Combinative vsexclusive preferences



MARGINAL UTILITY

TCA SRINIVASA-RAGHAVAN

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.

ferred to A.

 $Frank\,Ramsey\,showed\,90\,years\,go,\,cyclical\,preferences\,can$

be exploited by any clever person, and politicians are usu-

A simple example of this is when when a stamp collector

Any halfway decent dealer will keep offering exchanges

This process is known as the money-pump

First, the primary alternatives (in this case the stamps)

This is exactly how the Congress achieved peace and

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

for ₹100 ad infinitum. We have seen this happen to different

argument. But for it to work, two conditions must be satis-

can be combined with some other commodity like money

to form composite alternatives. Second, a new offer is

tranquility in the North East between 1959 and 1985 and

fering group preferences. The key thing is here is that pref-

erences are not mutually exclusive. This makes it both eas-

The other problem is of conflict resolution within dif-

Economic theorists say such conflicts can be resolved

One is to reduce all preferences to a single dimension

The second is to assume that different preference con-

The third is simply the majoritarian solution. This is

The fourth is the use of intuition. You simply guess

what the BJP always prefers. But this solution suffers from

a major weakness: it ignores subjective preferences which

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

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.

The last is when everyone makes a compromise. The

flicts cancel each other out. But this can result in a weak

preference cancelling a strong one, as happens with food

represented by a number starting from 0 and going up to

whatever. The higher the number the more preferred that

One is called cyclical pref-

erences. The other is called

when A is preferred to B, and

B is preferred to C, but C is pre-

are when the individual pref-

erences of people in a group

are involved and different

combinations have to be taken

into account, as when a group

As the mathematician

of people plan a holiday.

Combinative preferences

combinative preferences. Cyclical preferences are

From a purely legal and constitutional point of view the new citizenship law is fine. But from a preferences point of view it comes up short. The subject of preferences problem and their ordering have been studied threadbare by economic theorists over the last 125 years

ally cleverer than ordinary people.

groups over the last 70 years.

cash or kind — to satisfy his preferences.

always preferred to the previous one.

which the BJP has now disturbed.

ier and harder to solve the problem.

preferences on a group tour.

any other country.

can be important and non-negotiable.

This could have been avoided if the B.JP had consulted any economist specialising in choice theory, like say Amartya Sen who taught it at the Delhi

ndia now has a

new set of rules for

acquiring Indian

political

citizenship. These new

rules have brought

he critics are quiet, the challengers have sheathed their swords for the moment. With help from friends but much more, School of Economics. family, BS Yediyurappa has staged a comeback that is the envy of many in the party – including It would have been 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

PLAIN POLITICS

ADITI PHADNIS

it towards sunshine and healthy growth.

after a long struggle. But can he afford to rest on his laurels?

BSY is now the unchallenged king of his universe. His fortunes have reversed

Yediyurappa did what Fadnavis couldn't

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

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

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 twofold. One, the management of the election was entrusted to Vijayendra, Yediyurappa's younger son. In the 2018 Assembly elections, Congress Chief Minister outgoing 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 Santhoshbacked candidate. The Congress fielded Siddaramiah's son Yathindra, who won the seat. But the whole episode cut Vijavendra 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

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

Connecting the dots

YouTube mirrors what India is evolving into,

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

September 2019, YouTube is way ahead of Times Group's MX Player (95 million) and Disnev's Hotstar (91 million) savs 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 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 Chanchlani — 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

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 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,"

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 IndependensLater run a school. Soon after he left Helion, in 2011 Raghavan co-founded Skoolshop with a batchmate 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 ioined," 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. "Standup 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 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

Raghavan tells Vanita Kohli-Khandekar atya Raghavan raises his six foot-plus are proud to be earning a living on YouTube," frame out of the chair as I walk into Eest. says Raghavan The Asian restaurant at the Westin, We have opened our Bento boxes and the

At almost 275 million unique visitors in

doing YouTube full time. Now so many people



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

Seeds of discontent



PEOPLE LIKE THEM

KEYA SARKAR

n 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 businesses 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-inlaw 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?

Small freedoms and victories



PEOPLE LIKE US

KISHORE SINGH

his 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 oneday 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.

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WEEKEND RUMINATIONS

T N NINAN

Divergent tracks

he starkly divergent tracks being followed by the economy and the ruling party's ambitious political thrust are too obvious to be ignored. From the start of the Narendra Modi government's first term, it has been evident that for the government politics trumps the economy — and this despite Mr Modi's message on the stump in 2014. Today the dichotomy is all the more evident: The economy is less important than re-writing the basic rules of political engagement by giving effect to the Sangh Parivar's long-held shibboleths, for which you could argue that the Bharatiya Janata Party has won an electoral mandate.

This happened once before, in Indira Gandhi's battle for political supremacy and an even bigger mandate. That provoked her, half a century ago, to launch a legislative lurch to the economic Left: Broad-spectrum nationalisation, restrictive labour and other laws, and tight land legislation. The economy is still paying the price for that primacy given to politics. Will history repeat itself?

Large changes don't come without friction, and there is plenty of that going around quite apart from a pervasive ugliness. That may be part of the new narrative that includes the prospect of a disruptive national register of citizens. But however dominant the BJP has become, the domestic political situation shows contrasting pictures at the Central and state levels, and therefore continuing challenges to the BJP. The attempt to secure the heartland with the Hindutva agenda has now pitted it against the periphery that has large minority populations of various kinds. The consequences are unforeseeable. Transitional arrangements like the Inner Line System in the Northeast are being hardwired and indeed extended, dividing the country in new ways. That still does not offer solutions in Assam, while Kashmir remains locked down for a fifth month.

Internationally, the reasons that led western liberal democracies to prefer India to authoritarian China, and in important ways to make shared values a bedrock of bilateral relations, have come into question. Critical voices are being raised in the US and Europe, and will get louder. In the neighbourhood, the repercussions are already evident in Bangladesh, while a slower Indian economy will find it steadily more difficult to confront the challenge from China, which has not lost momentum as India has. As the fifth-largest economy, India will remain an attractive market, but the loss of momentum cannot but find reflection in international choices. It does not help that economic diplomacy has reversed tracks on trade and tariffs, threatening trade friction.

While it would be reasonable to expect some level of economic recovery in 2020, the obstacles in the way of a desperately required reversion to earlier growth rates are formidable. The financial sector's problems are not over, and small and medium enterprises in particular continue to struggle. The problems on the farm front are real, and exporters are hobbled by an unreal currency policy. The macro-economic story includes an impossible fiscal situation since the Centre is unable to pay its bills; unpalatable tax choices because of fundamental problems with goods and services tax (made worse by indiscriminate pre-election rate cuts); and the danger of stagflation underlining the limits of monetary policy. The room for manoeuvre is getting limited.

The GST revenue shortfalls mean that the government's commitments on the public provision of private goods (including pre-election cash pay-outs to farmers) now run ahead of the exchequer's capacity to bear the cost without serious fiscal slippage and a possibly unaffordable level of borrowing that will send up the levels of government debt in relation to GDP. It has not helped that heavy investments in the transport infrastructure have not seen expected returns, while the power sector continues to be bedevilled by serious viability issues.

The BJP's push for political dominance and rewriting the rules of engagement represents a serious misplacement of priorities in these circumstances, and may be impossible to pull off. Perhaps the calculation is that economic recovery will have been achieved before the next general elections come around, but such facile assumptions can come unstuck if current directions are not reversed quickly. That is what should be taking up more of the government's attention.

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

OW do we define a "national security state"? Pakistan. Narendra Modi reflected similar senti-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 fear-

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 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

the rest of the world, especially its neighbours, is:

SHEKHAR GUPTA

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

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

ment 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-Wall" series, that the notice prominently hanging 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 Urduspeakers left behind in Bangladesh.

Some of the recent discourse **NATIONAL INTEREST** 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

and the most useful lesson Pakistan holds out to the promise to correct its wrongs when India has left 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.

et's review the tale of two countries that began ■new histories in 1947. They chose contrary paths. One became a liberal, constitutional republic, the other a majoritarian, ideological, militaristic state. One stayed non-aligned, the other joined the period's "hottest" military alliances.

In less than 25 years, the ideological state had lost more than half of itself and a third country came into being. Soon, even the new country fell back on the model of the sibling it had left behind, choosing Islam as its majoritarian ideology and military rulers. Two decades of this beggared and impoverished it, and made it the metaphor for so many third world ills, from epidemics to over-population to endemic poverty. The outrageously irreverential but sharp American writer P J O'Rourke chose Bangladesh to talk about overpopulation in his collection "All the Trouble in the World" and wrote a line as offensive, but probably factual then, as: "How can a country not have enough to eat and still smell so much of crap?"

Soon enough, and in good time that new country went back to its founder's secular and modern ideal, much like India's. Another two decades and now it is way ahead of Pakistan on almost every socioeconomic indicator. In many it is now leaving behind India, which helped liberate it exactly 48 years ago as this column is being written. A country held out by Mr O'Rourke as an exemplifier of starvation and open defecation now has buried both the curses. It's mostly open defecation-free. Its population growth rate has declined dramatically, to the same level as India's: 1 per cent per year. It is the fruit of dumping the ideological virus it had briefly contracted from Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the dismembered Pakistan realised it had a great natural asset — its geography — as the Soviets invaded Afghanistan and the Cold War shifted next door. It benefited from it militarily and collected huge largesse in economic aid, but chose in around 1981 to employ the same Afghan tactics against India. The results?

In 1985 on my first visit to Pakistan I was taken aback by how much better it looked. Sure enough, its per capita income was 65 per cent higher than India's. In 2019, India's will be 60 per cent higher instead. How did that happen? Its socio-economic indicators are shot, a 13th IMF bailout has been consumed, the population growth rate is exactly twice that of India and Bangladesh. But it still has the military, a bustling national security state where the prime minister does "salaam" to his army chief. The only area where it is ahead of India is probably the number of nukes. But, as the late K Subrahmanyam, doyen of Indian strategic studies, used to say: Why do you need more when less is enough?

India serves itself poorly with its latter-day discovery of Pakistan as an instrument in domestic politics. For comparisons with Pakistan now, India will need to stoop so low that our knees would hurt. The other way, God forbid, is if we let their experiments with building an ideological, national security state inspire us to remould India of the future in a similar sectarian image. That is an avoidable tragedy.

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Dousing the infernos of urban chaos



SUNIL SETHI

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 grangenerated nationwide), followed

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

With rampant illegal construction, 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 singlebiggest contributor of plastic waste (of the 26,000 tonnes annually

Despite window dressing such as banning single-use plastic in Parliament and railways, the nouncements and ground-level action is ever-widening. For instance, the Waste Management Rules of 2016 have consistently plastic manufacturers, labour police, all blaming one another. in view the area and population contractors, and the thousands of migrants employed in the sweatshops crammed into ghettoes such as the one where the blaze this month took a deadly toll.

Among other clauses, manda-

tory 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 "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.

plant at Haridwar even as the Jal Shakti minister delivered a sermon

casualties in the charred building and 194 people lost their lives. witnessed ugly scenes of quar- We have no hesitation in admitrelling among authorities — the ting that there is a 50 per cent been diluted due to pressure from fire service, the municipality, and shortage of firefighters, keeping The hickering 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 offiwaters for 20 km through Delhi are cials 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 unau-The King and Queen of Sweden on thorised colonies, in unregulated deathtraps elsewhere in the city.

their recent visit attended the inaubuildings so congested that guration of a sewage treatment access by fire engines is difficult. The city's fire chief went on record to say: "We have witon the river as saviour of millions. nessed over 20,000 fire incidents The aftermath of the rising in Delhi since January this year 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 handwringing 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 plasticproducing raw materials and moved on — to set up shop in new

Dhoti chic

EYE CULTURE

UTTARAN DAS GUPTA

he official website of the Nobel Prize has a page dedicated to the Award Ceremony in Stockholm and the Nobel Banquet that follows is a strictly formal affair. Gentlemen are required

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 hat and frock coat are for the Victorian Prize" but only one had turned up in gentlemen. a dhoti.

The second part of the statement is correct; **(T)here is a significant** the first part incorrect. **difference between what** In fact, four Bengalis the traditional bhadralok have won the Nobel used to wear and what Prize — Rabindranath Banerjee wore at the Tagore in 1913 for litera- Nobel ceremony. ture, Amartya Sen and Earlier, it would Mr Banerjee in 1998 and usually be starched, of 2019 for economics, and cloth or silk, and white. Muhammad Yunus in In recent times, however 2006 for peace; the first fashion designers and three are Indian or of the bhadralok have been Indian origin, and the less and less reluctant to fourth is Bangladeshi. experiment with colour

whom Mr Banerjee shared his prize, chose to wear a sari. Of couple of years later in Amar Prem. 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 Baneriee.

Esther Duflo, with or material

When Mr Baneriee returned home to Kolkata in October this year for a usually be starched, of cloth or silk, and 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 Bhadralok", for The Caravan earlier this year. He could be a dress code: "The Nobel Prize professional, or a landlord, corresponding vaguely to Victorian professional gentleman.

To put it rather simply, Mr to wear white tie and tails, while ladies Mukherjee claims that the current powshould be dressed in an evening gown." er struggle between the Trinamool (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 Mukheriee.

In popular culture, the bhadralok usually wears a dhoti. It is as much as a symbol of his cultural finesse as the top

> 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

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 Baneriee wore at the Nobel ceremony. Earlier, it would 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 ear lier, is impossible to define — he would have earlier baulked 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

Every week, Eye Culture features writers with an entertaining critical take on art, music, dance, film and sport

How voice & video will dominate in 2020



YES, BUT... SANDEEP GOYAL

he one big trend that will dominate the decade of 2020 is the emergence of voice as a potent force in the digital world of tomorrow. Most would be surprised to know that by 2020, 50 per cent of all searches across the internet will be voice-based. Also, by 2020, 30 per cent of all searches will be done using a device without a screen.

At one end of the spectrum. 40 per cent of the adults now use mobile voice search at least once daily. At the other end, 20 per cent of the adults use mobile voice search at least once monthly. The faster than anyone ever imagined.

9 per cent of the 55-64 age-group also use mobile voice search. Both globally, and in India. Today, 20 per cent of the searches worldwide on a mobile device are voice-based Twenty-five per cent of all the queries on Android devices, in fact, are voice-based. Reliance Jio alone has 90 million users of Google Assistant today. What's more, 60 per cent of smartphone users across the world have tried voice search at least once in the past 12 months. And yes, 55 per cent of teenagers are using voice search on a daily basis. Already, 22 per cent of houses in

the US have smart speakers; by 2022 this number will exceed 55 per cent! But what amazes me the most is that today users communicate with voice-activated speakers like as if they were talking to another human being, using courtesy words like "please," and "thank you," and even "sorry"! Interestingly, we search with voice just like we speak. No wonder, voice search queries are longer than regular text-based searches. Voice search queries tend two extremes are coming together to have three-to-five keywords in length, compared to one or two

What's even more surprising is that words in text search. So, come 2020, forming sensory experiences like there is going to be a whole new paradigm shift triggered by the enhanced, and consistently growing, usage of voice in things digital.

Now to video, the other major driving force that will dominate 2020, and beyond. As per a Cisco report, by 2020 there will be close to 1 million minutes of video crossing the internet per second. Video is expected to make up 82 per cent of internet traffic by 2021. By 2022, online videos will make up more than 84 per cent of all consumer internet traffic — 15 times higher than it was in 2017. In the past 10 years, mobile video consumption has risen by 100 per cent, year-onyear. Can statistics tell a bigger story of what the future holds?

Today, more than 8,000 million videos are viewed on Facebook every day. In 2020, however, the big leap forward will be the virtual reality (VR) video. Facebook's new Horizon social VR platform alone will phenomenally expand the experience of travel and event participation. This is already evident in the 360-degree videos of National Geographic that are trans-

never before. It is in keeping with these apertures and opportunities that research agency Kantar reported that 84 per cent of marketers plan to increase their investment in online video advertising over the next 12 months. But why is video important?

Well, for starters, 97 per cent marketers assert that video helps them increase user understanding of their products and services. Eightyone per cent of businesses in 2020 are, therefore, most likely to use video as a marketing tool (up from 61 per cent in 2019). Reasons are not far to seek. Forty-six per cent of users act after viewing a video ad. And if they enjoy the video their purchase intent increases by a whopping 97 per cent. Research shows that including a video on a website's landing page can boost conversion rates by up to 80 per cent. For those who require any more convincing: Tracking studies show that a website is 53 times more likely to reach the front page of Google if it includes video. Video, in

on a website by 157 per cent.

In 2020, a voice content strategy will no longer be optional for brands. Voice in the decade ahead will revolve around 'youtility' marketing ... how it can prove to be a real and compelling utility for you ... not just rooted in information and in being ever-helpful, but in using more complex API-driven interactions that will enhance consumer experience through more layers of specificity and nuance.

The insight on video, going forward, simply is that users do not always watch a video with the intention of buying something, now or later. But watching video leads to discovery. And triggering of intent. Leading to evaluation. Finally purchase. So, video is a critical part of every stage in the customer journey. And brands have no choice but to participate in that iourney. In 2020, and after.

So, the dawn of the new decade is going to be about the 2Vs that will drive another very important V... Voice and Video that will drive consumer Value for brands.

fact, increases organic search traffic The writer is an advertising and media