



A thought for today

Condemn none: if you can stretch out a helping hand, do so

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Yogi At The Helm

New UP government earns mixed report card in first 100 days

As UP's Yogi Adityanath government celebrates a hundred days in office, its report card is a mixed bag. BJP's electoral sweep in the UP polls earlier this year – where it won a mammoth 312 out of 403 seats – was always going to raise expectations for the incoming administration. Given the size of UP and the breadth of its challenges the Yogi government risks becoming a victim of its own ambitions.

Take for example the law and order situation. The Yogi government, in keeping with BJP's electoral promise, has advocated a zero-tolerance policy towards crimes. However, it's yet to figure out how to deal with fringe elements within its own Sangh Parivar fold who feel emboldened and have been intimidating minorities. If BJP blames the previous Akhilesh Yadav dispensation in the state for shielding criminals belonging to the Samajwadi Party, it can't allow those affiliated to Hindu groups to run amok now. Meanwhile, incidents such as the Saharanpur caste violence between Dalits and Thakurs show that the new administration is far from attaining a firm grip on public order, even as it has pushed initiatives such as anti-Romeo squads that have been criticised for moral policing.

Plus, in hyping the issue of cow protection and conducting drives against illegal slaughterhouses without providing avenues for regularisation, the new administration is only pushing the meat trade underground and providing a fillip to vigilantism as well as crime. Such measures also disrupt the rural farm economy to which trade in animals is intrinsic. In this context, the Yogi government's decision to give a Rs 36,500 crore farm loan waiver puts additional pressure on UP's stretched exchequer. Instead, Adityanath must focus on pro-market moves that not only help the farmer in a sustainable way but also spare the exchequer.

Additionally, the Yogi government's propensity to investigate an increasing number of Akhilesh-era schemes can be fraught. Corruption, indeed, must be unearthened and fought. But the impression mustn't go round that investigations are motivated by political vendetta. That said, the Yogi government's anti-land mafia taskforce to recover public land and help those whose properties have been confiscated by criminals has progressed well. In fact, the new administration should identify and focus on a few such areas where it can deliver results, rather than biting off more than it can chew.

Badminton Badshah

Srikanth's sterling performance wins him back to back Super Series titles

As shuttle Kidambi Srikanth scaled new heights for Indian sport when he won the Australian Super Series title, beating Olympic champion Chen Long in straight games 22-20, 21-16. That makes him the first Indian to win two back-to-back Super Series titles, as well as only the fifth player in the world to contest three consecutive Super Series finals: Singapore, Indonesia and Australia of which he won the last two. Srikanth is currently 11th in world rankings, but he is expected to break into the top five after this performance.

Indian badminton is witnessing a renaissance as its shuttlers are consistently beating the world's best. Srikanth had got the better of current world number one player Son Wan Ho a week earlier in Jakarta as well. Ho and Long are the most feared players on the circuit. Moreover, the 24-year-old is not alone when it comes to spectacular performances. His teammate HS Prannoy too scalped Long and three-time Olympic champion Lee Chong Wei in consecutive days earlier this month. India now boasts of six shuttlers among the top 50 in the world.

Both Srikanth and Prannoy have come up from the stables of former All England champion Pullela Gopichand's academy in Hyderabad. This is ample proof that given the right coaching, environment and exposure, India is capable of producing world class players. It also strengthens the case for letting former players run the affairs of various sporting federations. Structural deficiencies plague the current administration where international sporting events are still considered opportunities for foreign junkets by our officials. Former players may not be able to win elections of sporting federations but they may understand the game better and be able to focus on key areas where players needs help.

Belted in and billed

Very educational experience of sitting next to a doctor on a flight

Bikram Vohra



So I am sitting next to this doctor on a flight and it is but natural that having him belted in for three hours I tick a few medical boxes. Like I start off casually talking about this back pain and the odds on it being arthritis as we age, that sort of stuff.

I also ask him about my occasional ear infection and as we munch peanuts and start struggling with little tubs of sauce and butter that defy gravity I say, you know I also have this slight giddiness when I get up suddenly, keeping my BP under control I am, try the dessert, it is quite nice, thank goodness I don't have a sugar problem.

A pleasant man clearly full of the milk of human kindness. We exchange visiting cards and just as we are leaving the plane I ask him if aspirin side effects were really an issue and we shake hands at the luggage carousel and this morning I get a bill of Rs 15,000 for services rendered at 31,000 feet.

I am so appalled I get my lawyer on the line and tell her how incredibly greedy the human race has become, so selfish and can you believe it, he sent me a bill and she said, well you did ask him questions relating to your health and you got specialised information so he is kind of within his rights.

I said, you too, it was just a pleasant conversation between fellow travellers and we were chatting about this and that... This and that being your health, she said little aware that I have been thinking of changing her for sheer ineptitude.

It was just a happy little talk, I say, it isn't as if he whipped out his stethoscope and put me through an MRI or took X-rays on the flight, for heaven's sake whose side are you on. She said, you asked my opinion, so I am giving it, you have no case, so pay up and stop raising your voice, I am not one of your minions.

I don't have minions, I shouted, I don't even have a job, all I asked for is a little advice, like I am asking you and you are not billing me. There is a long silence on the phone. You are, you are to be serious. I don't see why not, she said, you are taking legal advice during office hours. But we are friends, I yell. And that's why you are looking to find a replacement, I will invoice you tomorrow.

India's Civilisational Legacy

It needs saving from both uninformed evangelism and westernised disdain

Pavan K Varma



Did ancient India have remarkable achievements covering almost the entire spectrum of cerebral creativity? The answer is a categorical 'yes'. Is there a need to let Indians, especially the young, become aware of these, so that they are less ignorant about their own civilisational legacy? The answer is, again, 'yes'.

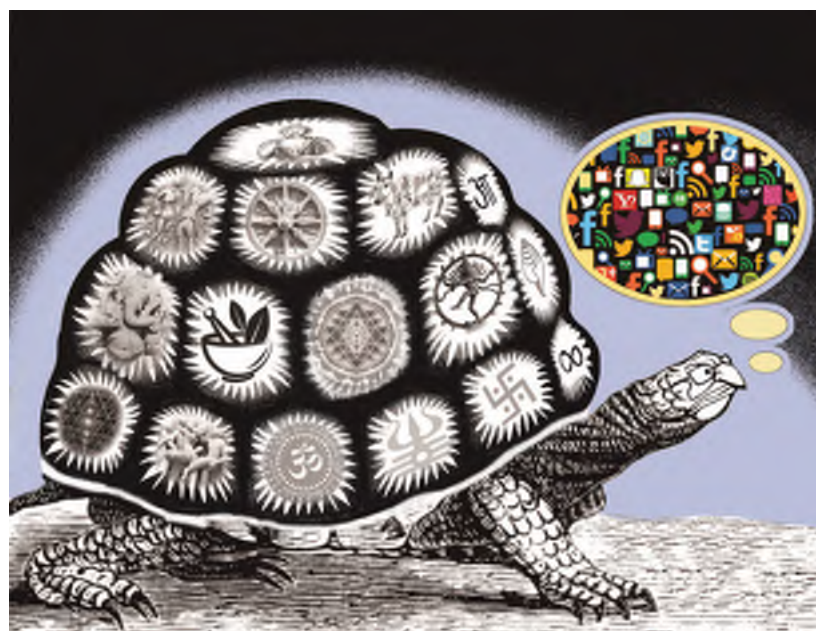
Can this exercise of recall and inform, that all post-colonial societies need to do, be done intelligently by those who do not know the difference between science and mythology, philosophy and ritual, fact and faith, and history and propaganda? The answer is a categorical 'no'.

Traditional branches of Indian medicine need revival. They embody centuries of careful clinical observation that treats the human body (and mind) holistically. Anyone familiar with the medical achievements of the sixth century surgeon Sushruta would think twice before dismissing India's ancient medicinal wisdoms.

The Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy is, therefore, far from being an act of misplaced nostalgia. Why then did AYUSH do such a clumsy job of advising pregnant women on the wisdoms of yoga and naturopathy?

The answer lies in not knowing the difference between what needs to be salvaged from the past and what needs to be updated in light of contemporary knowledge. Such knowledge need not entirely invalidate our ancient wisdoms but it may require an intelligent incorporation of what other branches of modern medicine rightfully tell us today.

Thus, instead of only advising pregnant women to keep away from 'lustful thoughts' and non-vegetarian food, the booklet produced by AYUSH, entitled Mother and Child Care, could have also emphasised the need for adequate nutrition rich in protein, iron, calcium and iodine, especially since half of all expecting mothers in India suffer from either malnutrition or anaemia.



Incidentally, not everything the booklet says is obscurantist rubbish as some excessively westernised observers seem to think. Why must much of our intellectual class wait for some foreign scientist to proclaim that an atmosphere of serenity and harmony is good both for the expectant mother and the child? Modern medicine is increasingly acknowledging the power of the mind over the body, and pregnant women who strive to shun mental agitation could well be doing themselves and their future child a favour.

Equally, what is wrong in the advice for expectant mothers to try and avoid "refined flour, fried items, coffee, sugar and garam masala"? Such advice, now offered ubiquitously by western medical practitioners, is, in fact, a validation of our yogic forebears.

The key is to find the right balance between over-glorifying everything about our past and dismissing everything about it as "obscurantist" or "communal" or "xenophobic" or even "unnecessary". One example of the former approach is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's comment that plastic surgery of an advanced order

Bajrang Sena's ignorant prudishness is more representative of Victorian morality and the colonial view that the 'natives' were heathens with 'unmentionable' carnal thoughts

must have existed thousands of years ago if an elephant head could be transplanted on a human body as is seen in Ganesha. He also said that the manner in which Karna was conceived by his mother in the Mahabharata showed that advanced genetic sciences existed in ancient India.

Such comments devalue both ancient India's real achievements and the delicate, symbolic meanings of mythology. Moreover they blur the lines between science and mythology thereby caricaturing both. Lord Ganesha, with his elephant head, was not an advertisement for advanced genetic science. He symbolised, depending on individual interpretations,

the imagination buttressing religious beliefs, in which man and nature were intertwined and representative of the one supreme energy called Brahma.

Perhaps he was a haiku, where the sheer profiling of a riddle catapults the human imagination beyond the routine to the possibilities beyond. Similarly Karna represents a certain human predicament, which is far more important than the mythological representation of how he was conceived.

There is also a great deal of illiterate aggression today in interpreting our past. Members of Bajrang Sena recently protested against the sale of Kamasutra books in Khajuraho. These 'high minded' individuals have no idea of the pragmatic acceptance in Hindu tradition of the sensual as part of a balanced life, best represented in the four purusharthas or goals of life: dharma, artha, kama and moksha.

Ethics, materialism, sensuality and salvation have philosophical validity in the canvas of human endeavours – and therefore Khajuraho and the Kamasutra, as also the Upanishads and the Bhagwad Gita, are part of the many-splendoured fabric that constitutes the Hindu world view.

Vatsyayana, author of the Kamasutra, himself says that dharma, artha and kama, pursued in proportion and not in exclusion, lead automatically to the fourth purushartha, moksha. The self-righteous and ignorant prudishness displayed by Bajrang Sena is thus more representative of Victorian morality and the general colonial view that the 'natives' were heathens with 'unmentionable' carnal thoughts, than of the wisdom and balance of the Hindu vision of life.

The remarkable refinements of ancient India need to be saved from the uninformed evangelism of self-anointed arbiters whose ignorance is only matched by their aggression. Equally, the disdainful dismissal by westernised critics of anything that pertains to our ancient past is misplaced. Great civilisations need the right balance between both these extremes.

The writer is an author and member of JD(U). Views are personal

The lynching of Mohammad Ayub Pandith: Save Kashmiriyat, or stay in denial on where Kashmiris have gone wrong

Javaid Gillani



On Shab-i-Qadir, Deputy Superintendent of Police Mohammad Ayub Pandith was deputed for access control duty at Jamia Masjid – the Grand Mosque in the heart of downtown Srinagar and a stronghold of separatist leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq. Shortly after midnight, a mob chanting slogans in favour of Zakir Musa, former commander of Hizbul Mujahideen and now proponent of an Islamic Caliphate, lynched the DSP to death. He was stripped, tortured and his corpse dragged several hundred metres and dumped in a corner.

Less than a week earlier, a police team from Achabal in Anantnag district was ambushed and six personnel, including the Station House Officer (SHO), were killed. Their bodies were mutilated thereafter. When police went to retrieve the dead bodies, they were attacked with stones by locals. Ironically, two days before the incident, over 200 locals from the same area had attended an iftar hosted by the SHO.

In April this year Lt Umar Fayyaz was abducted and killed in Shopian where he had gone to attend a family function. In the same month, four policemen and two unarmed security guards of Jammu & Kashmir Bank were killed when terrorists in Kulgam district of south Kashmir fired upon their vehicle. In the last few months, terrorists have killed a number of unarmed civilians and looted several banks in south Kashmir.

Public response in the Valley, including that of the so-called Kashmir intelligentsia, has been

While most people question the wrongdoings of the Indian state – and rightly so – it is equally important that murders and violence sanctioned by Pakistan and fundamentalists be challenged

on expected lines. It is a response crystallised over the last 30 years. Denial usually comes first: the killings are attributed to pro-government security forces. For example, in the case of bank robberies where even the images of LeT terrorists are on CCTV, state

agencies were blamed. Where denials don't work, self-gratifying justifications follow. Facts are distorted to justify the crime. In the case of the DSP's lynching a leading daily published from Srinagar quoted sources to weave a story that the DSP opened fire on people who were trying to ascertain his identity.

The police version always comes much later in news stories, way after seeds of false justification have already been sown in the minds of gullible readers. Killings of unarmed civilians are easily and routinely justified as killings of "collaborators" and "spies". The state, and the state alone is blamed for brutalising the Kashmiri population.

Kashmir has seen a great deal of death and destruction in the last three decades. The dance of death will continue as long as Kashmiris endorse any death sanctioned or caused by the terrorists and agents of Pakistan. That is not to say that the Indian state and its security forces should not be held accountable for human rights violations and excesses against innocent people in Kashmir. In the democratic republic of India, state institutions including J&K Police are answerable to citizens.

But in Kashmir, while most people question the wrongdoings of the Indian state unhesitatingly – and rightly so – it is equally important that the murders and mob violence sanctioned by Pakistan and religious fundamentalists be challenged. Silence or denial on what is ailing Kashmir internally as a society will only strengthen the likes of Zakir Musa, whose ideology threatens the very idea of Kashmir and Kashmiriyat that the majority of people in the Valley still hold so dear.

Kashmiris have the choice of continue to shed crocodile tears on the death of Kashmiriyat or acknowledge and admit where we have gone wrong.

The writer is an IPS officer serving in Kashmir

dilbert



Sacredspace

Nationalism

It is not easy to see how the more extreme forms of nationalism can long survive when men have seen the Earth in its true perspective as a single small globe against the stars.

Arthur C Clarke

Is It Possible To Turn Hate Into Love?

Ezekiel Isaac Malekar

Love and hate are very difficult emotions. They are really intimately connected because they stem from the same source. There seems to be a very thin line between love and hate. This is perhaps why, in many conflicts, whether at personal, ethnic or national levels, the worst conflicts are always between people or groups who are the closest. Family spats have been known to lead to the worst kinds of violence. Religious disputes within a particular denomination or religion could be much more severe than between rival religions. Disputes between friends and neighbours are often likely to become more vicious than disputes between strangers.

At first glance, it would seem that love and hate are poles apart, that they are complete opposites, and that they have nothing to do with each other. But

numerous incidents and events reveal that love and hate are closely interwoven. This is because they flow from the same basic human need.

We all, as individuals, feel incomplete and alone. Fear can overturn everything; it could cause good people to do bad things and can cause people to lose good relationships. We should never let fear rule our lives. The little boy who screams at his parents, "I hate you," is, of course immature and has to be guided to a great extent by his parents until he learns how to make decisions, but once a child learns how to make decisions, the parents must respect his individuality unless he makes life-threatening decisions or decisions that will impair his future.

To complete ourselves, we must

speak, express ourselves and relate well with others and God. Since all relationships are dynamic, we must constantly work towards keeping them positive. Hatred comes when we overstep the bounds of each individual's personality or when we feel rejected.

Merging – that is, forming close relationships – with others and God should cause us to enhance our personalities, and not to destroy them. When one party in a relationship tries to dominate the other and tries to destroy the other person's individuality, then hatred is the inevitable result. When personalities "merge", they must respect each other's independence and at the same time, feel one with each other.

It is difficult to be close and distant at the same time, but that is what a good relationship is all about. It is also very

difficult to maintain a good relationship when feelings of resentment and hatred start to creep in and are allowed to take over. That is why we find that even in families, there are instances when siblings do not talk to each other, or former good friends will not even shake hands because of a trivial incident that happened in the past.

In order to be successful in any relationship, each individual's views must be allowed to be expressed. We must be careful not to reject others foolishly, or try to dominate or try to distance ourselves too much from those we care for, otherwise their love will turn to hate.

Let us all hope and pray that all our relationships will be filled with only love and not hate because each of us has learnt to respect each other.

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