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May can't have it both ways

To boost trade, Britain should make visas easier for Indians

The resonance of 'UK visa' is rooted in our history, but the outlook is now more global and Indians have a wider choice. The perception that Britain is no longer a welcoming destination has driven thousands of Indians elsewhere; the realisation that this is Britain's loss rather than India's is reflected in official interaction. Britain itself is undergoing major changes, with immigration at the heart of the Brexit conundrum. The Leave vote was mainly driven by large-scale immigration from within the European Union in the last decade, but the ruling Conservatives have promised in its manifesto to "bear down" on non-EU immigration as well, notwithstanding promises made by leading lights of the Theresa May government that it will be possible to ease visa curbs for Indians and Commonwealth citizens after Brexit is complete. Ms May is expected to win the June 8 election, and has already indicated to this newspaper that no relaxation of visa terms is likely.

Recent statistics paint a more complex picture: In 2016, the largest number of voluntary returns of those without right to be in Britain were Indians; the highest number of work visas issued were to Indians; the biggest drop in international students coming to Britain for higher studies was from India; some of the highest number of foreign nationals caught abusing the British visa system are Indians; and the highest number of British visas granted during 2016 was to Indians (and Chinese). India has also eased the process and lowered costs through the e-visa system for British nationals but without similar gestures for Indians seeking British visas.

The quality and nature of migration from India to Britain has changed: From semi-skilled workers to IT and other professionals working in multinational companies in recent decades. The key challenge for Theresa May will be reconciling the mobility issue (visa) for professionals during talks for a free trade agreement with India after Brexit, for which she has shown much enthusiasm. It cannot be the case that you want our trade and money, but make it difficult for professionals to move and work.

The shadow of the black economy is receding

The formalisation of the economy after demonetisation brought in many gains

Shock therapy can work, but not without leaving some burn marks. The World Bank's latest India Development Update attempts to make another assessment of the impact of the Narendra Modi government's demonetisation experiment. It does not shy away from saying that demonetisation caused considerable distress among informal sector workers. But its general conclusion is that 'notebandi' had many more pluses than minuses and its negative fallout was limited. Part of the reason for this was simple luck: A normal monsoon helped cushion the rural economy. The report looks at the velocity of M1 money supply, a way to measure the number of transactions in cash, bank accounts and normal places people keep their money. The velocity fell from 5.7 to 5.6 between the last quarter of 2016 and second quarter of 2017. The bank predicts a sharp rebound in velocity in the coming quarters.

The report says that the GDP growth rate dipped but only marginally during the demonetisation period. It estimates GDP growth rate was at 7.3% in the first half of the fiscal year and dropped one-third of one percentage point in the second half. However, the bank admits it has no clear means to calculate the impact on the informal sector. There are clues to the degree of turmoil in this sector. Demand for jobs in the formal sector by February matched the entire demand of 2016. This is a clear sign of how many jobs were lost during demonetisation. However, this also underlines a key advantage of demonetisation: It is helping push India out of the shadow of its black economy.

Formalisation of the economy has numerous gains. There are many who speak in favour of the informal sector. But the poor man's economy has a crucial flaw. Because of its static productivity and technology levels it keeps its inhabitants in poverty. If India's economy is substantially whitened, demonetisation will be remembered as the act that began the process.

Why the south is ready for the BJP

The new global south Indian is not interested in battles of political justice or ideology anymore

SHIV
VISVANATHAN

Sometimes, one has to see political narratives not in terms of instrumental tactics, or technocratic probes but in terms of folklore and stereotypes. They capture the nature of truth in a way that a secular narrative cannot. One senses this as one looks at the BJP's ambitions to conquer the south.

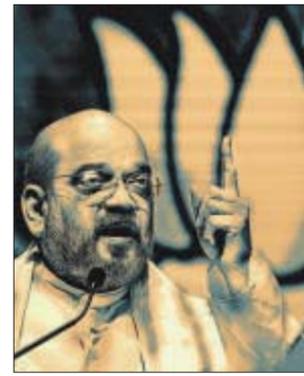
In an electoral sense, the BJP is an outsider to south India. It is stereotypically a Hindu-Hindi party. It today claims to be a national party ready to spread the saffron wave deep south. At one level, it feels like an alien invasion. Fundamental to this strategy is the years of networking built by the RSS. The BJP is only the tip of the iceberg completing an electoral victory after the RSS has entered the south. The geographies of the imagination do not convey the idea of an election but more an act of infiltration.

For years, the south was a fortress which the BJP could not enter. Part of the reason for this is that the BJP spoke an idiom of nation-state and identity politics the south did not share. The BJP reflected a narrative the south was contemptuous of. It reflected the waves of

social movements, which had fought for social justice, while the BJP remained a casteist party. Second, the BJP equated Hindi with India, an equation which the south, particularly Chennai, would not accept. One remembers Annadurai talking of a seceding south being listened to by a tolerant Congress. It is a prospect a BJP would not tolerate. It is the emptying out of political movements and the return of pragmatic politics that has made the south ready for BJP.

I remember as a child I went home for vacation to the south. As I crossed the Andhra Pradesh border, I almost felt I was seceding every summer. The south, I felt, was a different country where we behaved differently. Apart from Bollywood, as a child, I did not feel Hindi India had much to offer. Frankly, I felt as Indian as anyone, it is only the BJP dialect I felt was parochial. The decline of a cosmopolitan south concerned with justice has made it vulnerable to the BJP.

In fact, when one thinks of politics in Kerala, one thought of the Church, the CPI(M), and the Congress. There was a vitality to the debates on land and even the Church had a sense of the organic, native, and indigenous the BJP could never have. Today Marxist ideology is dead, the Church is conservative, the Congress dead-wood. It is as if a whole cast of characters and a wonderful set of scripts brilliantly enacted by the Congress and CPI(M) have been erased. The result is the entry of the BJP as a 'B' grade alternative to the great cameo acts of the past.



In an electoral sense, the BJP is an outsider to south India. **SOMU MEHTA/HT PHOTO**

In a way, what one sees here is the decline of acts of political justice. The new aspirational, mobile, global south Indian is more ready for the BJP and Narendra Modi than for epic battles of ideology and electoral politics.

The BJP knows its footprints are still new. It has to adapt local styles and heroes and the irony is that film which once kept it out is becoming the vehicle for its belated entry. In the earlier era, that film scripted a theory of politics that made the BJP irrelevant. But one must remember it was in an era where the film star and the politician was one person, like the DMK script writers, like Rama Rao, or Raj Kumar. Film and politics were warp and weft of one imagination. Today the ideological power of the film is over. What it however left

behind was the fan club, cadre of fans who were as powerful as the CPI(M) cadre or the RSS shakha. In a pragmatic way, the BJP has decided to co-opt the stars with fan clubs, giving them a fan base which eventually becomes a party base.

There is something surreal about the possibility of a Rajinikanth joining hands with a Modi. It is like a confluence of two badly scripted films. It is like politics as a symbolic fiction and film as a symbolic politics combining to create a new utopia, a hybridity to fill up the emptiness of southern politics. It is as if a pan-Indian second-hand state is being created, which makes pragmatic sense to both sides. A Rajinikanth keeps southern populist honour intact as RSS cadre merge with fans in surreal delight. Rajinikanth could have been a counter to the Modi wave, giving a respite to southern politics. Unfortunately, an alliance of convenience might make him the Trojan horse of Indian politics. For an old-fashioned politico like me, it is the ultimate nightmare. Politics is the happy transition actors in the twilight of stardom are looking for and the BJP has a pragmatic sense of this.

The BJP is a master of factional politics in Andhra Pradesh. Fundamentally, it acts as if every party is a regional extension to its national presence. It becomes both a complement and an opposition to each party, capturing the oppositional space, which is a temptation to many out of power politicians. Its real politics is its politics of patience. And pragmatism. The arrival of the BJP will create a new pragmatic politics without the old colour and character of the south. It will be an irony of democracy, which political pundits will take years to recover from.

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COWTALES



'Cruelty to animals' is covered in the Concurrent List and so both the Centre and states can enact laws on this subject and in case of a conflict, the central law will prevail. **REUTERS**

The cattle trade ban may not pass legal test

The Act under which the new sale rules of livestock have been framed does not treat slaughter as 'cruelty'

FAIZAN
MUSTAFA

The recent ban on the sale of cows and buffaloes for slaughter through animal markets has strangely been notified by the Union ministry of environment and forests though the subject of animal husbandry is under the ministry of agriculture. It is also wrong to say that these rules were framed on the directions of the Supreme Court (SC). In 2014, the SC had only directed that a panel be set up to frame rules to stop smuggling of cattle on the Indo-Nepal border. It is not surprising then that the Madras High Court on Tuesday stayed the implementation of the new rules on the ground that "several communities such as Sikhs, Muslims, backward classes and Dalits, who as a matter of worship...sacrifice animals, which are covered within the expansive definition of cattle under the rules".

India has included prohibition of cow slaughter in the directive principles of the Constitution because one community treats it sacred. If cow reverence is not an essential Hindu practice — i.e. it was not there in original Hinduism or one can be a Hindu even without revering the cow — then constitutional protection for the animal and the ban that more than 22 states have imposed on cow

slaughter will not be justified. Even the Supreme Court's 2006 upholding of ban on slaughter of cow or cow progeny will become questionable. In fact, there is evidence that beef eating was common in the Vedic and subsequent times even among Brahmins.

It is true that 'cruelty to animals' is covered in the Concurrent List and so both the Centre and states can enact laws on this subject and in case of a conflict, the central law will prevail. The Centre has used 'cruelty to animals' to justify the new rules but then the Act under which these rules have been framed does not treat slaughter as 'cruelty'. While framing rules, we cannot undo the Act. In fact the subject matter of these rules come under the exclusive jurisdiction of states as state list mentions 'agriculture' and 'preservation of stock' as state subjects.

The new rules are a blot to the promise of cooperative federalism. Moreover the rules will have an effect on the freedom of trade and occupation as restrictions imposed by them will fail the test of 'reasonableness'. The new rules also attempt to rewrite the ownership law as it prohibits a buyer from selling the animal for slaughter within six months of its purchase.

Ownership is a bundle of rights, which includes the right to alienation and even right to destruction. These arbitrary rules, which are not based on any intelligible differential and have no rational objective to achieve, are likely to be struck down as unconstitutional.

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Chhattisgarh's Maoist surrender policy is flawed

The judiciary must intervene since it is turning out to be custodial detention by another name

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Much like the Salwa Judum, where the Chhattisgarh government claimed that villagers were voluntarily leaving their homes and coming to live in camps, the government is now claiming that hundreds of people are surrendering and coming to live with the police for their own protection. But just as Salwa Judum was found to be a State-sponsored movement, the surrenders are turning out to be custodial detention by another name. The only difference is that the courts, which declared the Judum illegal, have yet to take a call on the State's surrender policy.

The case of Podiyam Panda, a former sarpanch, who allegedly surrendered before the police on May 9, brings the police lie into stark relief. He was picked up from near his village on May 3, and has been in police custody since. After several failed attempts to meet him, his wife filed a habeas corpus petition in the high court in Bilaspur on May 12. He was produced 10 days later, under heavy police escort. In the presence of policemen who stood not far from him, Panda told the court he would rather stay with the police than go with his wife and children. Despite his brother's testimony that he had seen evidence of torture, the court did not order a medical examination, or ask the police to explain the six-day gap between when the Press reported his arrest and the police claimed he had surrendered. Panda was not allowed any time outside of police custody before making his statement.

Panda is now back in police custody, and his 'confession' to being involved in the recent Sukma attack and to have served as a conduit between rights activists and journalists and Maoists, serve two

MANY 'SURRENDERED NAXALITES' ARE MADE TO JOIN THE DISTRICT RESERVE GROUP AND FIGHT THE MAOISTS, A LIFE OF COMBAT FROM WHICH THEY WERE SUPPOSEDLY ESCAPING IN THE FIRST PLACE

purposes — to discredit critics of human rights abuses by the security forces, and show that the police is taking quick action after 25 CRPF men were killed.

In fact, Panda is not a Naxalite but the former sarpanch of Chintagufa village in Sukma district, a man well-respected locally. He maintained his village as an oasis of peace in the midst of Salwa Judum, and helped both the CRPF and villagers.

While the Chhattisgarh's government's surrender policy helps the police keep people in detention indefinitely, it has two main advantages: Legal and psychological.

Unlike an arrest, where a person has to be produced before a magistrate within 24 hours, law and policy are silent on any mechanism to test a surrender's voluntariness. Surrenders also ease the pressure of proving a person's involvement in any actual crime.

Surrenders can, therefore, be used to cast a wide and indiscriminate net. Many villagers are picked up from their homes and held for months, while the police decides what to do with them. Some are subsequently 'arrested', others kept in police camps, while the lucky ones get to go home. The police declare they have been given 'cash incentives' of Rs 10,000 to Rs 1 lakh for surrendering — investigations on the ground reveal that few have actually seen this money. In 2015, a state screening committee found 75% of the surrenders forwarded by the police did not qualify as Maoist cadre, and were ineligible for rehabilitation; in 2016 that number went up to 97%.

Psychologically, the surrender myth has several benefits. It demoralises the Maoists, taints the 'surrenderer' in the eyes of their fellow-villagers, and counters the impression that the police are repressive. As it is, Bastar's jails are running some 400% over capacity. Showing people as voluntarily living in police camp sounds benign compared to mass arrests, while enabling total police control. Many 'surrendered Naxalites' are then made to join the District Reserve Group and fight the Maoists, a life of combat from which they were supposedly escaping in the first place.

Drawing on Chhattisgarh, the Odisha police recently forced Niyamgiri Suraksha Samiti activist Kuni Sikaka to 'surrender' as a Maoist or else face a long jail term. The courts must intervene before 'surrenders' become a mass disease and destroy the basic protections of criminal law.

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innervoice
WE CAN ONLY BECOME GREAT OURSELVES BY GIVING TO OTHERS

Archana Joshi

We all are not born great, but can, with some effort, die great. The secret lies in the act of giving.

No one ever won hearts by taking or snatching something from others, or by running away from difficulties. The greats are always those who serve their country and mankind.

It helps to remember that when the universe gives you anything extra, it's meant to be shared with others.

Flow of energy contributes to power and purity, just like the flowing water... with more force, it gains the power to cut rocks. Similarly, man becomes powerful and great when he starts giving to the world.

When humans start living a selfish life, refusing to utilise our talents, skill or wealth for the sake of world, we begin to collect negative energies in life.

The universe keeps giving us opportunities to uplift our thoughts, build our character, and enhance our qualities, and

become great in the eyes of ourselves and others.

Greatness cannot be built in one day. It is the result of constant yet selfless love, sacrifice, and the desire to make life worthy for one and all...

It's when you leave your ordinary life behind, and tread the path of greater good.

Inner Voice comprises contributions from our readers. The views expressed are personal. innervoice@hindustantimes.com