



The recalcitrant judge

It is doubtful if sending Justice Karnan to jail is the most judicious way of restraining him

It is singularly unfortunate that the Supreme Court's efforts to discipline Justice C.S. Karnan of the Calcutta High Court has had to end in a six-month prison term for contempt of court. With the recalcitrant judge making it a habit to bring the institution into ridicule by his aberrant behaviour, the court probably had few options but to act in defence of its reputation by holding him guilty of contempt of court – a finding that is unexceptionable. He had not only flung irresponsible charges of corruption against several judges, but also sought to make political capital out of his Dalit identity. He had repeatedly sought to pass purported judicial orders in his own cause. His arrest will undoubtedly mark an abysmally low moment in the country's judicial history. Therefore, it remains a pertinent question whether the court could not have waited for his imminent retirement so that the country is spared the unseemly event of a high court judge being arrested while in office. It was only last week that the court itself doubted whether Justice Karnan was of sound mental health. After all, it is highly unusual for a judge to charge other Supreme Court judges with committing 'atrocities' against him and threatening to prosecute them – an act that could only do harm unto him. As expected, Justice Karnan declined to subject himself to a medical examination by a team of mental health professionals as directed by the court.

Having gone so far as to question his mental soundness, it would have been pragmatic to let things be until his retirement, due in a month. After all, Justice Karnan, having been denied judicial work, posed no threat to the administration of justice. At the same time, it was increasingly clear that nothing was really going to chasten him or prevent him from challenging the Supreme Court's authority. It is doubtful whether sending him to jail will achieve anything other than possibly encouraging him to play martyr and portray himself as a victim in his 'war' against judicial corruption. That the only punishment that the highest court could come up with against a sitting high court judge was imprisonment speaks volumes about the total absence of any disciplinary mechanism short of impeachment to deal with contumacious conduct by a member of the higher judiciary. It is a pity that a case of proven misbehaviour did not attract the attention of the political class, which alone can initiate impeachment. The court's gag order on the media from reporting Justice Karnan's purported orders and comments only adds to the sense of unease about the whole episode. The lesson here is that while the collegium system had been unable to stop someone of his nature entering judicial office, maintaining internal discipline in the judiciary is an equally vexing issue.

Chasing peace

The latest de-escalation bid for Syria is the most realistic agreement yet

The so-called de-escalation agreement reached among Russia, Turkey and Iran last week in Astana is the latest in a series of attempts to bring the six-year-old Syrian civil war to an end. Previous ceasefire plans have either failed to take off or collapsed soon after, given the continued hostility between the regime of Bashar al-Assad and rebels. Still, the latest agreement is significant for a number of reasons. First of all, any attempt to cease violence is welcome given the destruction the war has wreaked in Syria. More than two million people are estimated to be living in rebel-held territories (barring areas controlled by the Islamic State) in terrible humanitarian conditions and under constant fear of aerial bombing. For them, an end to the Russian-Assad regime strikes is a great relief. Second, the agreement involves the three main external players in the civil war. Russia and Iran are the key backers of the regime, while Turkey supports some rebel groups. Under the agreement, Syria and Russia will stop bombing rebel-held areas, divided into four zones in Idlib, Homs, Damascus suburbs, and southern Deraa and Quneitra towns, to de-escalate tensions. The regime will also allow "unhindered" humanitarian supplies to rebel-held areas and provide public services. In return, the rebels should stop fighting government forces. Third, this appears to be a more focussed, phased attempt to end violence. The agreement was reached barely weeks before a two-track political process was to begin. In June, the government and rebel representatives will meet for negotiations in Geneva, while the Russia-led talks of external actors will continue in Kazakhstan in July. If the de-escalation plan holds, it will be a big boost for the political process.

But implementing the agreement itself will be a major challenge given the complex nature of the civil war. For the deal to hold, Russia and Iran will first have to rein in the Assad regime. In the past it has shown little interest in a political solution. Foreign Minister Walid Muallem's comment that the regime would not allow UN monitoring of the implementation of de-escalation is not in the spirit of the agreement. A bigger challenge for all actors involved is how to tackle the threats from al-Qaeda-linked groups. The Astana agreement is clear on that – Russia and Syria will continue to attack them. In Idlib, the Qaeda-linked Tahrir al-Sham is the main anti-regime militia. In Homs and the Damascus suburbs, they have joined hands with other groups. So if the government continues to attack them, it could drag more rebel groups into the fight, risking an end to the ceasefire. Ideally, the regime should exercise restraint and the non-jihadist rebels distance themselves from Qaeda-linked organisations, while allowing Russia, Turkey and Iran to play the role of facilitators. To take the political process forward, everyone has to act more responsibly, keeping in mind the humanitarian situation.

Now playing in Karnataka

While Siddaramaiah has embraced the constituency of Devaraj Urs, the BJP borrows from Ramakrishna Hegde



VALERIAN RODRIGUES

The Siddaramaiah regime in Karnataka is pushing towards a political polarisation of social constituencies which, while subjecting a well-tryed-out strategy in the State to test, is likely to have wider ramifications for the future direction of the Congress party elsewhere.

The outline of this political strategy was initially laid down by the late Devaraj Urs as Chief Minister of the State (1972-77), and its success even made him challenge Indira Gandhi at the near end of his political career and befriended Chaudhary Charan Singh during the closing days of Janata Party rule (1977-1979) at the Centre. Urs bypassed the existing revenue bureaucracy and set up a collective of officials and elected local leaders at the tehsil level all across the State to confer land entitlement on the direct cultivator, estimate surplus land, and adjudicate claims for homestead land by landless labour; and set up the credit and marketing infrastructure for the peasantry.

He also directed an inventory and classification of backward classes and extended to them reservation in employment, higher education and other social sector policies. He took initiative for the organisation of relatively marginal backward castes, and decisively shifted political recruitment to offices and positions to backward classes and minorities undercutting the prevailing dominance of upper castes, mainly Lingayats, Vokkaligas and Brahmins. The outcome was an electorally formidable platform of the lower agrarian strata, the backward classes, the minorities and a section of Dalits and Adivasis.

Political contestation in cities did not enjoy the same weight in the 1970s as it does today, and was taken care of by mainstream Congress politics. After Urs, many leaders in the State have invoked his



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legacy but had little of his adroitness to mount a distinct conception of social justice in practice. The political constituency that Urs nurtured remained adrift. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has come to embrace it enthusiastically.

Complex agenda

Mr. Siddaramaiah was nurtured in a school of politics that did not assign centrality to state initiatives, to industry and the city, at least, as much as the Congress did till the early 1990s. His politics revolved around agrarian concerns with an assemblage of fragments of thoughts of Gandhi, Ram Manohar Lohia, and folklore. For long he worked with the non-Congress formation in Karnataka led by Ramakrishna Hegde and H.D. Deve Gowda, who were the backbone of the Janata formations in the State. But he was also the strident champion of backward classes and thought that there cannot be a level playing field for them without a regime of preferential policies. His partisanship with backward classes eventually made him part ways with Mr. Deve Gowda, whose social base of support was among the peasantry of the dominant castes, particularly Vokkaligas. When Mr. Siddaramaiah joined the Congress in 2005, its claim to represent the backward classes was reinforced alongside Dalits and minorities.

Mr. Siddaramaiah has also been one of the astute managers of the finances of the State, and has

already presented 12 Budgets. A close scrutiny of these Budgets highlights that he has tended to focus resources on irrigation, roads and communication, and power. Industry in Karnataka has taken note of such disposition in spite of his mouthfuls of statements on social justice.

The Congress in power in Karnataka under Mr. Siddaramaiah's leadership has pursued a complex social justice agenda, very different from the one mounted by Urs that focused on redistribution and access. It identifies certain key disadvantages of vulnerable social strata, such as the lower rungs of peasantry, below poverty line (BPL) families, the shelterless, schoolchildren, pregnant women and nursing mothers, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, transgenders, backward regions etc. and extends some support to overcome their disadvantage. Similarly the different authorities and corporations under the State reach out to a set of grievances and aspirations of religious and linguistic minorities, sustaining a stratum of elite among them.

The regime has also reached out proactively in support of Kannada, folk traditions, and local icons. Mr. Siddaramaiah himself is an astute speaker of rustic and idiomatic Kannada with an excellent sense of irony and humour. Such disposition and policy measures have enormously increased the presence of vulnerable groups in the public domain that often finds ex-

pression in highly variegated but localised social assertions and movements. The social justice policy initiatives have also nurtured a huge clientele who have stakes in this patronage. Besides, it has articulated cleavages among Dalit communities, the north and south divide in the State, the indigenous philistines and the globalisers etc. Overall, the regime has invoked a stronger Karnataka identity without overtly splashing it across.

The BJP calculus

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) opposition has pondered to the Hindutva agenda to unite one of the most socially heterogeneous States in India while making the Lingayats, a dominant and numerous community, its social anchor. B.S. Yeddyurappa, the leader of this formation, a Lingayat himself, has tried to highlight the grievances of the upper strata of peasantry to reinforce his base of social justice.

The BJP thinks that it will be able to enlist the support of the service castes among backward castes, a section of Dalits aggrieved with the working of preferential measures, and the urban middle classes at the hustings. However, there is a nagging feeling within it that this is not adequate to seize an electoral victory. A few leaders of the party have tried to form a backward caste brigade within its fold, but the party leadership is divided on the issue.

In the 1980s Ramakrishna Hegde set up a truce between the Lingayats and Vokkaligas against the alliance that Urs had nurtured. But it was far too caught in the rivalry among dominant castes for power and eventually gave place to alternative alliances under the leadership of a dominant caste. The recent entry of S.M. Krishna, an Vokkaliga, into the BJP was an attempt to resurrect the alliance that Hegde fathered. However, there is little that Mr. Krishna can bring to the BJP given the fact that Mr. Deve Gowda commandeers the Vokkaliga bastion more than anyone else.

Given this configuration of political equations, the balance at

present is definitely tilted towards Mr. Siddaramaiah. Further, an alliance between Mr. Deve Gowda's Janata Dal (Secular) and the Congress in Karnataka, which is not unimaginable, would make them electorally formidable.

The persisting divides

However, what is too late for Mr. Siddaramaiah, as he is soon going to complete four years in power, is the little enablement that his initiatives have afforded to his political constituency at large. While he has succeeded in according a presence to backward classes, minorities, Dalits and other disadvantaged social groups, there is little that he has done by way of enabling these sections by redistributing assets and affording access. Even if he was not a position to shift resources decisively in favour of these sections like Urs did, he could have done much to put Karnataka medium schools, that his clientele have to invariably resort to, on a par with the rest. Primary health care in Karnataka, as elsewhere in the country, is abysmal. The State is perennially prone to drought and the water table in large parts has sunk alarmingly low.

While the State was known for institutional corruption, some of the social sector policies of the government have given it a further filip. Much of the economy is concentrated in Bengaluru and the southern part of the State and very little has been done to close the yawning gulf between North Karnataka and the rest of the State in this regard. While Muslims are still with the Siddaramaiah regime, a community divide in the State persists and the presence of Muslims in the mainstream economy is pitifully low. While the internal rivalry within the State Congress probably inhibited the Chief Minister from putting his best foot forward for long, political choices cannot always await opportune moments.

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Duplication isn't synergy

Indian science needs hard work and a critically large base of experts, not more management

GAUTAM R. DESIRAJU

SPARK (Sustainable Progress through Application of Research and Knowledge) is a proposed initiative to synergise science activity in India. A new, more efficient way of managing science is surely welcome, but one needs to put in a lot of thought before taking any action.

The existing systems of science governance in this country are robust with departments reporting to ministers who in turn report to the Union Cabinet. There is no lack of sound advisory bodies and committees within these departments. As for overarching bodies, we already have the Scientific Advisory Committee to the Prime Minister and the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India. Why are there two such similar bodies? Have any of their recommendations resulted in concrete actions? In the end, they have remained toothless. Do we need a third such body?

The science departments are too different from one another to

come under the purview of one "overarching" body like SPARK. The Department of Science and Technology and Department of Biotechnology are purely funding and outreach organisations. The Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) has a special and tricky mandate which involves interaction with industry.

The Department of Atomic Energy, Defence Research and Development Organisation, Department of Space and others are into mission-mode projects. There is hardly a government department or ministry that science does not touch.

Reality of Indian science

The goals of SPARK seem to be most closely attuned with NITI Aayog, and it might well be effective only within this parent organisation, taking inputs from various quarters such as industries, the ministries themselves and NGOs to make proposals, some of which could move forward to become major initiatives. What one needs



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is a management technique that effectively identifies scientific challenges and links the resulting breakthroughs with national problems.

However, the issue is not that we need a new system of science management. The bald fact is that we do not have so much to manage. The report of top science administrators that recommended the setting up of this independent authority is correct in that "the stature of Indian science is a shadow of what it used to be" but this is not because of "misguided interventions".

It is because there is a lack of scientific expertise across all levels.

We have failed in our educational system to harness the enormous latent talent in our country and build a solid foundation of science.

Science does not end with the Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research and other elite institutions. I disagree with the report's contention that "there is a huge support system", and "global goodwill" which is "positive". We have none of these.

Anyway, India does not need global goodwill to succeed in science. It needs hard work, honest management and a critically large base of experts.

Soothing yet baffling expedients to solve the problems of Indian science might make for good copy in the short run but they are not going to yield real results. For example, SPARK is not even required to "closely work with industry and evolve public private partnerships". That is the mandate of CSIR.

Decisions on new initiatives like SPARK should not be taken within

government departments in Delhi following a proposal from one closed administrative group to another. A broad-based consultation with stakeholders is a must.

Even if SPARK is constituted, it needs financial independence; given the relationship between the Ministry of Finance and its Department of Expenditure on the one hand and the science departments on the other, this remains a moot point.

Large systems that work even moderately satisfactorily should not be tinkered with too much, for we may then have to face unintended consequences. Indian science is certainly not in a good state of health today. But what is wrong is not the structure of the system. The wrongs emanate from the many sins of omission and commission over the years by the individuals who have led the system.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Not taking a 'right' turn

In a phase when right-wing forces are on the ascendant in India, the United States and in certain European countries, the victory of Emmanuel Macron, a former socialist, in France comes as relief to the liberal forces which espouse values of tolerance and multiculturalism ("The Centre holds," editorial, May 9). The Fifth Republic, wobbling due to issues such as Islamophobia and unemployment, has opted for the centre when confronted with the far right.

ASHOK ALEX LUKE, Kottayam

Mr. Macron's victory has been hailed by many as a victory of French liberalism when in fact it is more a loss of neo-fascism ("A triumph for French liberalism," May 9). The people voted for Mr. Macron, yes, but they did so

more to stop Marine Le Pen than because they had any trust in him. In fact, the record abstention number – between 25% and 27% – shows that a significant portion of the electorate was dissatisfied with having to choose between a capitalist and a far-right candidate. Mr. Macron's win may not have stopped the march of the far right but merely delayed it. If he decides to go forward with the neoliberal policies that he and others of his ilk have proposed, it will lead to even more dissatisfaction among the working class, which may drift towards the right.

REMUS NORONHA, Kozhikode

The results of the widely watched French presidential election will soothe the wounds caused by Brexit and make the

European Union stronger. Keeping in with the global trend, the final race was between two anti-establishment political parties. The world will keenly watch how a young and inexperienced leader tackles issues like the refugee crisis and the terror threat.

PAUL JOM, Palakkad

L'affaire Karnan

The saga of Calcutta High Court Judge C.S. Karnan and his judicial pronouncements has gone too far ("Karnan orders 5-year RI for CJI, 7 other SC judges," May 9). By making an ego clash with Supreme Court judges look like an atrocity case under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, Justice Karnan has trivialised the battle for Dalit rights. Dalits continue

to face severe discrimination which requires a concrete redressal mechanism. By fighting their personal battles with the help of a law meant to protect the rights of the downtrodden, people in high constitutional posts undermine the credibility of the movement for rights. In a way, this episode is also comes across as a commentary on the ineffectiveness of collegium system, which allows promotion of people of questionable competence to such high posts.

VINITA SAXENA, New Delhi

Left behind

While claiming to oppose exclusionary politics of the political Right, those on the Left often adopt a binary world view ("Righting the Left," May 9). The condescension expressed by the Left towards those

not on the same wavelength reminds us of sermonising offered as part of organised religions. Also, there is a clear failure to recognise that in the present scenario, many traditional Left values are losing relevance. The Left now comes across as whining about every issue without giving practical and workable solutions. This appears to be naive and reactionary. Issues such as human rights, liberty and equality are no doubt fundamental to democracy but the ideological framework of the Left and its methodology both need evolution.

NAKSHATRA SINGH, New Delhi

AAP still relevant

The plot to finish off the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is as sure as eggs in eggs ("Fired Delhi Minister

hires bribery charge at Kejriwal," May 8). The "bribe bombs" have been dropped with the intent to demoralise Mr. Kejriwal and ruin AAP's credibility. The AAP's trademark topi and broom are an eyesore to the BJP and the space it finds in the political sphere as an alternative is not to its liking. Blame Mr. Kejriwal for anything, but not for corruption; even his worst enemies would agree on his incorruptibility. It is true that the setbacks in Punjab and Goa Assembly elections have put the party in a downbeat mood. But the AAP has not ceased to represent value-based politics and still appeals to those who believe that politics shouldn't be fully detached from idealism.

G. DAVID MILTON, Maruthamcode, Tamil Nadu

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THE WEDNESDAY INTERVIEW | SALMAN KHURSHID

'Most Muslim thinkers say there's no such thing as triple talaq'

The senior Congress leader talks Pakistan, triple talaq, Indian Muslims, and his party's need for a new vocabulary

SMITA GUPTA

Congress leader, former Foreign Minister and lawyer Salman Khurshid is a man of many parts. From tomorrow, he will be appearing in the Supreme Court as amicus curiae in the controversial triple talaq case. In a wide-ranging conversation, he talks about the triple talaq issue, what it means to be a Muslim in Narendra Modi's India, the need in the Congress party for a new narrative, and the problem with the government's Pakistan policy. Excerpts from the interview:

Why have you offered your services to the Supreme Court on triple talaq?

Why not? It may have a political context, but it's not necessary to look at it in a political context. It can be seen in pure humanistic terms, and towards (developing) a pure understanding of the sociology of Islam. Instead of a partisan approach, we can have an objective discussion that will be helpful for both parties, the court and society. I have done some research, I offered it to the court and am very encouraged that the court accepted it.

But for the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), it is a political issue.

In politics, [you can] pose something for the benefit of a segment of society; or you can propose something [because] it gives you political advantage. If the BJP is genuinely concerned about the welfare of Muslim women, then it is understandable. If they are doing it to excite aversion to Muslims, it's very sad. My view is that they may be taking a simplistic political stand. Therefore I hope an objective understanding of triple talaq will be an appropriate response.

The Muslim ulema see it as an interference in personal laws.

That's their point of view. There are many other points of view. If ulema from elsewhere in the world and ulema from India have different positions then there

needs to be a dialogue between the two sets of ulema rather than for Indian Muslims to say we will only listen to the Indian ulema.

Do you think the BJP is gradually moving towards enacting a Uniform Civil Code?

Maybe, but anyone in the BJP who thinks framing a Uniform Civil Code is about removing elements of Islam from the law in this country is barking up the wrong tree because there are many more complicated issues that arise. Let me give you an example: what is the position of the BJP on same-sex marriages? If you have a Uniform Civil Code, you can't stop at traditional attitudes towards human relations.

Isn't there a court ruling already on triple talaq?

There are High Court rulings and one specifically from Delhi of Justice Badar Ahmed which is very explicit: the ruling doesn't say we will overrule triple talaq, it says there is no such thing as triple talaq. The world over, the majority view of Muslim thinkers is that there is no such thing as triple talaq. Even if you say talaq three times, it amounts to talaq being said only once. So we have to look at the texts more closely and then come to a conclusion.

Is triple talaq really a big issue for Muslim women?

It is not an issue at all, but anyone who feels the threat of adversity would like to stand up against it. But for

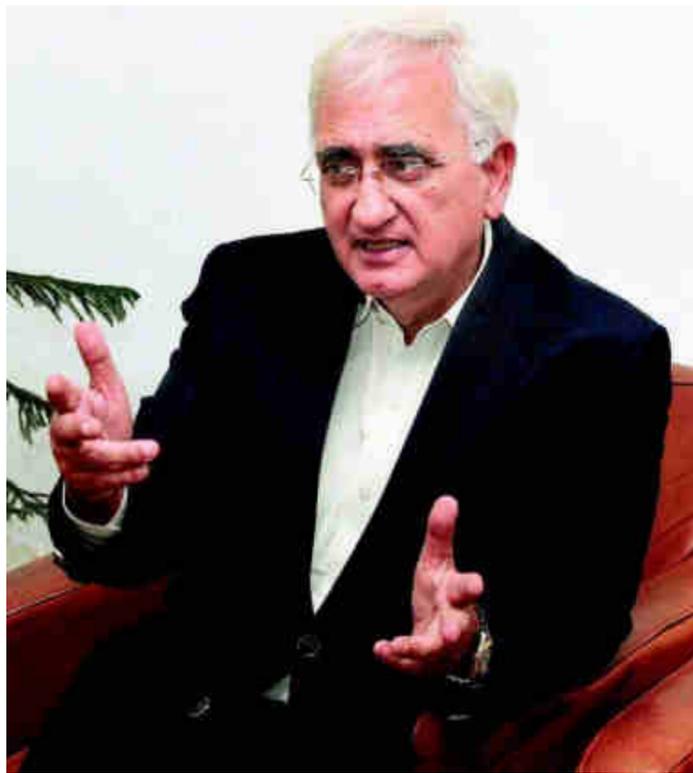
the BJP to assume that Muslim women think only it can save them from this adversity is completely wrong. There are systems within Islam, and an understanding within the Muslim community that does not favour triple talaq. In fact, triple talaq is largely a propagation and promotion of Hindi movies.

You have written at least two books in which you have dwelt at length on what it means to be a Muslim in India. What does it mean to be a Muslim in Narendra Modi's India?

Those books are already dated. What it means today is to understand what it means to be irrelevant. And you cannot blame Mr. Modi or [Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister] Yogi Adityanath for making Muslims irrelevant. The BJP is a political party and it has to win elections, and they have won elections by making Muslims irrelevant. But Muslims have played a major role in making themselves irrelevant.

Muslims have been wrongly described as a political group that is captive of the Congress and other liberal parties. They were participants in the Congress movement because it was the only movement that vigorously fought against Partition, refuted the idea of a divided India. So Muslims of India are those who rejected the idea of Pakistan. Where would they go? There have been disappointments with the Congress. Periodically, they return to the Congress. That's how 10 years of UPA rule was possible. But Muslims have been constantly attacked for being Congress lackeys and the Congress has been attacked for appeasement of Muslims.

However, the fact remains that Muslims are not the only ones who have made themselves irrelevant. The liberals



*SHANKER CHAKRAVARTY

Q If people are unwilling to understand what secularism means, we should take the larger picture and talk of liberalism. Define it as freedom, the right to express yourself

have made themselves completely irrelevant. The liberal voices are in complete isolation. It is liberal India that stood up for the minorities and women.

On the subject of appeasement of Muslims by the Congress, the A.K. Antony Report after the

2014 elections hinted that that might have been part of the problem.

I have not seen the report but I don't accept the report has this because I have spoken to Mr. Antony. He said he was saying this is in the context of political structures in Kerala, it was not a general proposition.

That is not how it is read in your party.

My party has all kinds of characters but I don't think they have a right to claim they speak for the party. I can say with enormous confidence that either in private conversations or in public we

haven't heard such a direction from our top leadership.

You mean Sonia and Rahul Gandhi.

Yes, yes. But there is ideology, principle and perception. If a perception is being created against the Congress, then we have to learn the idiom and the manner of presentation so that we don't become susceptible to perception. And that's where some of our colleagues are lacking.

We are not an NGO, we are a political party. And therefore, what needs to be said has to be said in a manner that will unite, not divide people. We were under a lot

of pressure from the NGOs to use a language that is unfortunately divisive. The Congress has a very inclusive and nationalistic idiom that it has used in the protection of minorities and of vulnerable sections of our society. If we lose that idiom, we will be hurt, and that's what the BJP has done. It doesn't mean that we have second thoughts on our ideology.

Doesn't the party need a new narrative?

Of course, we need a new narrative, a redrafting of strategies, a change in vocabulary. I would say fight for liberal India, you don't have to fight for secular India. If people are unwilling to understand what secularism means, we should take the larger picture and talk of liberalism.

Define it as freedom, the right to express yourself, do things that you want to do in a way that does not impinge on the other person, community. That's how all liberal societies define themselves and that's how India should define itself till such time as we can get the balance back to speak more freely and more openly about the rights of minorities.

It's been three years since 2014 but there is no talk of a new narrative in the Congress.

In our party we tend to concentrate more on organisation. There's always a lot of good people available all the time but the larger winning strategy – of course the changes you make in the organisation are absolutely indispensable, the fresh flavour, the fresh passion, fresh vigour to work, reorganise yourself – will come from new thought processes. Perhaps we have not done enough of that. We did this when we had conclaves in the past in the years before we came to office in 2004,

we built up a narrative that brought us to power for 10 years. I think a similar exercise is called for.

What will you say about the BJP's Pakistan policy?

Disastrous. They have not understood Pakistan. Mr. Modi thought it was all about hugs and kisses, and the amazing charm that won him elections in India would win him Pakistan. He has realised that is not the case. Pakistan is a hard nut, very complicated case. Not only are they convinced that their existence is hugely dependent on the continuing disharmony with India but also that their internal structures are very finely balanced on hostility towards India.

In all my references to Pakistan, I have said we must stand by the government. It is our duty and obligation that the nation remains united and speaks in one voice. But frankly, how long can we keep our eyes shut and not cry out in pain about what is going on – the repeated casualties and no explanations? What happened to all those promises of we will fix them, show them what India is... There are no easy answers, but you can't show you are weak as far as your military preparedness is concerned.

What about dialogue?

Let them say that dialogue will never be resumed. You start it, one day you stop it. Nowhere in the world does conflict end without dialogue. To hold out a promise that there won't be a dialogue is silly.

There will be dialogue at an appropriate time and under appropriate conditions after we have no reason to feel a sense of weakness. Casualties must stop, that is the first priority and it won't stop by begging Pakistan to stop it. We must have the strength to stop it.

SINGLE FILE

Pacifism and realpolitik

Japanese PM Abe proposes to revise the country's Constitution by 2020

GARIMELLA SUBRAMANIAM



The present geopolitical situation in East Asia may have looked conducive, even compelling, for Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to set a 2020 target to rewrite the country's controversial post-war pacifist Constitution. Nevertheless, the move to accord legal recognition to the country's military,

which has already grown to assume international commitments, must clear many legislative hurdles.

The country's 1947 Constitution has been at the centre of competing narratives, in much the same way as the contentious historical accounts on Japan's pre-eminent part in the Second World War.

Article 9, the bone of contention

The document drafted by the Supreme Command of the Allied Powers (SCAP) divided the Japanese Diet between the conservatives and nationalists on the one hand and the social democrats on the other. Whereas the former view the Constitution as an imposition on Tokyo, the latter see the text as a canon of progressive and forward-looking principles. At the heart of these divisions lies Article 9 through which Japan renounced the use of force in the resolution of international disputes and proclaimed never to maintain land, sea and air forces. The charter merely made provision for the country's own defence, which resulted in the establishment of the Self-Defence Forces (SDF).

However, the beginnings of a gradual shift away from a strict commitment to pacifism were soon to become evident. The 1954 Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement between Tokyo and Washington assured Japan external protection in exchange for the installation of permanent U.S. military bases in the country. The quid pro quo could hardly have been an antidote against an assertive nationalism following Japan's economic and industrial triumph through the decades. If anything, an accent on national sovereignty underscored the need for a more pragmatic interpretation of the essence of pacifism in relation to the growing military might of neighbouring China.

The execution in January 2015 of two Japanese hostages by the Islamic State (IS) may have strengthened the voices that have been eager to see the end of the 'no war clause'. The 2015 law on collective self-defence nearly ensured that. The measure authorises Japanese forces to join a battle to defend the nation's allies, even where its territory is not at threat.

Mr. Abe would hope that the proposed amendment would combine the piecemeal measures of the past and reorient the Constitution to the current geopolitical realities. But it will require a two-thirds backing in both Houses of Parliament and also a simple majority in a popular referendum. To jettison the foundational tenets of peace in any Constitution seems a morally regressive act.



CONCEPTUAL

Preference falsification

SOCIOLOGY

The act of misrepresenting one's actual opinions or preferences due to a fear of social pressures. The term was first coined by social scientist Timur Kuran, who used it in his book *Private Truth, Public Lies*, published in 1997. The idea has since been used to explain some sudden and unexpected political and social revolutions. The fear of social rejection can cause even preferences that are widely held to remain undercover for a long time, and exposed suddenly at some point. The latter could happen, for instance, when a sufficient number of people learn by some means that others covertly share the same preference.

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NOTEBOOK

Mr. Mandal, I presume?

You can't take anything for granted on the campaign trail

OMAR RASHID

Some names are more political than others. More so in Uttar Pradesh, where names are often an expression or reflection of caste hierarchy, political ideology, social mobility or rejection or acceptance of values. Many people belonging OBC castes incorporate the customarily Kshatriya title "Singh". Some Dalits adopt more authoritative surnames like Chaudhary, or use Buddhist titles like Siddharth or Gautam as a sign of rejection of Brahmanical ideals. These are just a few examples.

This context played large on my mind when a couple of months ago, while travelling for the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election, I was introduced to Moti Chand Rajbhar. He and I met at a litti-chokha stall in Ballia on the eastern fringes of the State. He belonged to the Rajbhar community, a most backward caste, but preferred to be called Moti Mandal.

We soon got debating the electoral mood in the State. To be honest, however, I was more enticed by his name. Mandal was not his birth name.

In the Hindi belt, Mandal more often than not evokes the legacy of B.P. Mandal of the Mandal Commission. As tribute to him, many pro-reservation scholars and leaders have even added Mandal to their names. Given Mr. Mandal's strong views on identity politics, I assumed there were lofty ideals behind his adoption of the name.

Mr. Mandal was campaigning for the Samajwadi Party but he had started out his politics by forming the Jai Suheldev Party, named after the medieval Bhar icon whom the BJP is trying to appropriate as a Hindutva figure.

The party aspired to ignite aspiration and identity among the Rajbhars. Over time, he merged his forces with another Rajbhar leader, Om Prakash Rajbhar, giving rise to the Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party. The partnership did not last though. Among many things, Mr. Mandal says, he was miffed by Mr. Rajbhar's insult of Mayawati, whom he himself considered to be a Bahujan icon.

To my disappointment, Mr. Mandal spoke more about Mr. Rajbhar than about himself. And soon, it was time to part. I was not letting him go without quenching my curiosity. I thought it now best to ask directly. "Do you take the name Mandal after Mandal politics?" I asked.

His response, however, proved to be a bit of an anticlimax. The name had nothing to do with ideology, he told me. While working with his previous party, SBSP, Mr. Mandal was in-charge of the Varanasi administrative division. In Hindi, division translates to mandal. "That's how I got my name," he said with a smile.

FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 10, 1967

Zakir Hussain elected President

Dr. Zakir Hussain has been elected President of India. He polled 4,71,244 first preference electoral votes, as against 3,63,771 by his immediate opponent, Mr. K. Subba Rao. Of the 15 other candidates, only six secured some votes. As anticipated in these columns, Dr. Zakir Hussain, who was sponsored by the Congress, secured a comfortable majority of 1,07,273 electoral votes over the former Chief Justice of India, who was supported by the Opposition parties. The announcement of the election was made this afternoon by the returning officer, Mr. B.N. Bannerjee, Secretary of the Rajya Sabha. From the beginning it was obvious that Dr. Zakir Hussain would win on the basis of the Congress Party's strength in the two Houses of Parliament and in the State Assemblies.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 10, 1917

America at war

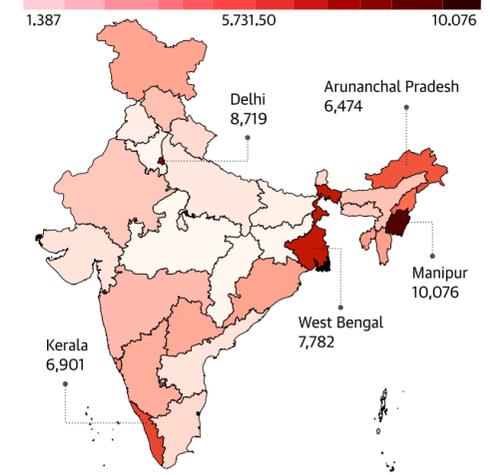
Mr. Balfour and the British Mission were received most enthusiastically in the Senate. Mr. Balfour in his speech said Germany had blundered in thinking that Great Britain and America were afraid to fight. "My confidence in the issue," he said, "is redoubled since you have thrown in your lot. I do not believe that Germany will win by the submarine. The war will not be settled by sinking neutral ships and drowning women and children. It will be settled by hard fighting. I do not doubt that success will crown our efforts, and posterity will regard the union of America and Great Britain and France as marking a new epoch in civilisation."

DATA POINT

Out-of-pocket expenses

Though public facilities are expected to provide health care free of cost, families spent an average of ₹3,198 per delivery in government maternity centres in the form of gifts and tips in 2014-15

AVERAGE OUT-OF-POCKET EXPENDITURE PER DELIVERY IN PUBLIC HEALTH FACILITY ₹



SOURCE: NFHS - 4