



**A thought for today**

*Intermarriage is not jihad.  
Intermarriage is India. India is a mix*

SAIF ALI KHAN

# The Love Index Of Uttar Pradesh

*Dimple bhabhi brings some joy to star-crossed Romeo and Juliets*

The Montagues and Capulets are a byword for love's torment. But howsoever unfairly an ancient grudge these two households bore in fair Verona, in fairer Lucknow/ Varanasi/ Meerut/ Kanpur even more inflexible walls are put up between lovers by caste and religion. Unfortunately for the star-crossed Romeo and Juliets of Uttar Pradesh, yet another election is passing by without any party whole-soul championing their cause.

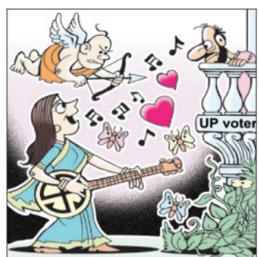
In fact the high heat of campaigning may have sent many lovers into hiding. O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo? Maybe he is on the run from anti-Romeo squads.

**just in jest!**

Amit Shah and the BJP manifesto say these squads will be raised to ensure greater safety for college-going girls and safeguard their honour. But safety should be provided by police and honour should not be policed by political henchmen. When even Shakespeare didn't keep Juliet confined to the balcony, don't go trying to lock her in a chastity belt today.

Well-wishers of Uttar Pradesh have long obsessed over raising its Human Development Index indicators and its ranking in the Ease of Doing Business Index. It's time they devoted similar energy to making sure the state also improves its performance on the Love Index.

Interestingly the chief minister and his wife do score high here.



Their inter-caste romance reportedly bloomed when they were in college. The way it overrode social resistance gives other star-crossed lovers hope. As do the campaign speeches of Dimple bhabhi.

Far from adopting an anti-Romeo posture, she reaches out to Romeo, talking about how the SP government has provided him several safe public spaces like a park where he can take along his mother, wife or girlfriend, or play with children.

You could complain that this seems like a very sanskari sort of park. But there's nothing better on offer for the lovers this election.

Another way bhabhi has cheered the Romeo and Juliets of Uttar Pradesh is by promising them that after Lucknow the metro will also come to Kanpur, Meerut and Varanasi. Even the thought of romantic adventures like the ones surely enjoyed all the time in the metro trains speeding through Delhi, Bengaluru and Shanghai makes young UP walas so breathless.

Of course bhabhi's promises would have been much more persuasive if Akhilesh bhैया had done a better job of providing law and order. From unsafe colleges to parks, Mayawati behenji suggests there never was a story of more love.

So if the Romeo and Juliets of Uttar Pradesh come together as a votebank, what would they demand? Simple stuff, like celebrating Valentine's Day without being harassed. Freedom to choose life partners irrespective of caste and religion. Not making some horror out of honour. Happy endings instead of unhappy daggers. Resignifying 'love jihad', celebrating inter-faith relationships as a blessing not depressing. For this alliance may so happy prove, to turn UP households' rancour to prosperity.

# Chakravayuh We Made

*India needs a more realistic assessment of its Pakistan and China options*

Manoj Joshi



The country's foreign and security policy has plunged into a Chakravayuh of its own making. Its major manifestation is the dead end that we have reached in our relations with China and Pakistan, our two principal neighbours, who are simultaneously our principal adversaries and each other's best friends.

The biggest foreign and security policy challenge that we confront is the deepening China-Pakistan relationship. These are countries we have warred and skirmished with, and on their account we have to spend a fortune on our security apparatus.

Faced with this challenge, one would imagine that the principal aim of our government would be to seek to break this nexus, which has been around since the 1960s, by fair means or foul. Instead, however, we have been witnessing a strengthening of that alliance, especially in the last two years. As for the government, it is in a world of its own where it already believes that it is a major world power that can bring its adversaries to heel through a policy of unrelenting toughness.

In the real world, the choices for India are fairly clear – manage ties with the countries in question or engineer change in them. Changing China or Pakistan is too big a task for India to attempt alone. Even the mighty US has tried and failed. Hoping for change to come is a non-option, what is needed is a policy to manage the bilateral problems through dialogue and negotiation in the short term and effecting change with the help of other likeminded countries in the longer. In essence this is what India's policy has been till recently. And it has achieved a great deal by avoiding a major war with either country, despite our very serious issues with them.

India rightly believes that the forces against change in Pakistan are powerful and insidious, but it is still worth pursuing the path of dialogue and friendship. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's approach towards Pakistan, at least to the point, a little over a year ago, when he descended on Lahore to wish Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif "Happy Birthday", was in line with this.

It's not clear what happened thereafter and the same Modi has since spoken of the need to sanction and isolate Islamabad in virtually every international forum that he addressed. It cannot simply be the cross-border attacks which are fairly minor and had been going on since, at least, 2012. We can only assume that Modi's desire to make peace with Pakistan has been overtaken

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by his need to win the UP election and thereafter the general election; in both cases, bashing Pakistan and, by inference, Islamism, plays well with his electorate, as against the risk of endangering his political capital through instances such as the Pathankot and Uri attacks.

New Delhi has displayed the same zig-zag pattern with China. In his visit to Beijing in 2015, Modi made an impassioned plea to his counter parts to resolve the border issue. But since then, New Delhi has adopted a strident and sometimes belligerent attitude towards Beijing on issues that can, at best, be considered trivial – India's membership to the NSG and placing Masood Azhar in the UN's 1267 list. The former appears to be born out of a sense of entitlement, rather than a real need. As for the latter, counterterrorism is better off focussing on eliminating the terrorist, not putting him on some list. Hafiz Saeed has been on that list since 2008 and it has hardly made any difference to him or the Lashkar-e-Taiba.

A third issue relates to CPEC which India says it will not condone because it passes through Gilgit-Baltistan. On the face of it, it looks reasonable, but in essence it means that New Delhi is offering Beijing a Hobson's choice – either accept India's claim on J&K or abandon Pakistan. And it is not about to do either, at least not without good cause.

Defeating the Chakravayuh is not easy, false choices and illusions block the way, and the belief that only unrelenting toughness will work with Islamabad and Beijing. Getting out requires a more realistic assessment of India's options and a willingness to accept the international norm that in bilateral ties, you are expected to give something in exchange for something you want. There are incentives New Delhi could offer – contracts for Chinese companies, a face-saving role for Pakistan in Kashmir and so on. At present all that is on display are disincentives for them. As of now, it would seem that New Delhi is riding on the hubristic belief that friendship with Washington is its key out of the maze. But in the US of today nothing will come for free.

# Moral Of A Lady Oriented Film

*CBFC under Nihalani has become Victorian, he should read some Hindu mythology*

Pavan K Varma



English is not the first language for a great many Indians, but even so, the choice of words used by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) to deny certification to Prakash Jha's film Lipstick Under My Burkha is quite bizarre. The Board says that what is objectionable is that it is a "lady oriented film", focussing on their "fantasy above life". It is far from clear why a film that is "lady oriented" is bad, or why women's fantasies can only have a certain altitude.

Pahlaj Nihalani is also against the "sexual scenes", "audio pornography" and "abusive words" in the film. Since countless films have all of these three elements, are we to understand that these become unacceptable only if a film is "lady oriented" with "fantasy above life"?

Since Nihalani and his moral brigade have a problem with a "lady oriented film", perhaps it may be instructive for them to learn about what, according to Hindu mythology, Parvati said to Siva after he had burnt the god of love, Kama, for disrupting his meditation.

Ask for a boon, Siva told Parvati, and the goddess replied: "Now that Kama has been burnt, what can I do with a boon from you today? For, without Kama there can be between man and woman no emotion, which is like ten million suns. When emotion is destroyed, how can happiness be attained?" Revive Kama Parvati said, for without him she did not wish to request anything at all. And so, Kama was reborn, this time, according to the Bhagwata Purana, as Pradhymna, the son of Krishna and Rukmini.

No doubt the revival of Kama was a "lady oriented" request. In the Saura Purana, Kama declares that, "There is no hero, no proud woman, no learned man too powerful for me. I pervade the whole universe, moving and still, beginning with Brahma the Creator."



But apparently, Nihalani feels that, however, powerful Kama may be, he should not affect women.

Perhaps then he should read how evocatively a sacrificial fire is described in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad: "Woman is fire, Gautama: the phallus is her fuel; the hairs are her smoke; the vulva is her flame; when a man penetrates her, that is her coal; the ecstasy is her sparks."

Our sages knew how to put sensuality in the right perspective. I don't know if the venerable members of CBFC have read the Kamasutra (and not merely seen the illustrations). In the very first chapter of the manual, sage Vatsyayana is asked by an imaginary interlocutor on the need of such a book. And, Vatsyayana says that there are four purusharthas or goals in this world: dharma, artha, kama and moksha.

Each of the first three, pursued in the right proportion, and not in

**A visit to Khajuraho and Konarak, where ladies are equal participants in all kinds of "fantasy above life", is also highly advised**

exclusion, as part of a balanced life, lead automatically to the last, moksha. Hence there is philosophical validity for desire, and if so, it is not enough just to be a lover, one must, especially for the sake of women strive to be an accomplished one.

The gopis who frolicked with Krishna in Vrindavana were not concerned about whether the blue god was encouraging "lady oriented" things. They were assertive and uninhibited in their desire, and this is chronicled in explicit detail in the Hariyamsha, the Vishnu Purana, and the Bhagwata

Purana. Jayadeva in his immortal Gita Govinda writes gloriously on the love play between Krishna and Radha, not caring if any censors considered such fantasies to be "above life". If Krishna was Sringaramurtimam, the epitome of the sensual mood, Radha was Raseshwari, his full-blooded counterpart. In medieval times, Bihar, Chandidasa and Vidyapati wrote love poetry that would have left Lady Chatterley's Lover asleep at the post.

So why is CBFC so prudish? All of this sensuality was out there in the public realm. I would urge Nihalani saheb to see the Basohli and Kangra paintings of the 18th century or the palm leaf drawings on erotica in Odisha. A visit to Khajuraho and Konarak, where ladies are equal participants in all kinds of "fantasy above life", is also highly advised. Perhaps, he may also find Kalidasa's graphic erotic descriptions of interest.

It was our colonial masters who considered Indians to be "disgusting" and "immoral" and full of "horrible beliefs and customs and un-mentionable thoughts". Ironically, CBFC, that Nihalani arrogantly says "is accountable for preserving the culture and tradition of India", has become the mouthpiece of Victorian morality, equating sex with sin and desire with guilt.

Frankly, in a changing India, where, especially among the young cutting across religious divides, inhibitions are breaking, cyber space is ubiquitous, women are more self-confidently aware of their sexuality, and fossilised citadels of patriarchy need to be broken, one wonders which world the CBFC is living in. Its own guidelines explicitly state that creative freedom should not be unduly curbed.

But, Nihalani thinks his outdated job is that of a moral policeman. The result is that in a country where the vast majority venerates Shakti as the supreme female power, a film that has won accolades across the world is being denied certification because it is "lady oriented".

The writer is an author and member of JD(U)

# A bad idea that keeps coming back: Why debt waivers are likely to hurt Indian farmers in the long run

Prasanna Tantri



Almost all political parties contesting ongoing UP assembly elections have promised a debt waiver for small farmers. A wide range of statistics from farmer suicides allegedly caused by indebtedness to low productivity of Indian agriculture are cited as compelling reasons that warrant a political intervention in agricultural debt contracts. Unfortunately, very few people are asking the question: Why did the economic situation of farmers not improve even after a massive national level debt waiver implemented in 2008, close to Rs 1,00,000 crore?

In a recent research paper I have coauthored with Sankar De, we investigated the impact of the debt waiver programme of 2008 on future access to credit as well as repayment behaviour. We find that nearly half of waiver beneficiaries do not get a single bank loan during a window of four years after the waiver. Moreover, those waiver beneficiaries that manage to get credit in the post-waiver period do not show any improvement in loan performance when compared to the pre-waiver period.

On February 29, 2008, while presenting the last full-fledged budget before the 2009 general elections, the then finance minister announced the Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme for small and marginal farmers. Farmers who had pledged less than 2 hectares of land were eligible for full waiver whereas those who had pledged more than 2 hectares were eligible for a partial waiver conditional on



**Why did the economic situation of farmers not improve even after a massive national level debt waiver implemented in 2008, close to Rs 1,00,000 crore?**

repayment of the remaining balance. The extent of partial waiver was fixed at 25%.

It is estimated that more than four crore farming households obtained waiver benefits. Given the scale of the programme, it is natural to expect that this should have become a game changer for Indian farmers and a large fraction of Indian farmers should have come out of the proverbial poverty trap. However,

in reality, no such dramatic improvement was seen after the waiver. Our paper provides one possible explanation.

We obtained transaction level data from a large bank, covering a representative sample of 26,241 loans borrowed by 9,759 waiver beneficiaries. As well, we have data pertaining to performance of loans in the pre-waiver period. For drawing inferences, we compare waiver beneficiaries with a landholding just below 2 hectares with those that are just above 2 hectares. It is reasonable to assume that farmers having a landholding of 1.99 hectares are likely to be, on an average, similar to those with 2.01 hectares. However, they differ with respect to waiver treatment. We use the above fact for identification.

We find that nearly half of the borrowers do not obtain a loan even after four years from the date of waiver. Given the highly subsidised interest rates, it is hard to believe that the waiver beneficiaries do not apply for a new loan for four years after the waiver. We perform several tests in the paper to rule out demand based explanations. As well, given that we obtain data from rural branches with thin banking coverage, it is unlikely that borrowers would have borrowed from other banks or financial institutions.

Therefore, it is likely that nearly half of waiver beneficiaries are not considered creditworthy by banks in the post-waiver period. Thus, one of the key purposes of waiver – ensuring credit flow to the distressed

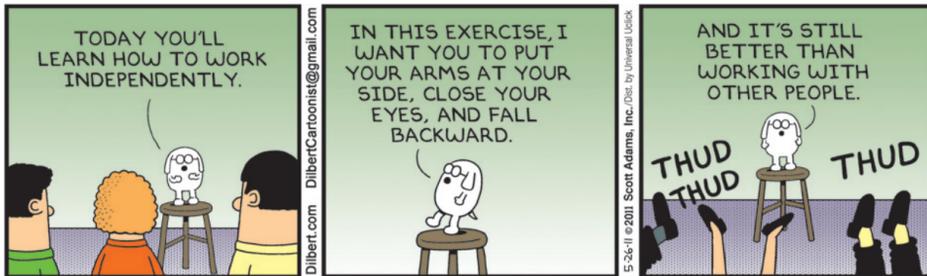
farmers – does not seem to have materialised on the ground.

We also focussed on loan performance in terms of default rates. We find that despite a 100% debt waiver, default rate of loans remains as high as before. This could be either driven by continued distress or by strategic behaviour caused by expectations of future waivers. Thus the debt waiver leaves farmers in either exactly the same or even worse situation when compared to pre-waiver period, although tax payers are forced to cough up significant sums of money in the name of the poor.

The point is not that government should not help distressed farmers. Some recent government initiatives such as developing an open market for agricultural produce, increasing coverage of crop insurance, building rural roads among others are likely to be useful to the farming community. On the other hand, a blanket debt waiver which is announced before an election is likely to harm farmers more than benefiting them. Sooner or later voters will see through this and punish the political class for such opportunistic behaviour.

The writer is senior associate director at Centre For Analytical Finance, ISB Hyderabad

**dilbert**



# Protecting Ourselves From Anger

Sant Rajinder Singh

Life is challenging. Every day people face situations that can make one feel stress and anger. Modern science has proven the effects stress and anger have on the health and wellness of our body and mind.

Picture a boomerang. When we throw it, it comes back to us. When we feel anger and hatred for others, it boomerangs back to us. The people we are angry with may or may not be hurt by our anger, but we definitely will be. If we have angry thoughts, others may or may not know it. They may sense it, but they may not even realise it.

We may speak angry words, but if other people are calm and have control, it will bounce off them. Therefore, we do not hurt them, but cause those words to boomerang to us. Similarly, we may even strike other people, but if they are calm, they will either turn the other cheek or

remain unaffected. Who bears the brunt of that anger? It is returned to the sender.

Anger causes stress-related ailments. Scientists are now discovering that continued exposure to the body's own stress hormones can cause buildup in blood vessels and nervous system that may cause a stroke, damage parts of the brain, or cause anxiety, depression, and other psychological problems.

If we know this, we may think twice before sending out the boomerang of anger: If we know it will come back to us, we can ask ourselves, "Do we want to receive the consequence of sending out anger?"

Is there any way that we can deal with stress and anger so that it does not create stress-related illness in our body and mind?

The way to avoid sending out anger

that will come back to haunt us is to forgive. To avoid disastrous consequences, it is much better to forgive. Instead of letting thoughts of hatred and anger possess us and ruin our lives, we should stop ourselves and forgive the other person. In this way, we can keep our mind free and clear of the detrimental effects of anger.

The secret to forgiveness is love. In a state of love, forgiveness comes easily. If we are to forgive all who cause us pain, we must develop a love for all of God's creation. This can only happen when we see the light of God in everyone. Through meditation, we can begin to experience the Light of God within ourselves.

When this happens, we will be able to see the Light of God in all of God's creatures and begin to love all of creation. Then, forgiveness will follow.

**Sacredspace**

Success & Failure

*Misery is a by-product of a lazy mind. Happiness is a by-product of an alert mind. Stop kicking yourselves with regrets and guilt feelings. Learn from mistakes, and give up feelings of being guilty. You will find yourself happy.*

Swami Sukhabodhananda



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