

Combinative vs exclusive preferences



MARGINAL UTILITY
TCA SRINIVASA-RAGHAVAN

India now has a new set of rules for acquiring Indian citizenship. These new rules have brought about a political storm.

This could have been avoided if the BJP had consulted any economist specialising in choice theory, like say Amartya Sen who taught it at the Delhi School of Economics. It would have been guided better in framing its Citizens Amendment Bill, which is now law.

From a purely legal and constitutional point of view the new law is fine. But from a preferences point of view it comes up short.

The subject of preferences and their ordering have been studied threadbare by economic theorists over the last 125 years. They know what they are talking about.

The preferences problem in the case of Assam for instance is this: The BJP prefers non-Muslims to Muslims, especially for migration, while the Assamese prefer Assamese to non-Assamese, regardless of religion.

The BJP would, therefore, have been told to solve two problems identified by economic theory.

One is called cyclical preferences. The other is called combinative preferences.

Cyclical preferences are when A is preferred to B, and B is preferred to C, but C is preferred to A.

Combinative preferences are when the individual preferences of people in a group are involved and different combinations have to be taken into account, as when a group of people plan a holiday.

As the mathematician Frank Ramsey showed 90 years ago, cyclical preferences can be exploited by any clever person, and politicians are usually cleverer than ordinary people.

A simple example of this is when a stamp collector prefers stamp A to stamp B, stamp B to stamp C and stamp C to stamp A. He is also prepared to pay something — in cash or kind — to satisfy his preferences.

Any halfway decent dealer will keep offering exchanges for ₹100 ad infinitum. We have seen this happen to different groups over the last 70 years.

This process is known as the money-pump argument. But for it to work, two conditions must be satisfied.

First, the primary alternatives (in this case the stamps) can be combined with some other commodity like money to form composite alternatives. Second, a new offer is always preferred to the previous one.

This is exactly how the Congress achieved peace and tranquility in the North East between 1959 and 1985 and which the BJP has now disturbed.

The other problem is of conflict resolution within differing group preferences. The key thing is here is that preferences are not mutually exclusive. This makes it both easier and harder to solve the problem.

Economic theorists say such conflicts can be resolved in five ways.

One is to reduce all preferences to a single dimension represented by a number starting from 0 and going up to whatever. The higher the number the more preferred that option is.

The second is to assume that different preference conflicts cancel each other out. But this can result in a weak preference cancelling a strong one, as happens with food preferences on a group tour.

The third is simply the majoritarian solution. This is what the BJP always prefers. But this solution suffers from a major weakness: it ignores subjective preferences which can be important and non-negotiable.

The fourth is the use of intuition. You simply guess which alternative is most preferred. It's main shortcoming is that it can lead to inconsistent outcomes, as can be seen in the new citizenship law. Migrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan acceptable but not migrants from any other country.

The last is when everyone makes a compromise. The Inner Line Permit extension to all NE states except Assam illustrates this. And if Assam also manages to be an inner line permit state, the compromise will be complete.

Yediyurappa did what Fadnavis couldn't

BSY is now the unchallenged king of his universe. His fortunes have reversed after a long struggle. But can he afford to rest on his laurels?



PLAIN POLITICS
ADITI PHADNIS

The critics are quiet, the challengers have sheathed their swords for the moment.

With help from friends but much more, family, BS Yediyurappa has staged a comeback that is the envy of many in the party – including the golden boy of the BJP, Devendra Fadnavis, who is still coming to terms with political defeat in neighbouring Maharashtra. It must have stung Fadnavis to see Prime Minister Narendra Modi asking MPs at the BJP parliamentary party meeting to give a standing ovation to Yediyurappa for his victory in the by-election that has resulted in pulling the BJP government in Karnataka off the ventilator and propelling

it towards sunshine and healthy growth.

It is true that Yediyurappa put everything he had to win the by elections. In the 2018 Assembly elections, the BJP won 105 MLAs; the Congress 78; the Janata Dal Secular 37 in a house of 224. Yediyurappa tried to form a government, failed and resigned. It was unparalleled humiliation for the BJP as a party as Congress and Janata Dal Secular (JDS) cobbled together a precarious majority. But for Yediyurappa it was a personal setback as well. In 2016, when he was made party president he had to manage enormous friction within his party. KS Eshwarappa, from the Kuruba (shepherd) caste went to great lengths to mobilise his caste, offering it as a social coalition to fight the might of both the Lingayats (Yediyurappa) and the Vokkaligas (HD Deve Gowda). Sadananda Gowda, a Vokkaliga and Jagadish Shettar, a fellow Lingayat, had many complaints. They found a sympathetic ear in BL Santhosh, the coordinator between the RSS and the BJP. To overcome all that was not easy. But then came the Assembly elections and Yediyurappa found himself clutching the consolation prize though he felt he had come first in the race.

Now the tables are turned. Till a few weeks ago, there was little difference between Karnataka and Maharashtra. Both states were

hanging on to power by a slender thread. Except that while Fadnavis slipped and fell, Yediyurappa managed to pull himself up by the bootstraps and succeeded in convincing the voters of Karnataka that it was not the MLA they were voting for (they were MLAs who had quit the Congress/JDS and joined the BJP, effectively making them turncoats of the same variety that Fadnavis and the BJP managed to corral together from the Nationalist Congress Party and the Congress in Maharashtra), it was the party. This is not to be sneered at.

What lay behind the Karnataka victory? To be sure, Yediyurappa's own effort: Rarely do chief ministers work as hard as he did for a set of by-elections. He visited each constituency twice or three times, making a total of at least 50 visits, leaving nothing to chance. But the BJP won in Old Mysore, in the heart of Vokkaliga land, the bastion of Janata Dal (S) and Congress.

Consider what this means. The Krishnarajapet (KRPet) constituency is in Mandya district where the BJP has never polled more than 10,000 votes in total from the eight or so Assembly constituencies in the region. Former JD(S) MLA KC Narayana Gowda, who was one of the 17 MLAs of the erstwhile JD(S)-Congress ruling coalition and who resigned to make way for the BJP to form government in

LUNCH WITH BS ▶ SATYA RAGHAVAN | DIRECTOR | YOUTUBE PARTNERSHIPS, INDIA

Connecting the dots

YouTube mirrors what India is evolving into, Raghavan tells Vanita Kohli-Khandekar

Satya Raghavan raises his six foot-plus frame out of the chair as I walk into Eest. The Asian restaurant at the Westin, Gurugram, is empty and Raghavan strides across to give me a quick hug. It has been a while since I met the 45-year-old head of partnerships at the largest OTT platform in India. For some reason, we chat about Ogden Nash's poetry before turning to the menu. Raghavan opts for the Chinese vegetarian Bentobox and I go for the non-vegetarian one. Soon we are comfortably settled and sipping our Chinese teas. But Raghavan, who I have known in his various avatars for close to two decades, is not a man for cosy conversations. It is time to talk shop.

At almost 275 million unique visitors in September 2019, YouTube is way ahead of Times Group's MX Player (95 million) and Disney's Hotstar (91 million) says comScore data. It has tens of thousands of channels and made over ₹2,000 crore of the close to ₹10,000 crore that parent Google India made in revenues last year. YouTube's India business is its largest and fastest growing one globally. What makes it intriguingly placed in the Indian context is that it is part of the \$137 billion Alphabet which also owns Google. The company is, along with Amazon, AT&T, Disney, Comcast, Apple and Netflix, among the movers and shakers of the new media world emerging as telecom, technology and media collapse into one simple search for audiences. The most viewed channel on YouTube globally, T-Series, comes from India. Yet YouTube is never talked about as a media company. Why?

Raghavan doesn't pause. "YouTube is an economy by itself. It is driven at one end by what established media companies like T-Series and Sony do and on the other end by creators and discovery," says he. Thanks to the open, online auditorium that YouTube is, anyone can come in, show a talent, share information, expertise or simply post a video they liked among the thousands of things people do on YouTube. Many of the comedians who came on board — Bhuvan Bam, Amit Bhadana or Ashish Chanchalani — have gone on to build mini-empires which span, TV, other OTTs, live events and brand endorsements among other things. "Earlier very few people were doing YouTube full time. Now so many people

are proud to be earning a living on YouTube," says Raghavan

We have opened our Bento boxes and the food looks good. My prawns and steamed rice is delicious but there is nothing Chinese about it. It tastes more like Goan or Konkani prawns. The Mumbaikar in me is happy. Raghavan digs into his fried rice and veggies as he lists the genres that have popped on YouTube over the last few years — lifestyle, beauty, kids, nursery content, learning and education and village food. This year it has been farming and gaming.

"YouTube tends to mirror India as it moves into the next million (users). The reflection of what India is evolving into with every million consumers is different," says Raghavan. And it throws up surprises all the time. For example Village Food Factory (Tamil) which had hit 3 million subscribers earlier this year. These are videos of anything from french fries to chicken biryani being made in huge quantities in a village by locals. The production values are basic compared to some of the polished cookery shows but millions of people are watching it because "it is about nostalgia value and vicarious pleasure", says Raghavan.

When something pops, the first question is "how scalable is it". And if it is, then YouTube helps in the birthing of a new vertical and its sub-verticals. When stand-up comedy popped as a genre on YouTube in 2014 it spawned several sub-verticals — long-form, short form, web series and so on. More than 7 million candidates preparing for the railway exams or 2 million teenagers who appear for class twelfth exams, use YouTube. "We supplement or complement the sources of knowledge for this or are at times the only source," says he.

That is just a sliver of the YouTube usage for education and "how to" kind of information. From how to make *rotis* to how to do fish farming or setting up your mobile phone there are thousands of videos people use. This educational, information connect with users is what excites Raghavan the most. The reasons, probably, lie in his somewhat restless professional journey.

A classic *tam bram* (Tamilian Brahmin) as he calls himself, Raghavan did his engineering in the early 90s. It was during this time that he started writing for *The Independen*sLater



in 1995, he was among the four people who set up India's first youth magazine, JAM (Just Another Magazine). He left soon after in 1996 to go to the Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow. A stint with Coca-Cola, two with Star India and one with General Mills followed before he did a second MBA. This time at Harvard followed by a stint with Microsoft and venture funding firm Helion where the whole idea of funding an education start-up took hold of him. Arguably some of this interest in education came from his mum who used to

the state, contested from the seat and won by a 9,000-vote margin. In one seat alone.

The importance of the KR Pet victory is two-fold. One, the management of the election was entrusted to Vijayendra, Yediyurappa's younger son. In the 2018 Assembly elections, outgoing Congress Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's constituency was Varuna, in this region. Vijayendra was keen on contesting against Siddaramaiah, but at the last moment, the party gave the seat to a BL Santhosh-backed candidate. The Congress fielded Siddaramaiah's son Yathindra, who won the seat. But the whole episode cut Vijayendra to the quick and he vowed to return to the region to post a victory. KR Pet was that victory.

Yediyurappa's area of work and influence has been Shimoga. But he was born in KR Pet. Vijayendra incorporated this in his strategy. In a two lakh-strong constituency, around 93,000 voters are Vokkaliga. Logic dictated that it would be impossible to play the caste card by the BJP which is seen as a Lingayat party. Instead, Vijayendra campaigned on behalf of his father as a prodigal son who had returned home. People scoffed at him, predicting that the BJP could never win from old Mysore. His retort was: "If Amit Shah can make the BJP win in Bengal, it can win from Old Mysuru as well."

In the by-elections, it is the BJP which has won, not the candidates: make no mistake. Yediyurappa's critics will now focus on lapses in governance and administration. But politically, a window that was always closed to the BJP has been opened by Vijayendra. He, along with a flock of other young leaders in the party, will be a man to watch in the future politics of Karnataka.

run a school. Soon after he left Helion, in 2011 Raghavan co-founded Skoolshop with a batch-mate from Harvard. It was supplying books and school stationery to over 200 schools when it was acquired by another firm Hopscotch in 2014. That is when Raghavan joined Google. "At YouTube all of these things (which he had done) became the dots that just joined," says he.

Will they connect in this new media world that YouTube and Netflix have kick-started? One where broadcasters are becoming OTTs while OTTs are doing exactly what broadcasters did, launching many apps, channels, niches and genres.

"Once you understand the niche or space you want to occupy the medium is not important. People are consuming YouTube on the smart phone and the smart TV. If you really want to crack the choice, convenience conundrum the ability to scale is important. And how big you become is defined by the type of content and ability to mine the smaller more varied clusters. TV is homogenous, there are soaps and shows. The scale we are able to see at YouTube is at another level. Our platform is scalable to the nth billion," says he. And given the reach and texture of the medium each vertical has a different growth curve. "Stand-up comedy is more like one stalagmite curve while the growth of food is like a glacier, it keeps rising forever. Music on the other hand grows in waves," says Raghavan getting into his element.

Advertisers, YouTube's biggest source of revenues, understand shows and soaps. "But a tractor company may not know that farming will be the next big thing on YouTube or that agriculture related content is getting traction," says he. This matchmaking between advertisers, revenues and audiences that YouTube does by being the world's auditorium, dictionary, news, entertainment, information and learning hub, is its biggest strength.

We are done with the food and opt for a healthy dessert of cut fruits. Raghavan forks his sliced apple as he dismisses the notion of conflict in the broadcaster-OTT ecosystem. "Whether they use it to promote or put out their content, some of these broadcasters are our largest ad partners. Sony, for instance, has 60 million subscribers on YouTube. Someone might put 10 minutes of content or a promo or someone might use it for catch-up TV, all these are on various points of a continuum," says he painting a broader canvas.

That's so Raghavan, I think, as we bid adieu.

Seeds of discontent



PEOPLE LIKE THEM
KEYA SARKAR

In my 15 years in the crafts business in Santiniketan, there have been a few times when social researchers have come to meet me. Their agenda is always to figure out the social impact of business-es like mine. Of all their questions the one which I have come to dread over the years is, whether my enterprise is aiding "women's empowerment".

Many of the girls I work with have in the years that we have worked together gone through a divorce. The reason is that over a period of time, they tend to earn more than their husbands, given the paucity of well paying rural jobs for men. With more money in their hands, their expectations and aspirations undergo a

huge change no longer compatible with those of their husbands. Invariably, this leads to love interests outside of the marriage which have become far easier to conduct thanks to personal mobiles. The girls are also generous in showering gifts on their current paramours.

Soon the husbands find out what's going on and after a few months of efforts at reconciliation, the answer is divorce. But unlike women in urban upper middle class homes these girls do not have the option of living alone in their villages. So a divorce invariably means coming back to the parents' house. As the girls have little in common with their parents' aspirations, the life there is no different from what it was with their husbands: The girls have money but no freedom to do what they wish with it.

Soon the parents start looking for another suitor and strangely they find them too. The girls invariably have one condition for agreeing: They should be allowed to work after marriage. After some negotiation, the boy's family agrees. And then, of course, there is the whole logistics to sort out. If she is getting married a distance from her place of work, there is much concern about how she will travel. Is there a direct bus from the village? Are there other girls who also travel to nearby locations from

the village and such like.

After all this has been sorted, the two families set a date and the girl mentally prepares for a new life. But recently, there seems to be another twist in the tale. The girls often ask me whether members of her future in-laws family can visit our workshop and meet me. They are keen to know where exactly their daughter-in-law will be travelling to and spending the whole day.

I invariably agree curious as I am to know what kind of interrogation I will be subjected to. My anxiety is unwarranted because village folks are more often than not intimidated by women like me. They ask a few questions look around the premises, talk to the other women and leave happy to know that the reality of the workplace matches the picture that that their daughter-in-law had painted.

The wedding happens and the girl is seems happy to begin with. It reflects in her clothes, the glitter of her costume jewelry. But all too soon, it fades and the conversation I begin to overhear with her colleagues is all about the amount of money she has to spend on the family. The seeds of discontent are sown.

I wonder how much of the guilt do I bear for having started off the cycle in the first place by giving her a job. Is this how "women's empowerment" plays out?



PEOPLE LIKE US
KISHORE SINGH

This weekend, we will attend our first reception for a gay couple, as neighbours and friends of a child who shared her adolescence and youth with our children, grew into a lively young woman, found love and companionship in an alternate space, braved the telling to her parents, and is looking forward to a future with her partner whom she married a while ago. The reception is a public declaration of their outing and acceptance within the family and circle of friends, and if there have been hesitations and hiccups behind closed doors, at least, openly everyone has stepped forward with a smile and an embrace.

If this is a sign of a mutable India, such

changes are currently confined to the metros and confines of the educated upper middle class. Acceptance of gay relationships in India is still a chimera, accompanied — in provincial capitals and smaller cities — by equal measures of derision and violence, sniggers and alienation. Small-town India can be frighteningly claustrophobic, now more so because the internet offers a glimpse of liberation that conservative societies quickly scotch. The fear of violence is always at hand.

If in Delhi, such celebrations are a one-day wonder for our domestic staff who seemingly take it in their stride, the taboo is still strong enough for their families to voice their disapproval of "urban" attitudes. Elders back home prefer that their children and grandchildren be brought up under their close watch so they can fortify their values. Stagnation rather than questioning marks the flagbearers of "culture" that is touted as "Indian heritage". Our cook, for instance, was forced to send his family packing to the village because the school where his daughter had been admitted insisted that she cut her hair for fear of spreading lice — something they could not countenance.

India is changing in ways both good and bad. Even as the state bears down on public freedoms — of citizenship, religion, expression of views — personal freedoms

are on the rise despite patriarchy, sexual viciousness and masculine vigilantism. Urban societies may not yet offer equal spaces and opportunities for men and women, but these disparities are prevalent as much in terms of gender as caste and class. Every domestic protest, therefore, opens a new door, or window, to an opportunity that was not previously available; every articulation of it makes its agent a role model for others.

Small freedoms and victories, thus, call for a cheer for their protagonists. But equally important are the people behind the dissenters who challenge their own and society's mindsets to accept newer thinking. The parents who encourage diversity, the family that supports dissent, the friends who absorb rather than marginalise deviations from the norm — they are the unsung heroes of the churn India is experiencing. They are rarely acknowledged, but in extending the safety and comfort of their backing, it is equally they who are the agents of change. And just as often, it is they who are the target for the slurs and needles of social approbation. But when they publicly endorse change, society is silenced. To them then, our friends, who had the courage to uphold their daughter's choice in the esteem it deserves — cheers, and a special buddy hug.

Dousing the infernos of urban chaos



AL FRESCO
SUNIL SETHI

A recent text message received from Defence Minister Rajnath Singh exhorts "Hon Raksha Mantri to flag off 'Plastic Se Raksha'. Nationwide event from Delhi Cantt Board". This was on December 7.

A day later, in the early hours of Sunday, December 8, an appalling fire broke out in a deeply congested area of Old Delhi, killing 43, mostly poor migrants from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Jharkhand, several of them children, engaged in producing plastic toys, plastic photo frames, rexine bags, and suchlike. The sweat shops were packed with inflammable materials such as glue and plastic gran-

ules. The workers lived and worked in airless tenements, two and three storeys high; fire tenders lost much time in reaching the spot because the narrow lane was dense with vending carts. "There was no ventilation and the staircase was blocked with highly combustible material," said an investigator.

With rampant illegal construction and no safety or fire regulation, disasters such as this occur with growing frequency across urban India. Earlier in the year 17 died from asphyxiation and burns in a Karol Bagh high-rise hotel. The police report noted "that extensive use of plastic, other inflammable material on the walls and partitions and a temporary structure erected on the roof" led to the rapid spread of smoke and fire.

The defence minister is only parroting the prime minister's pledges and appeals to make India a plastic-free nation by 2022. But the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) begs to differ. Delhi, where the leading worthies of government reside, according to the CPCB's figures, is the single-biggest contributor of plastic waste (of the 26,000 tonnes annually generated nationwide), followed

by Kolkata and Ahmedabad.

Despite window dressing such as banning single-use plastic in Parliament and railways, the chasm between policy pronouncements and ground-level action is ever-widening. For instance, the Waste Management Rules of 2016 have consistently been diluted due to pressure from plastic manufacturers, labour contractors, and the thousands of migrants employed in the sweatshops crammed into ghettos such as the one where the blaze this month took a deadly toll.

Among other clauses, mandatory fines on shopkeepers using plastic bags have been dropped. On the contrary, the Centre for Science and Environment reports a 136 per cent increase in the number of grossly polluting industries between 2011 and 2018. Despite crores spent on cleaning the Ganga and Yamuna, carriers of plastic waste, the river in Delhi is officially dead — the CPCB claims its waters for 20 km through Delhi are actually "sewage from the Najafgarh drain". As for Mother Ganga, it has acquired the unflattering reputation of a curiosity and charity pit stop for visiting royalty. The King and Queen of Sweden on

their recent visit attended the inauguration of a sewage treatment plant at Haridwar even as the Jal Shakti minister delivered a sermon on the river as saviour of millions.

The aftermath of the rising casualties in the charred building witnessed ugly scenes of quarrelling among authorities — the fire service, the municipality, and police, all blaming one another. The bickering became political, with the ruling Aam Aadmi Party and the BJP-controlled municipal corporation at each other's throats.

Hundreds of thousands of buildings are declared dangerous and unsafe after such disasters throughout the country, and the tinderbox of Delhi is no different. The capital's municipalities announced the immediate sealing of 4,272 out of 5,236 units, with one political boss piously announcing that he "sought answers" as to how such illegal construction was allowed.

He should know. Corrupt officials and the police, together with local political henchmen, are complicit in the creation of potential infernos — one estimate reckons that 70 per cent of the city's population live in unauthorised colonies, in unregulated

buildings so congested that access by fire engines is difficult. The city's fire chief went on record to say: "We have witnessed over 20,000 fire incidents in Delhi since January this year and 194 people lost their lives. We have no hesitation in admitting that there is a 50 per cent shortage of firefighters, keeping in view the area and population of the city." Yet it is also a matter of record that in all the major fires since 2011, not a single government official or policeman has been indicted in any inquiry for negligence in building or fire safety lapses.

Leaders have come to treat the fires of urban chaos as par for the course. With customary hand-wringing condolence messages and cash compensations, the chief minister and prime minister proffered cheques of ₹10 lakh and ₹2 lakh, respectively, to each of the families of the bereaved.

As for the terrified survivors of the burnt-out building, who ate, slept, and worked in sub-human conditions, they hurriedly packed up the remains of their plastic-producing raw materials and moved on — to set up shop in new deathtraps elsewhere in the city.

Dhoti chic

EYE CULTURE
UTTARAN DAS GUPTA

The official website of the Nobel Prize has a page dedicated to the dress code: "The Nobel Prize Award Ceremony in Stockholm and the Nobel Banquet that follows is a strictly formal affair. Gentlemen are required to wear white tie and tails, while ladies should be dressed in an evening gown."

Then, it adds: "Wearing your national costume is an alternative to white tie and tails or evening gown." Indian-American economist Abhijit Banerjee decided to utilise this caveat to wear a dhoti and kurta with a black bandhgala when he received the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences earlier this week. This earned him widespread applause for reclaiming his *bhadralok* heritage, albeit with a modern twist.

Several newspaper pieces claimed "three Bengalis had won the Nobel Prize" but only one had turned up in a dhoti.

The second part of the statement is correct; the first part incorrect. In fact, four Bengalis have won the Nobel Prize — Rabindranath Tagore in 1913 for literature, Amartya Sen and Mr Banerjee in 1998 and 2019 for economics, and Muhammad Yunus in 2006 for peace; the first three are Indian or of Indian origin, and the fourth is Bangladeshi.

Esther Duflo, with whom Mr Banerjee shared his prize, chose to wear a sari. Of course, people should wear whatever they want to — or not — but Ms Duflo, the youngest to get the Prize in economics, is French American. So one wonders what caveat applied to her, despite being married to Mr Banerjee.

When Mr Banerjee returned home to Kolkata in October this year for a short visit, soon after the Nobel Prize was announced, he was greeted with euphoria.

The Telegraph reported: "The Nobel winner entered the housing complex (in south Kolkata) at 7.55 pm... The sound of conch shells and ululation went on even after Banerjee went into his apartment."

Crowds had turned up at the airport, brandishing flowers and cellphones, eager to get a picture of him.

Kolkata Mayor Firad Hakim was also present. The euphoria was perhaps not unexpected. And by now, Kolkata might as well have a blueprint ready for greeting its citizens who bag the Prize.

But holding up Mr Banerjee as a trophy to Bengali and *bhadralok* pride only because he wore a dhoti to the Nobel ceremony is a tad onerous.

"[T]he bhadralok as a sociological category is notoriously flexible and defies definition," writes historian Ishaan Mukherjee in a long piece, "Battle for the Bhadrakol", for *The Caravan* earlier this year. He could be a professional, or a landlord, corresponding vaguely to Victorian professional gentleman.

To put it rather simply, Mr Mukherjee claims that the current power struggle between the Trinamool Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in West Bengal is a struggle for the legacy of the *bhadralok*.

"The current electoral success of the BJP has to be understood in terms of the political choices that the *bhadralok* seem to be making to preserve and perpetuate their dominance," writes Mr Mukherjee.

In popular culture, the *bhadralok* usually wears a dhoti. It is as much as a symbol of his cultural finesse as the top hat and frock coat are for the Victorian gentlemen.

The male protagonists of the novels of Tagore or his contemporaries would not be caught dead in anything else unless there was an urgent reason.

Later, depictions of these characters, first in theatre and then in cinema, had actors donning the traditional attire. Superstar Uttam Kumar seemed to monopolise this role, playing it in several films, but perhaps most memorably in *Nishi Padma* (1970) — a role that Rajesh Khanna reprised a couple of years later in *Amar Prem*.

Imagine Shah Rukh Khan wearing anything other than a dhoti-panjabi (the Bengali word for kurta) as Devdas!

But there is a significant difference between what the traditional *bhadralok* used to wear and what Mr Banerjee wore at the Nobel ceremony. Earlier, it would usually be starched, of cloth or silk, and white. In recent times, however, fashion designers and the *bhadralok* have been less and less reluctant to experiment with colour or material.

Designer Sarbari Datta has got Member of Parliament Derek O'Brien and model Milind Soman, former minister Praful Patel and the rather shy Rahul Dravid to don a new-fangled coloured dhoti.

The *bhadralok*, as we mentioned earlier, is impossible to define — he would have earlier balked at the very idea of wearing a coloured dhoti; now, with Mr Banerjee wearing, it is quite likely to be the hot fashion item during Durga Puja next year.

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Discovery of Pakistan

India invested 25 years after the Cold War to de-hyphenate itself from Pakistan in global strategic equations. Here's how Modi govt has dramatically re-hyphenated us

HOW do we define a "national security state"? Check out for ideas from the one living next door to us: Pakistan. Everything about Pakistan is built around the idea of national security, or insecurity. That is why its army has such a permanently privileged position in its power structure, and its intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), has more institutional autonomy than any in the history of a nuclear weapons power.

How do you delude your people, 210 million or so, permanently into paying for this folly? By finding a demon ugly and dangerous enough to scare them. To justify a national security state, you first need to build fear. The Pakistani establishment has successfully painted India as that fearsome ogre.

That is why it is able to spend so much money on the military. That is why, as I noted in an article on Pakistan in my occasional "Writings on the Wall" series, that the notice prominently hanging above the head of the immigration officer stamping your passport at the Wagah border reads: "We respect all. We suspect all."

It follows that a national security state is also a suspicious state. And further that is the reason why it ends up in such a mess. A bankrupted, beg-borrowed economy, a broken society, falling social indicators, garage sale of national assets, and wide swathes of territory to a neighbourhood "uncle" as protection fees, and the globally acknowledged distinctions like "University of Jihad" and the "global migraine". The clearest and the most useful lesson Pakistan holds out to the rest of the world, especially its neighbours, is: Don't be like me.

In India, it is evident now, we have decided not to take that warning seriously. We are, on the other hand, caught in this new, post-2015 Pakistan obsession. By 2014, Pakistan had nearly vanished from our public discourse. India had broken laps ahead in the race. Pakistan was at worst a nuisance state. This has changed over the past five years.

Pakistan buzzed repeatedly in the Parliament debate on the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB) and in the Jharkhand election campaign through this week. Amit Shah asked why, whether it was the surgical strike, Balakot air strike, or the CAB, the Congress party's view was the same as that of

Pakistan. Narendra Modi reflected similar sentiment in his campaign speeches. India's self-inflicted and conscious re-hyphenation with Pakistan, for domestic politics, is now quite clear.

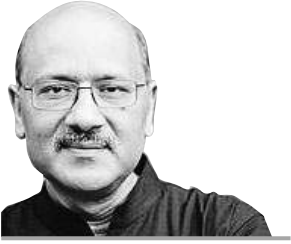
With Pulwama as the backdrop, the 2019 campaign was built on the theme of whether you are with us or Pakistan. An analysis of Mr Modi's speeches in just four states — Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, and Maharashtra — by *India Today's* data team showed Pakistan featured 90 times. This continued in the Haryana and Maharashtra campaigns. Pakistan is now featuring in our discourse and lives more prominently than it has since, we'd suspect, Op Parakram 18 years ago.

Now the entire CAB rationale and debate was based on Pakistan and Partition and the treatment of minorities there. It followed therefore that India had a special responsibility to look after the non-Muslim minorities of Pakistan, just as an Islamic state might have seen itself as a natural home for Muslims.

This was the clearest statement yet that India too had begun to see itself primarily as the natural home of Hindus, Sikhs, and other non-Muslims of the subcontinent just as Pakistan sees itself for the Muslims. Never mind that the same Pakistan has been so bloody-minded with the so-called "Biharis", the Urdu-speakers left behind in Bangladesh.

Some of the recent discourse harks back to much that you hear in Pakistan — full of insecurity, hostility and bile about India. To set the political clock back to Partition, with its most hostile neighbour so far behind that it could afford to mostly forget it, amounts to a new discovery of Pakistan.

The gap between India and Pakistan has now widened so much that nobody in the world, not even China, mentions both countries in the same breath. That hyphenation has been buried. Just that we have now dug it out again. Because, how do you build a national security state unless you invent insecurity first. For this you need a fearsome enemy. That's Pakistan. And while by itself it may not still be scary enough, seen with the larger threat of pan-Islamism it becomes a monster. That it brings a pall of suspicion, almost a Fifth Column image for India's own 200 million Muslims, is seen as mere collateral damage.



NATIONAL INTEREST
SHEKHAR GUPTA