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comment

Bring clarity to
job data in IndiaOne way is to hold the national
sample survey more often

There is a lot of hullabaloo every time there is a debate on jobs in India. This was further proven by the results the Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) amnesty scheme for the formal sector that ended in June. The EPFO asked firms, which had

hidden employees who were eligible for PF contributions, to bring them into the rolls. The bait: The companies would not be penalised for this disclosure. Over 10 million workers were added to the PF rosters during the amnesty. To put that into perspective, the government's estimates for total formal sector employment in India is about 48 million of whom 38 million were on the EPFO roster. The amnesty increased the EPFO's subscriber pool by 26% and probably total formal sector employment estimates by a similar percentage.

While the political and intellectual discourse is dominated about whether enough jobs are being created and how government policies are or are not helping employment, the truth is much of this is done wearing sunglasses in a dark room at night. As the vice-chairman of Niti Aayog, Arvind Panagariya, pointed out, of the two official surveys used to calculate the state of employment, one misses all shops and plants that employ less than 10 people and is patchy in its coverage of economic sectors, while the other, which is more accurate, the national sample survey, is done only every five years. He proposed that, at the very least, the survey should be done more often. There are other issues regarding measures of the job situation, especially in the informal sector and mobile labour.

It is not true that India is suffering from jobless growth. What is true is that India is not generating enough jobs to absorb the millions of youth entering the workforce every year. This has been further aggravated by the continuing stagnation in private sector investment and, most recently, by demonetisation. What matters politically, in the end, is popular perception and opinion polls are showing that not only is employment seen as India's primary problem, concern on this issue is now greater than it was under the last two Congress-led governments.

A compromise deal
isn't quite cricketA top-heavy coaching unit may
backfire on the young Indian team

The drama over selecting the head coach for the Indian cricket team is typical of a confused BCCI. Selecting a heavy-duty coaching staff that includes two former captains and a bowling legend hints at a compromise formula arrived after a win-some-lose-some discussion with captain Virat Kohli. The backroom staff comprising Ravi Shastri (head coach), Rahul Dravid (overseas batting coach) and Zaheer Khan (bowling coach) is rather unique. No team in the world can boast of such a star-studded line-up of coaches, whose combined Test experience is 336 Test matches and 694 ODIs.

After a good stint as team director, Shastri was favourite to become chief coach when the BCCI was looking for a successor to Duncan Fletcher. But Sourav Ganguly scuppered Shastri's chances and the Cricket Advisory Committee, in their collective wisdom, appointed Anil Kumble in dramatic fashion for a year in June 2016. BCCI's advertisement for a new coach on June 1 was prompted by Kohli's objection to Kumble's 'style' of functioning. After all efforts to improve coach-captain relationship failed during the ICC Champions Trophy in the UK, Kumble's exit left Ganguly & Co on a sticky wicket. There was no stopping Kohli's man Shastri now.

By forcing Kumble out, Kohli took on the CAC, the BCCI and the Supreme Court-appointed Committee of Administrators. This time, Ganguly and team rose above petty matters and chose Shastri as head coach but went a step ahead by naming a bowling and batting coach of their liking. The chief coach usually selects his support staff. It is unimaginable to think that Dravid and Zaheer will not express their views during team meetings. The presence of two heavyweights will always make decision-making a tricky job. Shastri's man management skills will be tested to the hilt. A top-heavy coaching unit can backfire on a young Indian team

History is rarely dispassionate

Like Britain and Germany, India has experienced
rewriting of its history to suit post-national tastesSWAPAN
DASGUPTA

At this summer's Jaipur Literature Festival in London, I complimented my old college mate Shashi Tharoor for having transformed anti-colonialism into a cottage industry. His book on the depredations of the British Empire in India has—as his gleeful publisher told me—been a roaring success in the UK. While this has much to do with the author's presentation skills, it is also a commentary on today's Britain.

Recently Oxford University announced it is tweaking its curriculum to make a paper on non-European history obligatory for history students.

Nominally, this had nothing to do with either the noisy 'Rhodes must fall' stir or Tharoor's eloquent attack on the Raj at an Oxford Union debate. Nor is the desire to enlarge the sphere of exploration an outcome of economic globalisation, a process that has fuelled premature anticipation of a post-national world.

Arguably, the changing ethnic landscape of western Europe has kindled popular interest in Asia and Africa. Since multiculturalism—as opposed to assimilation—is now the preferred European approach to integra-

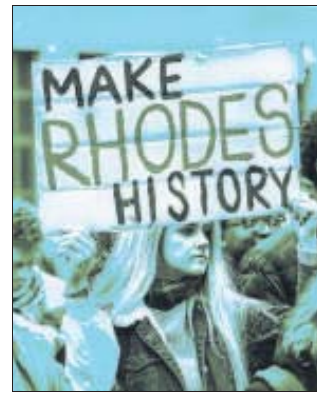
tion, there is a feeling that 'national' histories are inadequate. Just as an understanding of India's colonial experience is patchy without a parallel awareness of British history, the complexities of today's UK warrant examining how Empire impacted the colonies.

Not that European academia has only been obsessed with Judeo-Christian civilisation. Western universities have a rich tradition of engagement with non-European themes, even if they were aimed at servicing the Empire project. Indology, for example, has been enriched by European scholarship. And even when post-Independent India turned its back on classical studies in the elusive quest of the 'scientific temper', dedicated western scholars, often working in monastic isolation, kept Indology alive.

What the History Faculty of Oxford—housed, ironically, in a building called the India Institute but from which Indian studies were arbitrarily banished in 1968—has done is to move fringe and exotic concerns into the mainstream. The decision is laudable.

Unfortunately, things are often not what they seem. The Oxford dons may have acted with the purest of motives and with only half an eye on the commercial implications for cash-strapped universities. However, the move comes in the backdrop of an intellectual environment that is eroding the vitality of European societies.

There was a time when the study of non-European societies was accompanied by an implicit Eurocentric bias, aimed at both glorifying Empire and hinting at the backward-

Students protest calling for removal of
status of colonial era figures including
Cecil Rhodes from Oxford University
buildings, 2016

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ness of the Orient.

Today, this has been replaced by an emerging culture of self-abnegation, verging on self-loathing.

The celebration of the Empire and all that it represented has yielded space to a profound sense of post-colonial guilt—what an Australian writer has described as the replacement of the "Three Cheers" view of history with the "Black Armband" perspective.

I saw an example of this at an exhibition on German Colonialism at the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin. The exhibition, documenting some of the brutalities and racist overtones of the short-lived German Empire, culminated in a felled bronze statue

of Hermann von Wissmann, a former Reich Commissioner and Governor of German East Africa, that stood in Dar es Salaam until 1919. Relocated to Hamburg University in 1922, it was toppled in 1967 following student protests against imperial glorification. The exhibition in Berlin has the statue lying on its side, the face still smeared in the yellow spray paint with which it was vandalised by students.

As a symbol of inversion the imagery is powerful. The German desire to repudiate a troubled past is understandable. If, however, historical guilt becomes an overriding concern, it could be a prescription for national paralysis. Germany's self-destructive open-door policy towards 'asylum seekers' has owed entirely to this sense of guilt, as has the UK's inability to curb the evolution of a 'Londonistan'.

History is rarely dispassionate or objective. Winston Churchill can be remembered as the leader who saved Britain from Hitler or as the man whose strategic choices led to a million plus deaths in the Bengal famine. India recalls the latter but if Britain also starts perceiving Churchill as simply an imperialist monster, there are bound to be complications. What matters is not what is taught but how the subject is approached. And with what objective.

India too has experienced the systematic rewriting of its history to suit post-national tastes. More than an exercise in puerile iconoclasm, the reshaping of the national imagination is also aimed at eroding the national spirit.

There is undoubtedly a place for rarefied scholarship but at the popular level history must aim at bolstering the nation.

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The views expressed are personal

Gandhi did not want to
disband the CongressAn opposite claim is being made by the BJP as a part of
a continuing trend to (mis)appropriate national leadersSUCHETA
MAHAJAN

Recently, Amit Shah, president of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), lauded Mahatma Gandhi's foresight in calling for the disbanding of the Congress after Independence. While his use of a caste suffix "chatur bania" for Gandhi was rightly objected to, the part about disbanding the Congress went uncontested.

In a note dated January 27, 1948, three days before he was assassinated, Gandhi wrote that the Congress has "outlived its use" in its present form, should be disbanded and "flower into a Lok Sevak Sangh". This appeared as an article in Harijan on February 2, 1948, titled 'His Last Will and Testament', a phrase added by his associates. Some scholars of Gandhi seem to have uncritically accepted the term 'last will and testament'.

For example, political scientists Lloyd and Susan Rudolph comment: "Twenty four hours before his death on 30 January 1948 at the hands of Nathu Godse, Gandhi proposed in his 'last will and testament' that the Indian National Congress be dissolved and be replaced by a Lok Sevak Sangh, a people's service organisation." The title of the article and its posthumous publication endowed Gandhi's note with a significance greater than he intended.

The 'last will and testament' should be read along with another statement also carried in the Harijan the same day: "Indian National Congress which is the oldest national political organization and which has after many battles fought her non-violent way to freedom cannot be allowed to die. It can only die with the nation." This suggests he still believed the Congress had a future role and was pondering over what it would be.

What Gandhi had penned was a draft constitution, not a 'last will and testament'.

MAHATMA GANDHI'S COMMENT – THE CONGRESS PARTY HAS OUTLIVED ITS USE – WAS MADE IN THE CONTEXT OF A CONTINUING DEBATE ON THE ROLE OF THE PARTY AFTER INDEPENDENCE

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The views expressed are personal

THINSKINNED



Trolls don't bother to discuss the dissenters' arguments, they only discredit them

HT

Hindutva trolls are similar
to Turkey's ErdoganistsBoth parade their manliness and obsessively focus on
what they perceive as the critics' vested interestsALFONS
LOPEZ TENA

Anyone who writes on social media about politics is swiftly bullied by trolls to discredit him or her, much more so if the author disparages communitarian or authoritarian movements, or governments. Social media enables everyone to speak up and out, hence it is a threat to those who fancy themselves as the representatives of a nation, people, religion, class, race or party. They need support and when the old methods of buying, menacing, firing or jailing journalists can't stifle dissenters, they send in trolls to harass and silence everybody into submission.

There are, however, marked differences among trolls in different countries, which shed light on the fears of their ideological masters.

For example, Venezuela's Chavistas and India's Hindutvas relish to belittle criticism coming from foreigners just because a foreigner is only allowed to praise them, but it's Hindutva's spiciness to insist manically on the past and present real and invented atrocities made by the country of the critic as an argument to insult her. Both Hindutvas and Catalan Processists—the staunch believers in a process towards independence that always stands still—justify their own wrongs and crimes alleging


Whites' (or Muslims') and Spaniards' respective wrongs and crimes, an astonishing guilty confession indeed.

Turkey's Erdoganists and India's Hindutvas obsessively focus on paymasters of critics, which includes the Congress party, the Vatican and Satan, but also show their innate viciousness by parading their manliness and abusing their critics. Brexiters and Trumpkins shout that winning a vote means nobody can discuss it further, a pretence alien to Hindutvas until their paltry 31% victory in the general elections of 2014, as alien to them as the Spanish trolls' obsession of insulting Catalans as renegades and traitors, and the Catalan processists' sanctimoniousness of sending all dissenters to psychiatric wards.

As Pankaj Mishra has ably demonstrated, Hindutva ideology is just the Indian branch of the anti-modern, authoritarian, far-right and sometimes far-left, anti-globalist and anti-Enlightenment trend haunting the world two centuries on, hence Hindutva trolls share with their like-minded trolls worldwide some insults ("libtard", "sickular") that sprout from a common mindset: Don't bother to discuss the dissenters' arguments, just discredit them personally, sully their reputations, bully them into submission or silence, turn any statement of fact into a question of motive or shut them up. It's not decent, and it does not work, because regardless of who says it truth always stands by itself and sets us free. It is only dishonesty alone that needs the support of the State.

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The views expressed are personal

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HELPING OTHERS IS
ONE OF THE GREATEST
JOYS OF LIFE

Rajesh Krishan

One of the greatest joys in life is to help others, irrespective of whether we are trying to make ends meet, climbing up the ladder of success, or retired. It's also a way to be grateful for what God has bestowed upon us within our lives. Thankfully, there are many kind-hearted, sympathetic, and compassionate beings in the world around us who want to do well and be of service to humanity. However, not all are able to execute them-

selves, even though they wish to extend themselves out to make a difference. They remain stuck about translating their thoughts into actions because they wait for the "right moment" to make an impact.

The poor man waits, believing that he will do charity when he will have a lot of wealth and prosperity; the common man waits, thinking that he will work for good causes when he will have a status or power; and the rich man waits, telling himself that he will give back to the society when he grows old.

The truth is that one doesn't have to wait to do something worthwhile. At all times, opportunities abound for us to contribute to society. We can help others by sharing a small amount of our time, wealth, knowledge, or even through offering a few words of encouragement. All that it requires is an honest intention to do something.

(Inner Voice comprises contributions from our readers.)
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