



A thought for today
State has been taking liberties,
and these liberties were once ours

EP THOMPSON

Hip Hic Hurray

Kerala shows the way on reversing the ban mania that's been running amok

The Pinarayi Vijayan government has given Kerala a new liquor policy and it represents both a dramatic and welcome U-turn on the policy of the previous government of Oommen Chandy, whose UDF government had not only restricted liquor bars to five star hotels but also committed to closing a tenth of state liquor vends each year in its drive towards total prohibition. Vijayan calls such commitments "impractical", encouraging bootlegging and drugs while discouraging tourism. The new LDF policy has therefore sought to recover lost ground by moves like enabling full-fledged bars in three and four star hotels and freeing those with even fewer stars to run wine and beer parlours.

The new policy will help the Kerala tourism industry – which attracted 12.4 million domestic tourists and close to a million foreign tourists in 2015 – to bounce back and therefore provide more income and employment opportunities to the state's well educated workforce. Hardline restrictions on liquor had caused tourists to reschedule their itineraries to other states and even neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka and Mauritius. It had also frozen new investments flowing into this sunrise sector where Kerala has a huge potential. With excise duty from alcohol being a major income source, the new policy augurs achhe din for state coffers too.

Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar must take note. Reports are piling up about how prohibition in that state has increased bootlegging instead of decreasing drinking, giving a spurt to criminal gangs rather than temperance. It's a classic case of draconian laws that infringe terribly on personal liberties breeding contempt for law and encouraging extortion rackets.

On the food front it's bad enough how Taliban style laws choking consumption of beef have produced a rash of vigilante violence across the country, but these have now been compounded by the Centre's new rules prohibiting sale of cattle for slaughter in animal markets. This is crippling livestock trade countrywide and also buffalo meat exports. After factoring in the danger to associated industries like leather and soap, we are looking at millions of jobs being endangered. Centre must walk back from these destructive rules. Modern India must be rid of the ban mania that infantilises the citizenry, criminalises lifestyle choices and destroys livelihoods.



Modi-Trump Meet

The two leaders need to work out a new bilateral paradigm

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi heading to the US later this month for his first meeting with President Donald Trump, a critical moment is apparent in New Delhi-Washington relations. There's no denying that Trump has shaken up US foreign policy by challenging several established principles. Under an 'America First' framework, he has tried to reset America's ties with Nato, pulled out the US from the Paris Climate Accord, and torpedoed the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement. Add to this how he takes to social media to speak his mind on diplomatic relations – as he recently did in criticising the trade deficit between Germany and the US – and we have an American president with a highly personalised approach to foreign policy.

That ought to serve as a common ground with Modi who has also imparted his personal touch to Indian foreign policy. In fact, both leaders have a clear vision for their respective country and are willing to stake significant political capital to see this realised. Hence, the Modi-Trump meeting provides a good opportunity to update where each country stands in the other's foreign policy priority.

Continuity in India-US relations from the Modi-Obama years now looks impossible. This may not be a bad thing as Trump has already indicated a tough line on Pakistan-sponsored terrorism and described India as a terror victim. But differences over issues such as H-1B visas to Indians and outsourcing need to be negotiated, perhaps by convincing how Indian interests are aligned to American industry interests. Just as China's President Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe have tried to establish a personal equation with Trump, so must Modi. These two leaders have the capacity to broker a new understanding for a win-win India-US partnership.



Dear departed

We don't like to speak ill of the dead for a very good reason

Jug Suraiya

The other day I happened to overhear a conversation between two people about a third person who had recently died. I knew all three of the people concerned and for a while I couldn't help but wonder if my ears were playing tricks on me.

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Because the two people who were talking were all praise for the person they were discussing.

I knew that neither of the two had particularly liked the person in question. In fact, they'd positively disliked him, and, as far as they were concerned, far from being the late lamented the departed one should have been the late unlamented, the only lamentable aspect of his departure being that it was so late in coming.

Despite that the two seemed to be competing with each other in seeing who could outdo whom in saying nice things about the guy, whom they made sound like a cross between an Albert Einstein for intelligence and a male Mother Teresa for compassion and charity towards his fellow human beings.

Far from being a stray case, such eulogising of the dead is the rule rather than the exception which proves it.

In life a fellow could have been an out-and-out scoundrel, a con artist and swindler who cheated everyone he could, and who not only energetically picked his nose in public but subjected to keen scrutiny what his finger had managed to find therein.

But the moment he kicked the bucket, he'd be invested with an instant halo and declared to be a saintly soul by the very people who'd been his former detractors.

Why is it that we are enjoined not just not to speak ill of the dead but to speak as well of them as it is possible to do?

We even avoid the dirty four-letter word – dead – in speaking of them. We use polite euphemisms like 'passed away', 'left us', 'gone to one's heavenly abode'.

Part of the reason of course is that as the dead are unable to defend themselves it's unfair to bad mouth them. But there could be a far more potent reason.

Saying nice – even if untrue – things about the departed is a form of insurance. We'd like the compliment to be returned when we ourselves depart, as we all must do. And that, when we do, others will ensure that we are allowed to RIP – Rest In Praise.

jug.suraiya@timesgroup.com
http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/juglebandhi/

A Tale Of Two Worlds

Digital globalisation is proceeding remorselessly despite geopolitical rhetoric against globalisation

Arindam Bhattacharya



A leader of a global industrial company – which has survived and thrived through the ebbs and flows of globalisation over the past century – brought out the remarkable recent shift in the narrative of globalisation when he lamented to me that "globalisation is not a zero sum game as current geopolitics makes it out to be". He went on to add, ironically, that despite the geo-political rhetoric they are continuing to grow strongly, especially their global services business, as the world becomes even more tightly integrated digitally.

These two seemingly conflicting narratives of the world, the geopolitical and the digital, have fundamentally transformed the half century old model of globalisation. This dichotomy is further influenced by the seemingly opposing geopolitical approach of the two leading economic powers, US and China.

While the United States has overturned its late 20th century policy as the champion of open borders and global trade and is embracing economic nationalism as a bargaining lever to achieve its objective of 'fair trade', China is pushing a new geopolitical order with its One Belt One Road initiative. In both cases, the loss is that of multilateralism which underpinned the growth of globalisation over six decades since World War 2, despite economic hiccups like the oil crisis of the 1970s or the dotcom bust in 2000.

This dichotomy of the two worlds is playing out in the metrics of globalisation. The negative geo-political narrative of growing protectionism is reflected in 'old' metrics that show a downward trend with slowdown in the global merchandise trade affecting the trade multiplier on global GDP. Similarly global FDI intensity (as percentage of total global investment or global GDP) is also falling and together has brought down global GDP growth from a high of 4.5% in 2010 to around 3%.

On the other hand the digital narrative is all about growth in the number of globally connected consumers, which



Uber who are building multi-billion dollar global businesses not in decades but months and years by leveraging this rapid growth in digital integration. Perhaps the most dramatic example of such growth was Niantic, the makers of the PokemonGo game who reached billion dollar revenues in just six months from over 100 million consumers in over 125 countries.

At a recent conference in US where I presented my thesis of new globalisation resulting from these two narratives, the head of a global consumer company articulated the unfortunate tale of the two worlds very nicely when he said that in the current political climate where anything 'global', 'world' or 'united' is almost demised, whereas anything 'national', 'us versus them' and 'protectionist' is heralded, people lose sight of the fundamental and undeniable truth that protectionism and nationalism have never in history created wealth for society at large.

He went on to add that the most important question for him was how should corporations position themselves in this battle of two worlds? Should they jump on the bandwagon of protectionism as some global firms are doing by abandoning some markets which was very "convenient" politically in the short term, but destroys value in the long term? Or should he consciously ignore the political noise and instead fully embrace the rapidly converging global consumer trends?

A non-trivial choice to say the least, with no easy answers. But it is important to remember that ebbs and flows of globalisation are not new. Over the last century and half, the world has witnessed several major waves of globalisation.

Each time, globalisation's momentum was halted by some crisis. After each reverse, globalisation was redefined and emerged stronger than ever – but also in a very different form. Hopefully the current era will be no different and the two worlds will converge as the inexorable logic of the market and consumers bring about the alignment of the two worlds. And prove once again that globalisation is not, and never was, a zero-sum game.

The writer is director, BCG Henderson Institute. Views are personal

has gone from 0.7 billion in 2003 to over 3 billion. The number of globally connected machines is growing even faster and currently number over 6 billion, which is forecast to more than treble to over 20 billion by 2020.

This growth in digital connectivity has led to an explosive growth in global data from 100 gigabytes in 2002 to over 20,000 GB in 2015, and it is expected to cross 60,000 GB by 2020. So while the merchandise trade is slowing down services trade, especially digital services trade, is growing strongly.

These two world narratives have led to very different 'winning' strategies, both at the level of countries and companies. While overall global growth has slowed, we are also seeing greater divergence in growth rates among countries, especially emerging markets, a marked contrast from the convergence among developing country growth rates that defined the last two decades of globalisation.

Developing countries that have strong services exports and strong

Developing countries that have strong services exports and strong domestic consumption continue to grow while many commodity and even manufacturing export led economies struggle

domestic consumption continue to grow while many commodity and even manufacturing export led economies struggle. Clearly a very different winning formula from the manufacturing and merchandise led export growth model of the second half of 20th century.

Similarly, the fastest growing companies are those who have built their business models around services and digital platforms, selling to digitally connected consumers or businesses. Examples are companies like Fitbit and

'Indira Gandhi put RSS's Guru Golwalkar on cow slaughter committee ... wound up after 12 years without a report'

While Union minister for environment and forests Harsh Vardhan has clarified that rules notified by his ministry for restricting sale of cattle for slaughter were misunderstood, the political debate around cow slaughter remains vociferous. **Jairam Ramesh**, former minister of environment and author of 'Indira Gandhi: A Life in Nature', spoke to **Nalin Mehta** about the first political committee to explore a national ban on cow slaughter set up in 1967, the politics of beef and Indira's role in India's ecological history:

■ You have written about the committee set up by Indira Gandhi on cow slaughter. What did it find?

On 7 November 1966 thousands of sadhus and others attacked Parliament demanding a national ban on cow slaughter. There was police firing and people died. The home minister resigned. On 29 June 1967 Indira set up a high powered committee to examine the issue of a national ban under AK Sarkar, retired chief justice of the Supreme Court. That committee was given six months to submit its report. It met for 12 years but there was no report. I tried to get the primary papers related to it but did not succeed. The only accounts of that committee are in two memoirs. Ashok Mitra, the economist, and Dr V Kurien, the dairy and Amul man – who

were both members – have written about it, and quite delightfully.

One of the members of that committee was RSS sarsangchalak guru MS Golwalkar himself. Indira made him a member of that committee. It was wound up in 1979 by PM Morarji Desai. According to Mitra and Kurien, no report was submitted. There may be something in the home ministry's deep archives but I didn't find anything in the National Archives.

■ Did Indira have a view on cow slaughter?

She did. There is a 1967 letter I quote from then American ambassador Chester Bowles to Dillon Ripley who was then at the Smithsonian Institution which wanted to do a study on the ecological consequences of India's large cattle population. Bowles replied that the PM doesn't like this because this is a sensitive issue and must be dealt with only by Indians.

■ What is your view on the environment ministry's recent regulations on sale of cattle?

It could have been done in a much better fashion. I don't think anybody would justify slaughter for the sake of slaughter but there are also

issues of faith and livelihoods which must be addressed. There is much that is wrong in what has been done. While some motivations cannot be questioned the manner in which those motivations have got reflected in legislation leaves much to be desired.

Mamata Banerjee and many other chief ministers have a problem with the way this has been done. Tamil Nadu's leather industry which is a major export earning industry and a major employer will be badly affected. I am not surprised Tamil Nadu has been vociferous. There is an economic angle which also needs to be looked at.

■ What is your take on beef festivals being organised as a form of protest against the ministry's move?

I am vegetarian and as minister of environment in 2009

publicly said that the best thing the world can do to reduce methane emissions is to stop eating beef.

Yet, I don't believe in coercion. It is a lifestyle choice. If people want to eat beef let them eat. The state should not dictate what people should be doing in their personal domain. Surely, we have better things to discuss than cow slaughter at a time when we have a jobs famine. To be discussing beef when the economy is decelerating is bizarre. It is all part of an orchestrated campaign to keep society polarised. It suits the ruling establishment

■ Why do you call Indira an ecological pioneer?

For the new generation Indira is remembered either for her characterisation as Durga or for the Emergency. What is not being realised enough is that she was an ecological pioneer in India and abroad. The four major legal pillars of environmental regulation in this country – the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, the Water Pollution Control Act of 1974, Air Pollution Control Act of 1981 and Forest Conservation Act of 1980 – were the result of her single-handed efforts. The institutions we have today like the Central Pollution Control Board, state pollution control boards and the ministry of environment itself were created by her. She is most associated with Project Tiger but she started Project Tiger in 1972 a year before Project Tiger.

dilbert



Become Water Positive, Harvest Rainwater

Shri Shri Anandamurti

In the beginning, there were no living beings, not even plants. Water enabled the evolution of life; it is an essential factor in earth's evolution, crucial for survival of human beings, animals, plants and the planet as a whole. If there is no water, ecological balance of the planet will be lost and soon the earth could become a barren wasteland.

In the near future, there could be severe crisis in many parts of the world. The only solution is to conserve rainwater. Many ponds, canals, dams, lakes and reservoirs should be immediately constructed to catch the rainwater and store it for drinking water. This is the only way out.

There are three main causes of drought: The first is the wanton destruction of plants, the second is low pressure systems over oceans and big seas, and the third is sudden changes in the angular movement of the sun and other celestial bodies like comets,

nebulae and galaxies. The third cause can only be controlled by Supreme Consciousness. However, if human beings follow the path of positive microvita and have the grace of Supreme Consciousness, they can also control the third cause.

When there is the sudden appearance of powerful celestial bodies or a sudden change in their angle of rotation, their gravitational pull may disturb the seasons and the natural order of creation. For example, as a result of the strong gravitational pull of a powerful comet or meteor, clouds may not be formed. This phenomenon is called bakudasha in Sanskrit.

Certain deviations of celestial bodies like meteors, comets and satellites take place due to concentration of a huge number of positive and negative microvita. Movement in universal space is subject to the movement of positive and negative microvita,

and this also affects life on earth. The angularity of the movement of celestial bodies also affects the minds of human beings. Suppose you are outside, enjoying a cool breeze, on a calm, full moon night. A soothing, painless feeling will arise in your mind. But if the feeling continues, the nerve cells in your body may become dull, and if the experience of dullness goes beyond a certain limit, your thinking power may be impaired, even causing some psychic ailment. This occurs because the ecological balance within the human structure is lost.

The amount of existing surface water should be immediately doubled. This can best be done by a decentralised approach to water management which increases the depth or area, or both, of water storage systems. The first step is to increase the

depth of those ponds, tanks, dams, lakes, rivers and reservoirs which are already being used for storing water.

The second step is to increase the area of these storage facilities, while the third step is to increase the plantations around them.

Human movement is towards ecological equipoise and supreme synthesis. In the inner world, balance must be maintained as this leads to spiritual progress. Ecological order is not only for the earth but for the entire universe, and it must be maintained both within and without. This subtle balance is ecological balance.

You must prepare yourselves. You have to solve all the problems in the world today. You should prepare detailed plans and programmes and act accordingly.

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Sacredspace

The Seeker

My heart, like a peacock on a rainy day, spreads its plumes tinged with rapturous colours of thoughts, and in its ecstasy seeks some vision in the sky, with a longing for one whom it does not know.

Rabindranath Tagore