opposition party

DECISION 2019
STATE BY STATE
ANDHRA PRADESH & TELANGANA

GILLES VERNIERS, SURYA RAO SANGEM & GOWD KIRAN KUMAR

THE CONSOLIDATION of the BJP's 2014 performance has been the result of its ability to retain its position in the Hindi belt and to expand into new areas in the east and the south of the country. In the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, regional parties have resisted the BJP's mobilisation efforts to varying degrees.

In Andhra Pradesh, where the state election took place alongside the Lok Sabha election, the YSRCP improved upon its 2014 performance by bagging 22 seats and 49.2% of the vote. That left only three seats for the TDP — despite an over 39% vote share — and none for the Congress and the BJP, who got 1.3% and less than 1% of the vote respectively.

Jagan's caste calculus

The YSRCP's strategy bore a striking resemblance to the BJP's: the projection, exclusively, of the party's leader, Y S Jaganmohan Reddy, a formidable ground campaign backed by ample resources, a strong social media presence, and a caste-based strategy that combined favouring a local dominant caste while providing token representation to a larger number of groups who were not affiliated with other parties.

After his father's death in September 2009, Jagan converted his Odarapu Yatra (condolence tour) into a direct political tool, after the Congress high command refused him the Chief Ministership. After his resignation from the Congress, he founded the Yuvajana Sramika Raithu Congress (Youth, Labour, and Farmers' Congress), an acronym that evoked YSR's name. He built from this episode a taste and talent for ground mobilisation. Ahead of the election, he led a 3,648-km *padayatra*, covering most constituencies over 341 days.

Jagan's campaign was backed by Prashant Kishor's I-PAC, which provided strategic support to several parties that were either BJP allies or were potential BJP partners. I-PAC designed an aggressive social media campaign, targeting students, farmers, and employees along with other groups loyal to YSRCP. It is no coincidence perhaps, that Jagan's campaign resembled Modi's.

The campaign of Chandrababu Naidu, who was trounced in both the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections, on the other hand, lacked the cohesiveness and sense of purpose displayed by his opponent. Naidu's attention was divided between the state and the national stage, and many of his incumbent candidates suffered from a bad local reputation. He had backtracked on various promises made to OBC groups — notably the promise to grant a specific reservation status to Kapus.

BJP in Telangana

The Telangana scenario was different —

The YSRCP distributed a quarter of its tickets to Reddy candidates, and an equal number of tickets (one) to eight different OBC groups — Boya, Gavara, Kalinga, Kurba, Padmasali (weavers), Setti Balija, Turpu Kapu and Yadav. It also distributed most of its SC tickets to Malas, and gave one ticket to a Madiga candidate.

The TDP, by contrast, banked mostly on Reddy and Kamma candidates, as well as on Rajus (OBC). Other forward or backward groups were hardly represented. This enabled the YSRCP to articulate a discourse of inclusion that played in its favour. It would seem that the YSRCP succeeded in consolidating support among Reddys as well as among varied OBC groups, many of whom used to support the TDP against the Congress earlier.

Jagan Reddy also announced various schemes favourable to OBCs, notably a Rs 15,000 crore BC subplan, and the "YSR *cheyuta*", a monetary grant of Rs 45,000 for BC women.
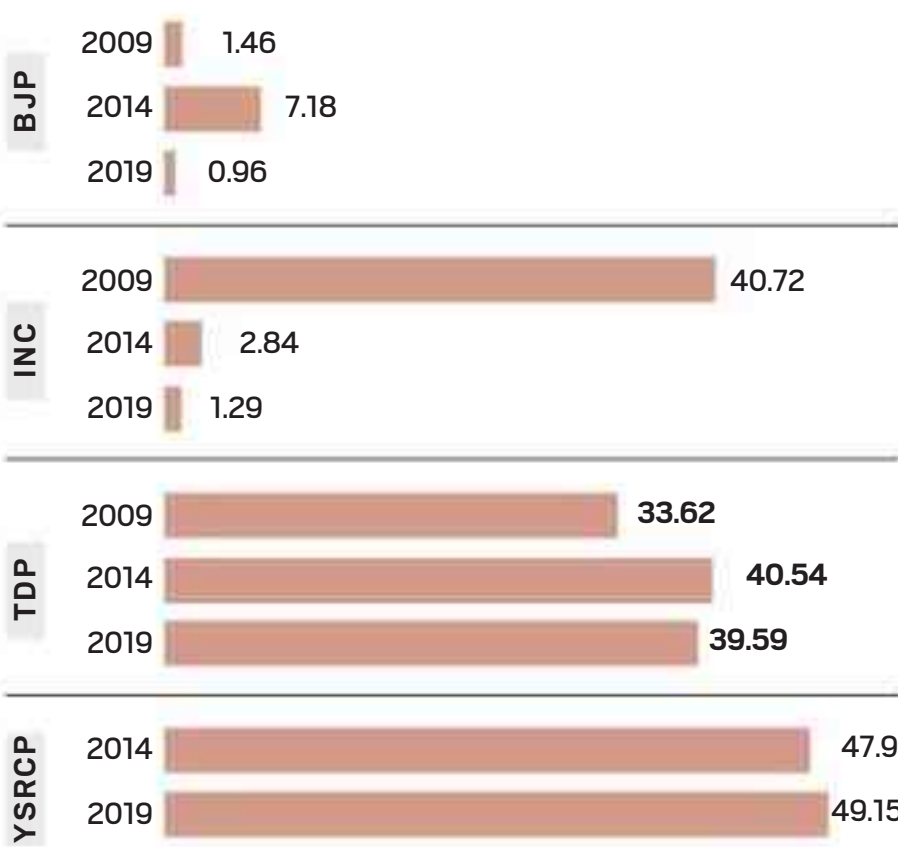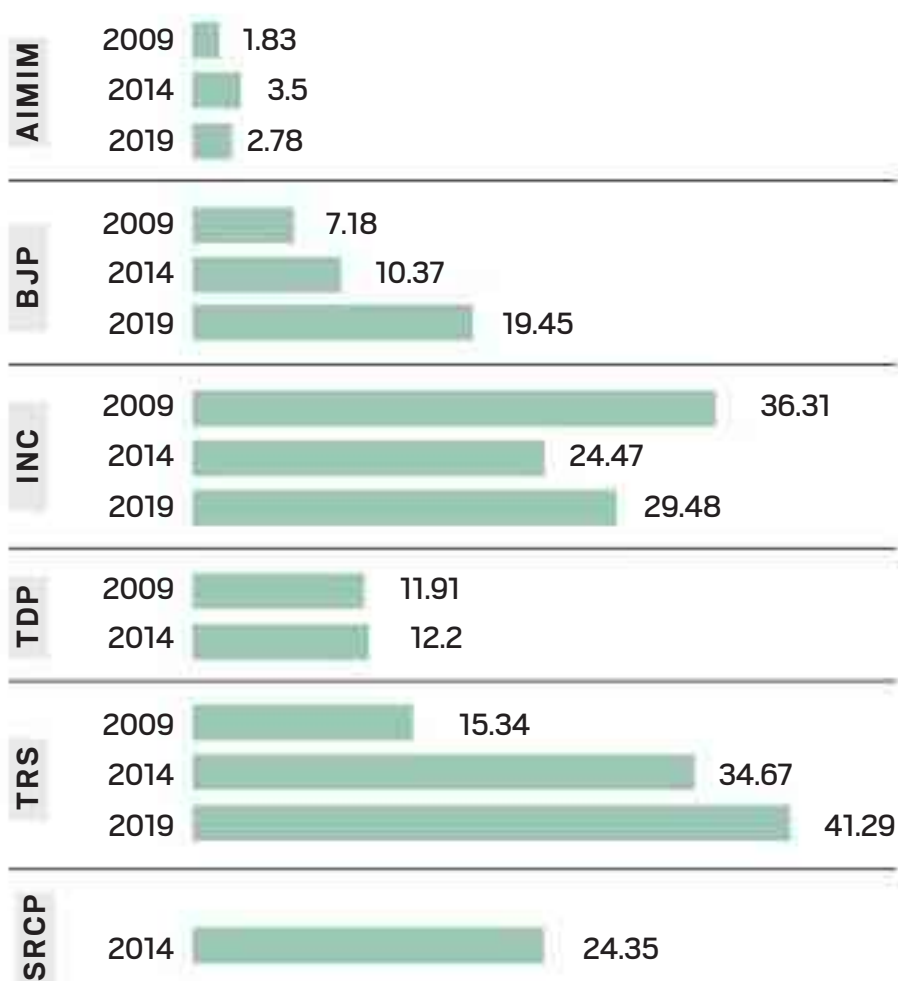
Organisation, campaign

But the success of Yeduguri Sandinti Jaganmohan Reddy, known as Jagan Anna in Andhra Pradesh politics, can't be explained only by savvy caste arithmetic. Within five years, he has succeeded in building an alternative to both the Congress and TDP from the ashes of the Congress state unit. While he did succeed in capturing the legacy of his father, Y S Rajasekhara Reddy, in terms of image, he did not inherit his organisation. He had to build it from the ground, through hard work and intense mobilisation, while facing various judicial challenges.

a three-corner fight between the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), the Congress, and the BJP which, unlike in Andhra Pradesh, led an aggressive grassroots campaign against both the other parties. Other parties like the TDP, the communists, the Jana Sena, and YSRCP were not in the race. AIMIM ran with an arrangement with the TRS.

Here, the disaffection for the Congress translated into votes for the BJP, which succeeded in wresting four seats: Adilabad, Karimnagar, Nizamabad, Secundrabad, all located in Northern Telangana. The BJP also finished second in Hyderabad and Mahbubnagar.

Few had anticipated this performance by the BJP, which can be explained by two main factors. First, a strong, cohesive booth-level campaign led by Manthri Srinivas, the BJP's organising state secretary.

And second, the BJP fielded strong candidates at several seats.

■ Soyam Babu Rao in Adilabad is a figure of the Gond tribal movement. He initially sought a Congress ticket, but joined the BJP ahead of the election.

■ Bandi Sanjay Kumar (Karimnagar), who is considered an aggressive Hindutva face in Northern Telangana, had lost the Assembly election last December by a thin margin.

■ Dharmapuri Aravind (Nizamabad) is the son of D Srinivas, a former Congress minister who is currently a Rajya Sabha MP from the TRS. Aravind defeated Kalvakuntla Kavitha, daughter of TRS chief K Chandrashekar Rao (KCR), in what should have been a safe seat for the party. The fact that 179 farmers filed their nominations in Nizamabad, which topped the election in terms of number of candidates (185) did not help the TRS candidate either.

■ G Kishan Reddy won the Secundrabad seat after having lost in the last state elections. He has also been growing rapidly within the party.

■ In Mahbubnagar, the BJP fielded Aruna D K, a former TDP Minister who switched to the BJP before the election. She finished second.

Interestingly, the BJP won seats in subregions where ST and OBC votes matter the most. By gaining ground at the local level, the BJP has reiterated what it has done in many states since 2014: replace the Congress as the main opposition to a regional champion, by building ground-up organisation, and by poaching prominent faces from other parties.

The big picture

This result has come as a shock to the TRS, which had expected to sweep the state the way it did last December. Instead, it got 'only' eight seats, although with 41.3% vote share, significantly more than in 2014.

Not only did the BJP succeed in making inroads, it also conquered TRS strongholds like Nizamabad and Karimnagar. Reports from the ground suggest that many Reddy voters did not support KCR, despite the fact that the TRS distributed a third of its tickets to that dominant group.

Two broad lessons can be drawn from the results in these two states.

The first is that regional parties cannot take their dominance for granted; the second is that the BJP can expect to expand wherever the Congress remains the main opposition party.

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MAIN PARTIES' VOTE SHARE IN ANDHRA PRADESH, LS ELECTIONS, 2009-2019

Party	Year	Vote share
BJP	2009	1.46
BJP	2014	7.18
BJP	2019	0.96
INC	2009	40.72
INC	2014	2.84
INC	2019	1.29
TDP	2009	33.62
TDP	2014	40.54
TDP	2019	39.59
YSRCP	2014	47.9
YSRCP	2019	49.15

Vote shares show the dramatic fall in the popularity of the Congress in Andhra Pradesh after the bifurcation of the state. It did much better in Telangana by comparison.

MAIN PARTIES' VOTE SHARE IN TELANGANA, LOK SABHA ELECTIONS, 2009-2019

Party	Year	Vote share
AIMIM	2009	1.83
AIMIM	2014	3.5
AIMIM	2019	2.78
BJP	2009	7.18
BJP	2014	10.37
BJP	2019	19.45
INC	2009	36.31
INC	2014	24.47
INC	2019	29.48
TDP	2009	11.91
TDP	2014	12.2
TRS	2009	15.34
TRS	2014	34.67
TRS	2019	41.29
YSRCP	2014	24.35

Why the US wants social media details of most visa applicants

KARISHMA MEHROTRA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 5

THE UNITED States government on Friday updated visa application forms to require nearly all applicants to provide their social media usernames, email addresses, and phone numbers for the past five years. The requirement to provide the additional information is in line with the Donald Trump administration's decision to ensure more stringent screening of potential immigrants and visitors to the United States.

Who is impacted

The new policy will affect roughly 15 million US visa applicants around the world every year. More than a million non-immigrant and immigrant US visas are given to Indians every year. Government officials and diplomats are exempt from providing the additional information.

In 2018, 28,073 Indians were issued American immigrant visas, the vast majority of which passed through the "family preference" process. Since 2009, the biggest jump in the number of Indian immigrants to the US — almost 20% — was seen during 2014-2015. But after reaching a peak of 31,360 in 2016, the numbers of immigrant visas issued to Indians dropped in 2017.

In 2018, the US issued 10,06,802 nonimmigrant visas to Indians, the third largest national group behind the Chinese and Mexicans, and amounting to a little over 11% of total nonimmigrant visa issuances.

How it will work

The change affects the nonimmigrant visa online application form (DS-160), the paper back-up nonimmigrant visa application (DS-156), and the online immigrant visa application form (DS-260).

In the drop-down menu on the Consular Electronic Application Center (CEAC) site, applicants will be expected to choose from 20 online platforms, including Facebook, Flickr, Google+, Instagram, LinkedIn, Myspace, Pinterest, Reddit, Tumblr, Twitter, Vine and YouTube, and provide their usernames on the platforms. Among the social media platforms based outside the United States on the list are Tencent Weibo, Twoo, and Youku.

Why the change

"National security is our top priority when adjudicating visa applications, and every prospective traveler and immigrant to the United States undergoes extensive security screening," the State Department said in a statement. "We are constantly working to find mechanisms to improve our screening processes to protect US citizens, while supporting legitimate travel to the United States."

The statement clarified that "consular officers will not request user passwords", and that "the information will be used, as all information provided during a visa interview and on the visa application, to determine if the applicant is eligible for a visa under existing US law".

"Collecting this additional information from visa applicants will strengthen our process for vetting applicants and confirming their identity," the State Department said.

Policy under Obama

The new requirement marks a shift away from the voluntary disclosure of social media profile information under the Barack Obama administration. The new mandatory policy announced by the Trump administration also monitors those already in the US, such as green card holders.

In early 2014, the Obama administration had prohibited social media profile evaluations during visa application processes. Later that year, the policy was loosened, but social media checks were not standard practice until a shooting in California in 2015.

The San Bernardino shooting — in which 14 people were killed and 22 others were seriously wounded in a terror attack in California — involved attackers who had undergone visa screening. News reports at the time said that the shooter, Rizwan Farook,

Nearly all applicants for a visa to enter the United States — an estimated 15 million people a year — will be asked to submit their social media usernames for the past five years, the State Department has said. Vincent Tullo/The New York Times

WHY SOME ARE CONCERNED

SOCIAL MEDIA is an intricate map of its users' contacts, associations, habits and preferences. Full information on accounts will give the US government access to a visa applicant's pictures, locations, birthdays, anniversaries, friendships, relationships, and a whole trove of personal data that is commonly shared on social media, but which many may not like to share with agencies of state.

CRITICS SAY the sweeping surveillance potential of the new regulations could discourage a wide range of visa applicants. "Research shows that this kind of monitoring has chilling effects, meaning that people are less likely to speak freely and connect with each other in online communities that are now essential to modern life," Hina Shamsi, director of the American Civil Liberties Union's National Security Project, was quoted as saying in a report in *The New York Times*.

had been posting violent messages under a pseudonym online.

In the aftermath of the shooting, many Democrats also voiced approval of social media surveillance methods. President Obama too called upon technology companies to combat terrorist activities.

By the end of 2015, the Department of Homeland Security began analysing social media accounts during immigration applications regularly.

Changes under Trump

In a series of executive orders and memos that began a week after his inauguration, President Trump called for "enhanced vetting protocols and procedures of visas and other immigration benefits" to mitigate against terror threats. In October 2017, the Department of Homeland Security expanded its immigration records to include "social media handles and aliases, associated identifiable information, and search results" on the same day that the controversial travel ban on citizens of seven countries went into effect.

According to the memo, "publicly available information obtained from the Internet, public records, public institutions, interviewees, commercial data providers" would provide the information at the time.

The State Department first announced the mandatory collection of social media accounts in March 2018. It stated this week that this change was a result of a Presidential memo from 2017 directing the State Department and other agencies to improve screening and vetting.

Elsewhere in the world

In 2015, Indians faced further scrutiny in Schengen visas, after it was made mandatory to provide biometric data through fingerprints and a digital photo. That requirement was already in place in the US and Britain. Currently, the UK and Canada — popular destinations for Indian visitors and immigrants — do not have any policy of collecting social media information form visa applicants.

WORDLY WISE
Roosters crow at the break of dawn, look out your window and I'll be gone.
— BOB DYLAN

The Indian EXPRESS
∽ FOUNDED BY ∽
RAMNATH GOENKA
BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

UP SHOWS THE WAY?

Maybe the break-up and soul-searching by SP and BSP will help them and others in Opposition to go back to the drawing board

JUST TWO WEEKS after the election results were announced, BSP chief Mayawati has admitted that her party's gathbandhan with the SP did not work on the ground. On Tuesday, she declared that the BSP will fight the upcoming 11 bypolls in UP on its own. Though Mayawati did not rule out the possibility of the two parties working together in the future, she has claimed that the SP, in the present state, is incapable of holding to its core vote or transferring it to its ally. In short, Mayawati has said that caste arithmetic need not always add up and triumph over political chemistry to produce a winner in an election.

The BSP supremo's candid admission that her tactic for the election was not successful and hence she is moving on, is in sharp contrast to other opposition parties that have refused to reconcile with defeat. The Congress, for instance, has yet to recover from the shock of the drubbing it received. Rahul Gandhi, who led the Congress campaign, has withdrawn into a shell while the rest of the leadership is busy blaming each other for the debacle. As in 2014, the party is in a state of denial and has refused to introspect on its failures, including in states where it had won assembly elections less than six months before. The gathbandhan constituents in Bihar — Lalu Prasad's RJD and the Congress among others — have been silent since their wipe-out. As much as the absence of a strong Opposition is worrying, the refusal of parties to debate the causes of their defeat too is disturbing. It, of course, allows the ruling party to set its own course and narrative and avoid scrutiny of its actions at any fora. The unravelling of gathbandhan in UP is hence refreshing for it may trigger new conversations within, and among, opposition parties. SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, who without rancour accepted the BSP decision to quit the alliance and announced that his party will rethink its priorities, and Mayawati may have unwittingly initiated a debate about the nature and course of opposition politics, especially the viability of electoral alliances of convenience. The BSP-SP split also brings into sharp relief the future of social justice politics and its overt reliance on caste alliances: The UP results challenge the notion that caste groups constitute a monolithic transferable vote bank and are immune to the influence of broader narratives based on faith, nationalism and even welfare.

The SP-BSP gathbandhan was the big idea that the Opposition said will influence the electoral tide. Its spectacular collapse should resonate across India, where similar alliances came about ahead of the elections, and encourage political parties to reflect on their agendas and tactics. That would be a promising beginning towards building a strong Opposition.

GOING DIGITAL

Nilekani committee bats for lower costs, incentives and greater role for non-banks to boost digital transactions

THE PAYMENTS ECOSYSTEM in India has seen a flurry of activity in the recent past. Post demonetisation, the shift towards digital payments has been particularly striking. Yet, acceptance, from an infrastructure perspective, continues to be low. For instance, while debit card issuance has touched a billion, there are only about 3.5 million POS devices and two lakh ATMs that accept cards. Against this backdrop, a committee headed by Nandan Nilekani has recommended several suggestions to broaden the acceptance infrastructure and deepen digital financial inclusion.

On the issue of acceptance, the committee notes that "high cost structures, including merchant fees, as well as limited financial service offering impede merchants from accepting digital payments". To address this, it has recommended reducing the interchange on card payments by 15 basis points hoping this will "increase the incentive for acquirers to sign-up merchants". Then there's also the suggestion of setting up of a committee to review merchant discount rate and interchange on a regular basis. Now, merchant acquisition is central to expanding the payment ecosystem. But, rather than focusing more on the card-based ecosystem, perhaps greater emphasis could have been placed on the Aadhaar-enabled payment systems, which is likely to have greater appeal, especially in the rural hinterland. There are also suggestions which call for ensuring no user charges for digital payments, and providing businesses tax incentives "calibrated on the proportion of digital payments in their receipts". These are eminently sensible recommendations. But implementation is likely to prove challenging. Take, for instance, the government's decision to waive of fees on transactions less than Rs 2,000. Theoretically, a sound proportion. But, the roll-out was not as smooth as was expected.

The committee has also suggested that non-banks be encouraged to participate in payment systems. But, this is where questions over the existing payments architecture crop up. As the inter-ministerial committee had pointed out earlier, there is need to distinguish between the RBI's role "as an infrastructure institution providing settlement function from its role as regulator of the payments system". As the panel has said, the role of the regulator needs to evolve from being "largely bank centric". Non-banks are at an inherent disadvantage in the current payment ecosystem. Perhaps, as the Nilekani committee notes, bringing in "non-banks as associate members to build acceptance infrastructure", and allowing them access to settlement systems, might help create a level-playing field.

FRENCH PHILISTINES

For the last time, France says, cock-crow is part of the rural experience, predating the visitors who seek it out

THE GAULS HAVE a long history of suppressing rural talent, dating back to Cacofonix the Bard, who was physically retrained from performing at banquets in the time of Julius Caesar. The latest victim of this culture of draconian censorship is Maurice, who performs morning airs on the Atlantic resort of Île d'Oléron. But there is an essential difference between these two artistic martyrs. Cacofonix followed his calling, while Maurice is following the order of nature. He has no choice in the matter.

Maurice is a cockerel on an island which has become a tourist resort, and his crowing is keeping a visiting neighbour awake. His owner, herself a singer, argues that his species has been crowing from remote antiquity. Indeed, it's in cold print — their cousin in the Holy Land ticked off Peter for denying the son of god thrice. The problem is the visitors who come to the island in search of tranquillity, not the domestic fowl who predate them. It is rare for birds to become involved in cases of man-animal conflict — such prowess is generally reserved for creatures red in tooth and claw — but Maurice is a marked chicken.

The second French fowl thus threatened, he faces the legal charge of being a health hazard, a ground that an increasingly hypochondriac human race takes very seriously. It is clearly absurd, since the neighbour would be far healthier being awakened by a living alarm clock, in good time for a morning constitutional. But the cockerel is fortunate enough to have other neighbours on his side, who have rallied behind a petition. And the mayor agrees that suppressing a cockerel's song is an unnatural act against the order of nature. If only Cacofonix had enjoyed such local support, he could have been recognised today as the father of death metal.

The constitutional citizen

Constitution contains a kindred concept of justice, asks a citizen to be responsive to sufferings of co-citizens

UPENDRA BAXI

THE TRIUMPHAL MOMENT of Modi 2.0 has led to sincere felicitations by all citizens, but the insidious phrase "left liberals" has resurfaced and pleas have been already aired for a "re-invention of liberalism". What matters for political and civic discourse is not name-calling but rather the tolerance of the intolerable — disrespect for dissent, encouragement for practices of ethnic violence, caste or community-based lynching, and production of social indifference towards states of injustice and human rightlessness. It does not matter for those murdered, and the survivors, whether all this is produced or reproduced by left, right, or centre; all that they insist on is strict scrutiny now and prevention of re-occurrence, regardless of the political labels we choose to affix on the opponents. All political cadres and leaders must encourage and practice the vital difference on which a democratic order is premised — the difference between the "adversary" and "enemy".

To avoid "the necrology of the meaningless discourses" (as Paul Ricoeur describes it), one has to internalise what democratic belonging to a political community may mean. Good old Aristotle distinguished the two aspects of citizenship: A citizen is a being that knows how to rule and how to be ruled. A democracy views political belonging in terms of a congregation of co-citizens. That is the very meaning of what the constitutional Preamble means when it refers to the value of "fraternity". Fellow-feeling means that everyone must learn to be a co-citizen first, and then a ruler or a ruled. It is certainly not being anti-national to take the Constitution seriously as providing the means and ends of good constitutional governance and conscientious resistance (peaceful dissent).

If so, one must follow the conception of being a constitutionally sincere co-citizen — a conception outlined by the Indian Constitution itself in the Preamble, Part III (fundamental human rights), IV (the directive principles of state policy), IV-A (fundamental duties of co-citizens), and the oath of office that certain political co-citizens and justices take under the Third Schedule. How far

> The Constitution contains a kindred concept of justice. Read as a whole, it says in one sentence that only that development is just which disproportionately benefits the worst-off, or the constitutional have-nots.

the citizen rulers and the ruled have followed this credo requires deep study. But to call anyone attempting to examine this as "left-liberal", "alt-right", or by any other name, is in itself constitutionally unjustified.

The Constitution we have adopted is not "liberal" but "post-liberal". First, no constitution in the world contains basic rights that avail not against the state but to civil society: The rights against untouchability (Article 17) and against "exploitation" (Articles 23 and 24) are collective rights of discriminated peoples. They are declared constitutional offences, and the whole scheme of Indian federalism is set aside by casting a legislative duty on Parliament.

Second, all Article 19 civil and political rights are declared subject to "reasonable restrictions" imposed by the legislature. Third, Article 21-guaranteed rights of life and liberty are immediately followed by Article 22, authorising preventive detention. Fourth, as Justice M Hidayatullah wryly remarked about the Ninth Schedule, "ours is the only Constitution that needs protection against itself" (though now the Supreme Court may co-determine what new legislations curtailing rights can still be placed in that Schedule). Fifth, the power to impose President's Rule on states may be exercised by the Union but is subject to the process of judicial review. Sixth, a large number of draconian security legislation have been upheld by the Supreme Court, including some colonial laws violating fundamental human rights. Seventh, respect for international law required by Article 51 does not result in reacting even an enabling legislation on custodial torture, let alone a fully-fledged adherence to the nearly universal convention against torture and inhuman, cruel or degrading punishment or treatment. Eighth, the judicially developed law against sexual harassment at the workplace continues to be stymied at almost all sites.

It is unnecessary to cite many more features but perhaps it is sufficient to say that ours is not entirely a "liberal" constitutionalism and one needs to appreciate the context

of the poignant realities of Indian Partition in which this miraculous document was conceived by far-sighted composite figures. They evolved a Constitution for an uncertain future, reconciling somehow the four antinomic ideas: Governance, development, rights, and justice. Their task is still with us.

The Constitution can be read (in the words of political philosopher Iris Marion Young) as a movement away from the liability-based "blame model of responsibility" to a "shared political responsibility model". The key idea is that we accept "a responsibility for what we have not done", simply because many "cases of harms, wrongs or injustice have no isolable perpetrator, but rather result from the participation of millions of people in institutions and practices that result in harms".

This conception requires an acknowledgement that some people "bear responsibility for injustice does not necessarily absolve others" and it renders problematic "the normal and accepted background conditions of action". Rather than to "apportion blame and shame", mechanisms which "trigger shared responsibility" are to be preferred. And this "involves coordination with others to achieve... change" if only because it is "more forward-looking than backward-looking".

The Constitution contains a kindred concept of justice. Read as a whole, it says in one sentence that only that development is just which disproportionately benefits the worst-off, or the constitutional have-nots. This articulation does not surprise the non-millennials who still recall the favourite song of Mohandas Gandhi (written by Narsinh Mehta): *Vaishnava jan to tene re kahiye, jo peed parai janne re* (a Vaishnava is one who knows the pain and suffering of others). To be a good citizen is neither to be a liberal, Marxist or a Hindutva person, but to be and to remain responsive to the sufferings of co-citizens and persons.

The writer is professor of law, University of Warwick, and former vice chancellor of Universities of South Gujarat and Delhi

ATTACK THE SYSTEM

Policy must deal not only with caste-based discrimination, but identity itself

ALOK BANSAL

ONE OF THE biggest achievements of the 2019 election was that the common man in India clearly showed that he is willing to rise above caste barriers for the national interest. The caste system is arguably the biggest bane of Indian society, and has adversely affected India's growth, development and security over centuries. Primarily a Hindu concept, this malady has transcended religious frontiers and affected every religion in India.

Many apologists for the caste system tend to justify it by stating that caste-based identities are not bad, only the discrimination based on caste is bad. However, this is nothing but indirect support to an extremely divisive and repugnant social practice. One needs to understand that in an extremely hierarchical system, discrimination will exist as long as caste-based identities remain. Many Hindu sages and social reformers have criticised caste-based divisions based on birth. Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati, founder of the Arya Samaj, had criticised the hereditary caste system and had asserted that such a system never existed in Vedic times. His namesake and founder-convenor of the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, stated that "Birth-based discrimination and cruel treatment of individuals and families which developed in Hindu society over time as socially sanctioned practices are in gross violation of ancient Hindu teachings and philosophy. Many people that revere and owe allegiance to our ancient Dharmic teachings and philosophy have suffered over the years as a result of

> Regrettably, in the last seven decades, no significant step has been taken to eradicate or dilute the caste system, although actions have been initiated (both effective and superficial) to curb caste-based discrimination. On the other hand, numerous steps have been taken by governments, regrettably, to perpetuate this social anachronism.

such discriminatory practices. Such suffering continues even today, despite the law of the land and enlightened social and religious leaders having continued to make, over the centuries, major and effective contributions to diminish the depth and extent of these discriminatory practices, which have nothing to do with Hindu Dharma."

The most serious indictment of the caste system came from Balasaheb Deoras, former RSS Sarsanghachalak, who stated that "just because something is old, it need not necessarily be good and valid for all time. Neither should we think that since we have been living all these years on the basis of old principles, we need not even think on new lines... Science has progressed, new inventions have been made. Therefore, it is inconsistent with the demands of modern times to insist on the hereditary varna and caste system... What exists now is not system... Hence we should all put our heads together and think how to guide it — a system which has to die and is already dying must finally end and have a natural death."

The Constitution does not recognise caste and guarantees all citizens equality of status and opportunity and recognises the principle of fraternity. However, many politicians have nurtured caste-based identities to consolidate their vote banks. The founders of the Constitution had sincerely hoped that caste-based discrimination will disappear soon. Consequently, reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes in Parliament and state assemblies (reservation in jobs isn't mentioned

in the Constitution) was for a limited period.

Regrettably, in the last seven decades, no significant step has been taken to eradicate or dilute the caste system, although actions have been initiated (both effective and superficial) to curb caste-based discrimination. On the other hand, numerous steps have been taken by the government, regrettably, to perpetuate this social anachronism. The caste-based census and need to mention one's caste in numerous government forms defeats the very purpose of diluting caste-based identities. A large number of youth in urban India do not identify themselves with any caste, but are often forced to mention one in official documents.

It is essential that the government create a category of people with "no caste" for all those who do not wish to subscribe to their caste identity. Children of inter-caste marriages must necessarily belong to this category. A social movement must be started for people to relinquish their caste and caste-based surnames. There may be a need to incentivise inter-caste marriages. Eventually, asking of an individual's caste could be made a cognisable offence and all caste-based organisations must be banned. All mention of caste, except where required for reasons of affirmative action, must be eliminated.

Division of labour — or the rationale behind the Varna Vyavastha — does not exist today and the country certainly needs to get rid of its vestiges.

Bansal is director, India Foundation. Views are personal

JUNE 6, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

POLICE REFORM
STATE CHIEF MINISTERS will meet in New Delhi on June 6 to evolve a basis for agreed decisions on specific grievances of agitating policemen. Six major problems which have upset the policemen relate to formation and recognition of associations, interference from outside, pay and status of the constabulary, working conditions, misuse of orderlies and housing facilities. Union Home Minister H M Patel, who will preside over the one-day meeting, will spell out the Centre's approach to various issues which will come up for review. According to Home Ministry sources, the Centre feels that a restructuring of the police set-up will help in redressing their

grievances. In this respect, a beginning can be made only at the level of the constabulary which constitute the base of the system.

AFRICA WITH EGYPT
EGYPT HAS RECEIVED considerable support from black African countries in its effort to thwart a radical Arab bid to have the question of the Sadat regime's suspension from the non-aligned movement inserted in the agenda to be considered by the conference of foreign ministers of the co-ordinating bureau of non-aligned countries, beginning in Colombo on June 6. The African argument, first articulated by Gabon on June 4, is that Egypt is a member of the Organisation of

African Unity as well. One of the conditions for OAU membership is that member countries must be non-aligned. Moreover, the proper forum to discuss Egyptian action in signing the peace treaty with Israel was either the Arab League or the OAU.

DELHI BANDH
THE SECOND DELHI Bandh by traders within a week completely paralysed the wholesale trade despite the UP traders having called off their agitation and withdrawn their call for Bharat Bandh. Some retail shops were, however, open for most part of the day. The traders' organisations had a hard time persuading traders that the Delhi Bandh was on.
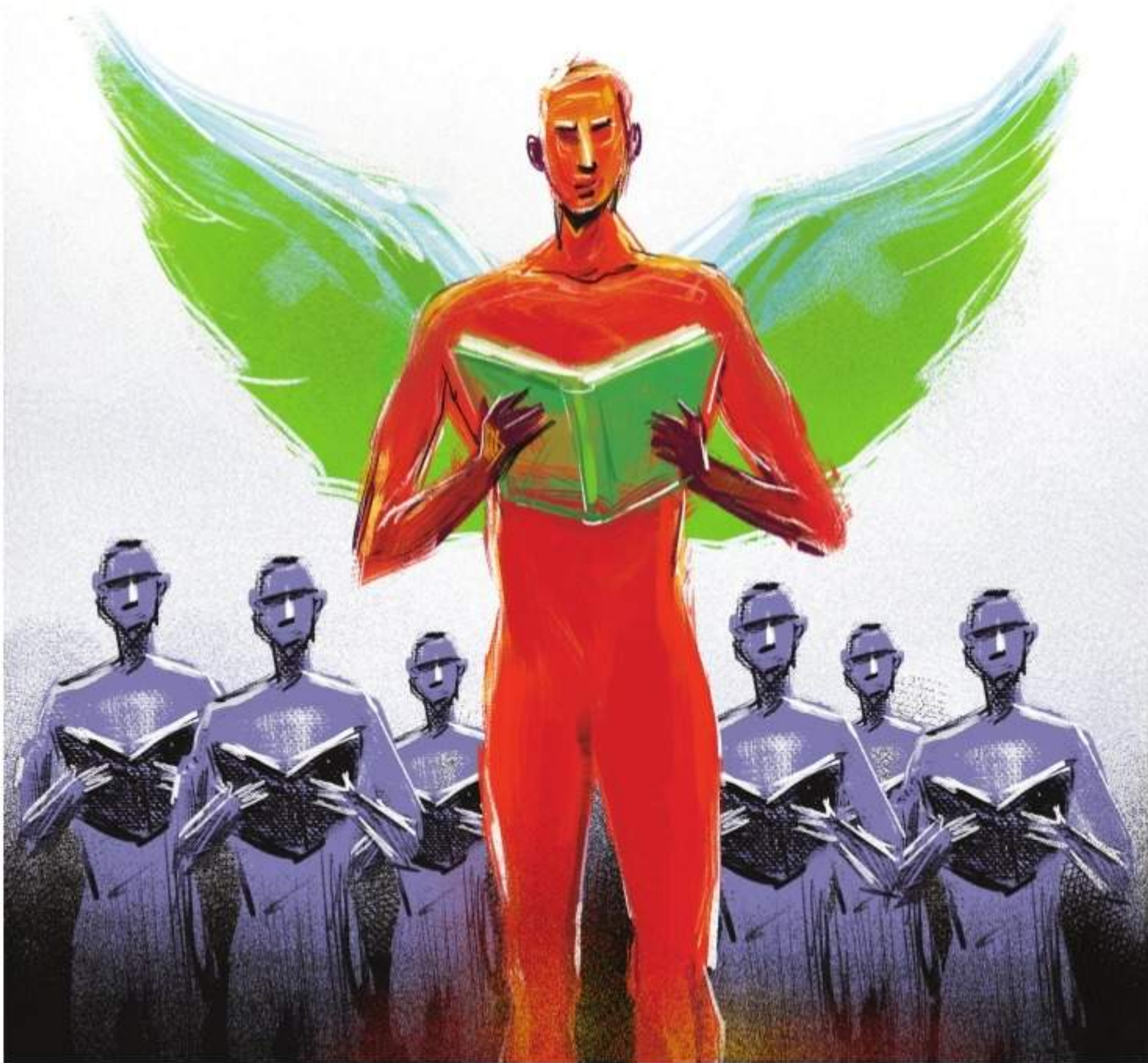
An invitation to the liberal arts

Education in the liberal arts and humanities are important in themselves. And they can enrich the understanding, empathy of our doctors, engineers and techno-managers

AVIJIT PATHAK

IN THESE "PRAGMATIC" times, it is not easy to plead for liberal education. Yet, as a teacher, I want the new generation who have just cleared the board examinations and are willing to enter the domain of higher learning, to realise that education is not merely "skill learning" or a means to inculcate the market-driven technocratic rationality. Education is also about deep awareness of culture and politics, art and history, and literature and philosophy. In fact, a society that discourages its young minds to reflect on the interplay of the "self" and the "world", and restricts their horizon in the name of job-oriented technical education, begins to decay. Such a society eventually prepares the ground for a potentially one-dimensional/consumerist culture that negates critical thinking and emancipatory quest.

Before I put forward my arguments for liberal education, I need to raise three concerns. First, as the economic doctrine of neoliberalism has become triumphant, a mix of "positivistic objectivity", scientism and technocratic rationality seems to have become the dominant ideology of education. Knowledge becomes instrumental and technical; "professionalism" demands dissociation of "skills" from the politico-ethical; and moral questions and the contents of the curriculum are required to be evaluated in terms of measurable "outcomes". No wonder, such a discourse refuses to see much meaning in, say, a serious enquiry into T S Eliot's *The Hollow Men*, or a reflection on "soul force" as articulated by M K Gandhi in his *Hind Swaraj*, or a Freudian interpretation of Leonardo Da Vinci's Monalisa. Neither the techno-managers nor the market find any value in these "subjective"/"non-productive" pursuits. When they do speak of literature or sociology, they kill its spirit, and reduce it into a set of modules with concrete "outcomes" — measured in terms of "life skills", "communication skills" and "personality development" skills. It is like destroying the soul of education through the fancy management discourse.

Second, school education continues to reproduce this hierarchy in knowledge traditions. Whereas science or commerce is projected as "high status" knowledge, not much cognitive prestige is attached to the humanities and liberal arts. In a way, this is like demotivating young minds and discouraging them from taking an active interest in history, literature, philosophy and political studies. Possibly, the standardised "ambition" that schools and anxiety-ridden parents cultivate among the teenagers makes it difficult for them to accept that it is possible to imagine yet another world beyond the "secure" career options in medical science, engineering and commerce. Certainly, it is not the sign of a healthy society if what is popularly known as PCM (physics-chemistry-mathematics), or IIT JEE, becomes the national obsession, and all youngsters flock to a town like Kota in Rajasthan, known for

the notorious chain of coaching centres selling the dreams of "success", and simultaneously causing mental agony, psychic disorder and chronic fear of failure.

Third, the state of liberal education in an average college/university in India, I must admit, is pathetic. With demotivated students, teachers who do not have any passion, empty classrooms, routine examinations and the widespread circulation of "notes" and "guide books", everything loses its meaning. History is a set of facts to be memorised, sociology is just common sense or a bit of jargon for describing the dynamics of family/marriage/caste/kinship, literature is time pass and political science is television news. Even though the state of science education is not very good, the trivialisation of liberal arts is truly shocking.

The challenges and obstacles are enormous. Yet, I would insist on the need for liberal education — good, meaningful and life-affirming education. As teachers, we have to play our roles. Unless we feel confident in our mission, give our best, and invite the youngsters to the fascinating world of poetry, philosophy, anthropology or art history, there is not much hope. We must tell them that there is yet another domain of knowledge, beyond "objectivity", "measurement" and "technical control". This domain is about the interpretative art of understanding the symbolic domain of culture, it is about reflexivity and imagination and it is about the critical fac-

> A doctor, I believe, ought to converse with a philosopher who speaks of the Tibetan Buddhist book on living and dying and a techno-manager ought to engage with a cultural anthropologist in order to know what 'development' means to local people and appreciate their understanding of the ecosystem and livelihoods. In the absence of adequate liberal education, we have begun to produce technically-skilled but culturally-impoverished professionals.

ulty for debunking the "official" worldview — the way Marx and Freud did it in their times, or the way feminists and critical theorists are doing it in our times. No, unlike management or engineering, it does not enhance "economic growth", or the "productivity" of industry but it does enrich us — culturally, politically and spiritually.

Furthermore, I would argue that even our doctors and techno-managers need a fair degree of liberal/humanistic education. A doctor, I believe, ought to converse with a philosopher who speaks of the Tibetan Buddhist book on living and dying and a techno-manager ought to engage with a cultural anthropologist in order to know what "development" means to local people and appreciate their understanding of the ecosystem and livelihoods. In the absence of adequate liberal education, we have begun to produce technically-skilled but culturally-impoverished professionals. Techniques have triumphed and wisdom has disappeared. We seem to be producing well-fed, well-paid and well-clothed slaves. This is dangerous.

I have, therefore, no hesitation in becoming somewhat "impractical", and inviting fresh/young minds — somehow perplexed and thrilled by their "successes" in board examinations — to the domain of liberal education.

The writer is professor of sociology at JNU

Suvajit Dey

Bolster the first line of defence

Any effort to strengthen national security without reforming, reorganising or restructuring the police would be an exercise in futility.

PRAKASH SINGH

THE COUNTRY'S internal security architecture continues to be fragile. In the wake of the 26/11 terrorist attack in 2008, a slew of measures were taken to strengthen the police forces, reinforce coastal security and decentralise the deployment of National Security Guard. However, after that, a complacency of sorts seems to have set in, mainly because there has been no major terrorist attack since then. Whatever upgradation of police has happened during the intervening period has essentially been of a cosmetic nature.

Meanwhile, terror clouds are gathering on the horizon and could burst upon the Subcontinent any time. The ISIS, which is committed to spreading "volcanoes of jihad" everywhere, recently perpetrated a horrific attack in Sri Lanka. The organisation has made significant inroads in Tamil Nadu and Kerala and has sympathisers in other areas of the country. It recently announced a separate branch, Wilayah-e-Hind, to focus on the Subcontinent. In the neighborhood, the ISIS has support bases in Bangladesh and Maldives. The government has been playing down the ISIS's threat. It has been arguing that considering the huge Muslim population of the country, a very small percentage has been drawn to or got involved in the ISIS's activities. That may be true, but a small percentage of a huge population works out to a significant number and it would be naïve to ignore the threat.

Pakistan has taken some half-hearted measures against terrorist formations in the country, which are euphemistically called non-state actors — largely due to pressure from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF.) These measures are more for show than substance. Besides, the ISI has been, for years, making well-orchestrated attempts to revive militancy in Punjab and trying to disrupt our economy by flooding the country with counterfeit currency.

It is necessary, therefore, that the country's internal security is beefed up. The first responders to a terrorist attack or a law and order problem is the police and, unfortunately, it is in a shambles. Police infrastructure — its manpower, transport, communications and forensic resources — require substantial augmentation. The directions given by the Supreme Court in 2006 appear to have created a fierce reaction in the establishment and led to a consolidation of, to use Marxist jargon, counterrevolutionary forces. The government must appreciate that any effort to strengthen national security without reforming, reorganising or restructuring the police would be an exercise in futility.

The police in every major state should have a force on the pattern of Greyhounds to deal with any terrorist attack. The country must also have a law on the lines of Maharashtra Control of Organised Crimes

Act (MCOCA) to deal with organised crimes. Investigation of cyber-crime would require specialist staff. Training the constables and darogas for the job will not take us far. The police must draw recruits from the IITs for the purpose.

The National Counter-Terrorism Centre must be set up with such modifications as may be necessary to meet the legitimate objections of the states. The law to deal with terror — the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act — needs more teeth. Successive governments have only fiddled with the law. We have had the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA), followed by the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) followed by the present UAPA.

It is also high time that the government thinks of bringing police in the Concurrent List. Police problems were simpler and of a local nature when the Constitution was framed. Since then, the pattern of crime and the dimensions of law and order problems have undergone a sea change. Drugs trafficked from the Myanmar border traverse the Subcontinent and find their way to Europe or even the US. Arms are smuggled from China to India's Northeast via Thailand and Bangladesh. They are then distributed to insurgent groups in different parts of the country.

States today are incapable of managing the slightest disruption in law and order. Central forces are deployed to assist the states round the year. Bringing police in the Concurrent List would only amount to giving de jure status to what prevails on the ground.

The CBI's image needs to refurbished. It is time that an Act was legislated to define the charter and regulate the functioning of the premier investigating agency. It is ridiculous that the CBI draws its mandate from the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act of 1946 and that the organisation was created through a resolution passed more than 50 years ago.

The Central Armed Police Forces are not in the best of health. It would be desirable that a high-level commission is appointed to go into their problems of deployment, utilisation, discipline, morale and promotional opportunities.

The major internal security threats today are in J&K, in the Northeast and from Maoists in Central India. These would need to be dealt with in a manner which — while addressing legitimate demands and removing genuine grievances — ensures that the intransigent elements are isolated and effectively dealt with. The Hurriyat leaders must be cut down to size and the cases against them pursued to their logical conclusion. The framework agreement with the Naga rebels must be finalised and the NSCN (IM) should be firmly told that the government can go thus far and no further.

The Maoists need to be dealt with in a more sensitive manner. Now that government has got the upper hand, it should seriously consider holding out the olive branch, inviting them for peace talks while taking precaution at the same time that the insurgents do not utilise the peace period as a breather to augment their strength.

The writer was Director General of Border Security Force

Khan Market blues

It is unfair to call the citizens that frequent the area a gang

NILIMA SINHA

NO, NOT another article on Khan Market! The response, in the form of numerous articles in newspapers, is not surprising, considering the number of supposedly elite men and women simmering over the tag so derisively conferred on them by no less a person than the highly popular prime minister himself. The "Khan Market Gang" — as if it is a group of gangsters living (and shopping) there by virtue of the wealth acquired through questionable means, not unlike the robber barons of the US.

This is so far from the truth that those bestowed this title cannot but shake with indignance. As a person who has lived my whole life in the area, from before Independence, who has seen this part of Delhi grow from a remote jungle into the posh, central part of the city that it has now become, I feel I must join issue.

No doubt I am one of those privileged to have grown up in Lutyens Delhi. This was not because I belonged to a rich and wealthy family. It was only because my father, a government servant who, by dint of his hard work and merit, had been able to enter the coveted Indian Civil Service and had got posted to Delhi early in his career. He was the son of a commoner — a teacher in Nagpur — but had studied hard, in a foreign language, and successfully competed against the privileged Britishers in Britain. It was his reward for the struggle he had gone through to reach this position.

The young ICS officer happened to be

posted in the relief and rehabilitation ministry during Partition. The huge compound of our government accommodation at 6, Ashoka Road had turned into a shelter home for refugees. My mother looked after them and even opened a training centre for the women to teach them hosiery-making. Several centres were opened by the rehabilitation ministry to provide skills and training to those who had fled Pakistan, leaving behind all their belongings. The refugees were eager to earn their own living. Their hard work and efforts to stand on their own feet earned everybody's admiration. I remember how Connaught Place had become crowded with small shopkeepers squatting in the corridors, a variety of objects spread out on sheets before them, trying to earn some money.

It was the task of the rehabilitation ministry to settle the refugees and my father was one of those given that onerous responsibility. That is how the Khan Market came into being. It was meant to give the refugees a place where they could earn a living instead of depending on others or on the government.

As mentioned in earlier articles, the market was named after the North West Frontier leader Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his brother, who had helped the Hindu refugees to flee safely from that region. Two other markets in the region, Khanna and Mehar Chand markets were named after the minister heading the relief and rehabilitation ministry, Mehar Chand Khanna.

The area around was developed into colonies where junior government servants could stay. Bharti Nagar, Rabindra Nagar, Lodhi Colony, and several other housing colonies came up in the vicinity. Khan Market flourished as its shops catered to the residents. Of course there was the more affluent class too, in Jor Bagh, for instance, and in Lodhi Estate and Prithviraj Road. My father stayed in both these areas later as the years passed and he acquired seniority. In fact, my mother became so familiar to the shopkeepers that one day, when she left her grandson, a toddler, behind at a shop by mistake, the shopkeeper was able to inform the policeman about where to take the lost child. It was such a relief for us and the modest Khan Market shopkeeper was thanked profusely.

Later, as the wife of someone who had also made it from an underprivileged background in Bihar to a prestigious government job in Delhi, Khan Market became my haunt too. We walked there almost daily from Rabindra Nagar and later Shahjahan Road. Coming down to the next generation, our daughter, too, married to a government servant, continued to frequent Khan Market. Not only this, she became an officer in the Bank of India and was posted at the Khan Market branch for several years. The shops there were a steady attraction for us whether for their books, fashion garments or food items, and the shopowners were always welcom-

ing and friendly.

As the city expanded outwards, Khan Market developed into one of the most popular shopping areas in the capital. And today, frequented by foreigners from the diplomatic colonies, too, it has acquired greater sophistication resulting in prices soaring.

To call the government servants residing around Khan Market, whether senior or junior, a "gang" of elites is to be unfair to many. Indeed, they have struggled hard to reach there. Many have risen from poor homes in villages and small towns. Sheer hard work and dedication to studies has made them conquer the disadvantages of poverty and surmount the lack of an English education, finally letting them achieve their aim of serving the country through jobs in the government.

It is because of the earlier struggles of its members that the clan is now in a prestigious position; not because they were born with silver spoons. Along the way, the members also acquired the liberal attitude that came with education, the secular outlook and the respect for others' freedom that is the hallmark of democracy.

In short, the Khan Market "gang" deserves to be appreciated and respected, rather than be treated with disdain. Needless to say, this includes the hard-working journalists who also live in that area.

Sinha is an author of mystery-adventure and other fiction for children

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