

THE MASK IS off and the claws have been bared. Project Hindu Rashtra is gaining speed. The engine is the Prime Minister, Mr Narendra Modi; at the wheel is the Home Minister, Mr Amit Shah. The designer/engineer, the RSS, is watching with great interest.

Message to Muslims

The only surprise is that the BJP is pushing its agenda so quickly after its massive election victory: criminalisation of triple talaq, the National Register of Citizens (NRC) exercise in Assam, the repeal of Article 370 of the Constitution and, now, the passage of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill are part of an elaborate plan to advance Project Hindu Rashtra.

The common intent behind these moves is to send a blunt and unambiguous message to the Muslims of India that they are not equal citizens of this country and to reiterate the Golwalkar-Savarkar theory of 'India is a Hindu nation'.

The Citizenship Act, 1955, recognises citizenship by birth; citizenship by descent; citizenship by registration; citizenship by naturalisation; and citizenship by incorporation of territory. All other persons living in India would be 'illegal migrants'. The Foreigners Act, 1946, and the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920, would apply to them and they are liable to be expelled. The religion of a person — whether a citizen or an 'illegal migrant' — was alien to the concept of Indian citizenship.

All the above have changed with the passage of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019. The Bill is suspect. In fact, many scholars and former judges have opined that it is unconstitutional.

Many questions, no answers

What does the Bill do? It picks three countries — Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. It picks six 'minority communities' — Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians. It *presumes* that any person belonging to one of the six communities from one of the three countries who had entered India on or before December 31, 2014, was '*persecuted*' in home country and could, therefore, by an *executive order*, be exempted from the provisions of the Foreigners Act and the Passport (Entry into India) Act. Such a person shall not be an 'illegal migrant'.

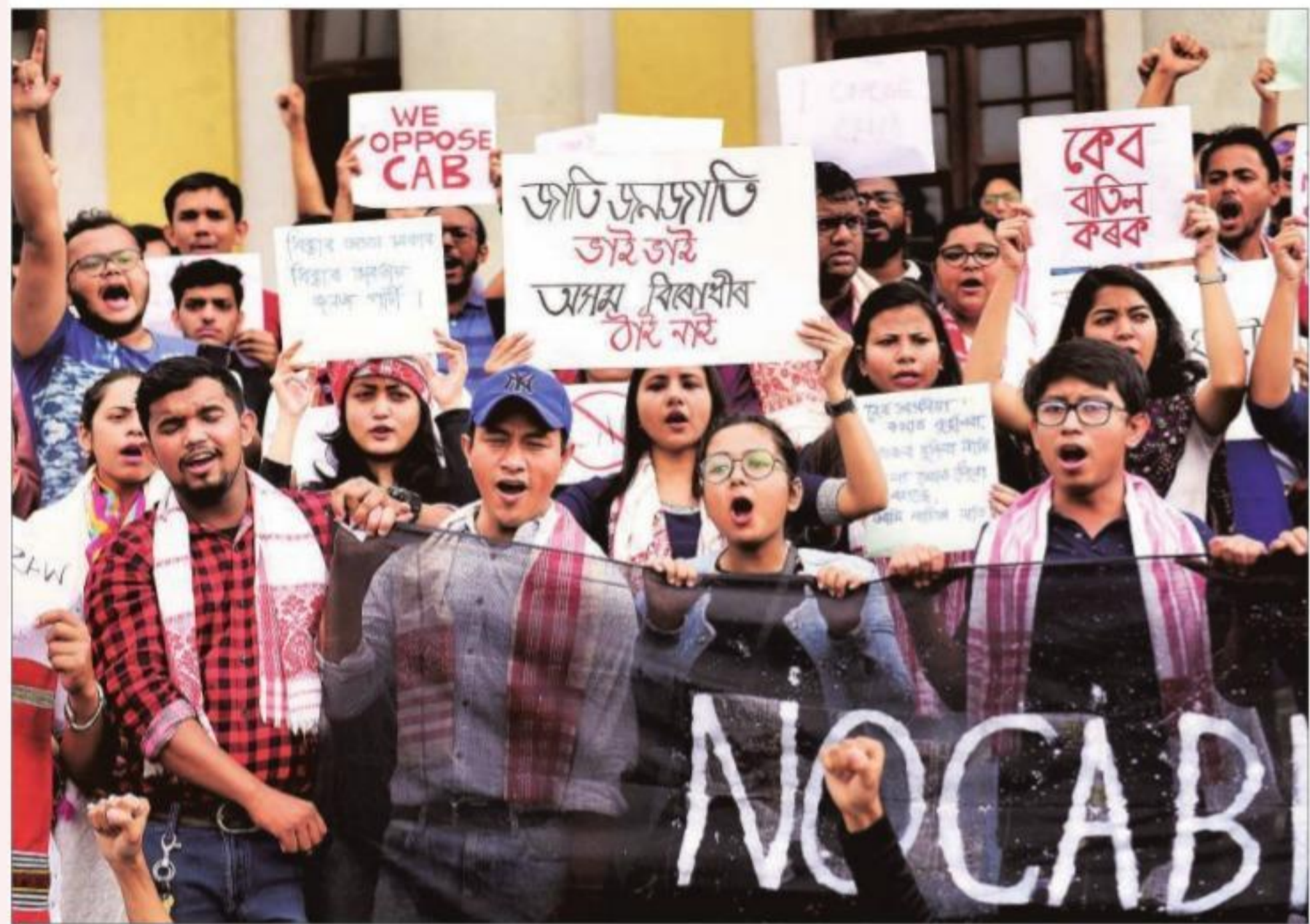
In short, the amendment Bill has introduced a new route to acquire citizenship — citizenship by executive fiat. Questions arise, they were asked, but the government had no answers:

1. Why were only three countries picked for special treatment leaving out other neighbouring countries such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bhutan and Nepal?
2. Why were only six minority communities picked leaving out other communities — discriminated in the home country because they do not belong to the majority — such as Ahmadiyyas, Hazaras, Balochis, Rohingya, Jews etc?
3. Abrahamic religions are three: why was Christianity alone included, leaving out Judaism and Islam?
4. Why were Hindus included, but Sri Lankan Hindus excluded? Why were Christians included but Bhutanese

ACROSS THE AISLE

P Chidambaram

India's soul is wounded



Assamese students during a protest against the Citizenship Amendment Bill in Bengaluru

Christians excluded?

5. The premise of the Bill is religious persecution. What about victims of other forms of persecution, like linguistic, political, cultural, casteist etc? What about victims of civil wars?
6. Why is the cut-off date December 31, 2014? What is its impact on the cut-off date of March 25, 1971, mentioned in the Assam Accord? Has the latter been discarded?
7. What is the purpose of exempting from the provisions of the amended Act "the tribal area of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram or Tripura as included in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution" and the area covered under "The Inner Line" notified under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873? What are the consequences of such an exemption?
8. Are CAB and the NRC not Siamese twins? Which will be implemented first?
9. Will those who claimed they were born in India or entered India before March 25, 1971, have to change their story now and claim that they were vic-

tims of religious persecution in their home country? Which claim will be a lie and which claim will be truthful?

Consequences of excluding Muslims

If both CAB and the NRC will be implemented, the non-Muslims *excluded* under the NRC will be *included* under CAB. The *net result* will be that only Muslims will be identified as illegal migrants and excluded. The consequences will be monstrous.

Once excluded, the government must sequester the excluded persons in camps until any country or countries agreed to accept them. Where will the camps be built and how many will be required? Will the 'illegal immigrants' remain in the camps for the remainder of their lives? And what will be status of their children?

Besides, there will be social, economic and political consequences, in India and abroad, of incarcerating, indefinitely, millions of Muslims in vir-

tual concentration camps. Reacting to the cleansing in India, there will be pressure on Hindus living in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Pakistan to emigrate to India.

It was apparent that the government had not taken a considered view on the constitutional validity of CAB when tested on the anvil of Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Violent protests have broken out in Assam and the Northeastern states. Large sections of people across the country, a majority Hindu, have joined the protests.

Despite the serious questions about CAB and the turmoil all around, Parliament collaborated with the Executive in passing an unconstitutional Bill. The task of restoring equality and constitutional morality will now fall on the Judiciary.

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OUT OF MY MIND

MEGHNAD DESAI

Myanmar, and an Asian atrocity

WHEN HE WAS in London in 1931, Mahatma Gandhi was asked what he thought of the European civilisation. Being a master of the English language, he replied, "It would be a good idea". The expression 'would be' was to denote the current absence of, but hoping for better in the future. He was to be proved horribly right as, within his lifetime, the horrors of the Holocaust were revealed. Germany, an old European nation, the cradle of Martin Luther, Goethe and Einstein, inflicted the most uncivilised murder upon six million Jews and left many more damaged forever.

This week, in the Dutch city of The Hague, Asia is on trial. Aung San Suu Kyi, the State Counsellor (de facto Prime Minister) of Myanmar and previous winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, is the head of a Burmese delegation facing trial at the International Court of Justice. The charges relate to genocide of the Rohingya. The tragedy of the Rohingya has been unfolding before our eyes for years now. They have been hounded out of Myanmar. They have flooded into Bangladesh and India and farther away.

Suu Kyi, the granddaughter of former Burmese prime minister Aung San, suffered house arrest for many years as she fought the military rulers of Burma, and won the battle for restoration of democracy in the country. She regained her legacy as a member of a ruling dynasty. But that was a quarrel among the Buddhist Burmese. When it came to othering Muslims, Suu Kyi has proved as seasoned a politician as the worst military general.

There is a huge tragedy here of Asian culture and Asian politics. How is it that a Buddhist country long known (perhaps wrongly?) for

its peace-loving people has conducted one of the world's worst genocides? The Khmer Rouge of Cambodia made a virtue of slaughtering all 'intellectuals' — everyone who wore spectacles or was educated — to build a one-class paradise where only peasantry had the right to live. They killed one-seventh of the total population. They were othering their own. But they were not Buddhists; just Maoists.

Myanmar and Suu Kyi have 'othered' the Rohingya who have lived in Myanmar for centuries, just because they are Muslims. Of course, the Myanmar defence is that Rohingya are terrorists. The word terrorist has become almost synonymous with Muslims across the world since 9/11, regardless of evidence. The idea seems to be that only Buddhist Burmese are authentic citizens.

The astonishing thing is that the case has been brought by Gambia. Not by any neighbouring Asian nation. Not Malaysia nor Indonesia nor Pakistan. It says something about Asian solidarity or humanism that no country in Asia has cast a critical eye towards Myanmar. Of course, the reason is China, which is a strong ally of Myanmar and a country no other Asian nation wants to displease. China has its own Uighur problem which has brought no protests on any street in any Asian country. Only the American Congress seems to be fighting for human rights these days. Though not the American President!

During Gandhiji's lifetime, Burma was a part of India. In 1935, it was separated. Then, in 1947, Partition made Pakistan a different country. In 1971, Bangladesh separated from Pakistan. From one, we have four. How many more?



A poster supporting Aung San Suu Kyi is seen in Yangon, Myanmar

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

A true anti-hero

Patrick Reed gets booed at the President's Cup for an alleged cheating scandal

OVER THE TOP

Meraj Shah

I'M NO FAN of Patrick Reed and I'll tell you why a bit later. Right now though, depending on when you're reading this on Sunday, the final round—comprising of singles matches—of the President's Cup is underway. The International team went in with an 10–8 lead today morning to try and win the event only for the second time in the event's history. The third match of the day is between CT Pan—the 28-year-old Taiwanese sensation—and Reed. Now even though a number of you may not have heard of Pan, he's already got the better of Reed twice this week, both times in the four-balls format paired with Japanese player Hideki Matsuyama. Reed's been a bit off his usual doughty self, and hasn't quite displayed the fire he's known for, especially in team matchplay events. I mean who can forget Reed's now fabled takedown of Rory McIlroy at the 2016 Ryder Cup at Hazeltine.

The lapse is mental more than anything else for Reed. It all started last week in the Bahamas where, as part of an elite field competing at the Hero World Challenge, Reed was assessed a two-shot penalty for improving his lie in a bunker.

On the 11th hole of the third round, Reed took two practice swings—both of which pushed back sand—and caught the attention of tournament officials. Now golf rules can be complicated (and certainly, the recent amendments have not helped), but not grounding your club in a bunker, is probably the first rule you learn when you play the game. And we all usually learn it the hard way.

"It was not my intention to improve the lie. I don't ever put the club directly behind the ball on my practice swings because I'm always scared of moving the ball. So I'm always going to give myself some room. But after seeing that camera angle—it brushed the sand, and it's a penalty. I accept that," Reed said in his defence. The gracious response from Slugger White, PGA Tour VP of Rules and Competitions, was that intent does not matter when it comes to deciding the penalty.

My response to that, not exactly



Patrick Reed plays from the rough during the President's Cup golf tournament at Royal Melbourne Golf Club in Melbourne

unique in the world of golf, and one which explains why Reed has been lambasted by a legion of past and present players, and heckled non-stop at the President's Cup this week, is: 'Are you

kidding me?' I'm sorry, but a golf professional who's been playing all his life, couldn't tell that he brushed the sand back, not once but twice in a row? I mean that is so ludicrous a suggestion

that I have nothing but admiration for Reed's brazenness.

Others have hardly viewed his infraction through a more forgiving lens. International team opponent Cameron Smith of Australia was the most straightforward. "I don't have sympathy for anyone that cheats. If you make a mistake maybe once, you could maybe understand, but to give a bulls--t response like [blaming] the camera angle... that's pretty up there," Smith said.

Greg Norman, the Australian golfing legend was amongst those viewing the Hero World Challenge on television and immediately brought the infraction to the notice of PGA Tour officials. "I feel for not just the pros. I feel for all the amateurs," Norman said. "Like today when I played in the pro-am, what was the first point of conversation? 'Oh, well Patrick Reed did it. Can we do it?' Well, you can't do that."

Norman later went on air on his radio show to say that he was 'repulsed' by Reed's cheating. "From my personal perspective, you know, I get really repulsed with that because, to me, you've got to protect the integrity of the game, not protect the player," he said.

On cue, the Australian crowd has been giving Reed a mighty hard time in Melbourne where the President's Cup is being played. The gallery burst into applause when Reed's first drive of the event found a bunker; "You're really

going to make your caddie carry 14 clubs and a shovel?" one fan shouted. Heckled constantly throughout his two match-ups, Reed managed to put up a defiant face, but his caddie, Kessler Karain, got into an altercation with a spectator. As a result, Karain has been banned from carrying Reed's bag on Sunday which instead will be taken by Reed's swing coach Kevin Kirk. Kirk's probably not looking forward to the experience.

Reed has never been much of a crowd favourite. In 2018, on the eve of the final round at The Masters Tournament, Reed was asked why some people (especially on social media) tend to give him flak. "I don't know. Why don't you ask them?" he said. "I mean, I have no idea, and honestly I don't really care what people say on Twitter or what they say if they are cheering for me or not cheering for me. I'm out here to do my job, and that's to play golf. I feel like if I'm doing it the right way, then that's all that really matters."

Well, shovelling sand out from behind the ball in a bunker to improve its lie is certainly not doing it the right way. In fact it goes against the very grain of what golf is about—playing with honour and integrity. And that's something that has to be consistent no matter what the camera angle might be. Shame.

A golfer, Meraj Shah also writes about the game