



A thought for today

Prohibition didn't work in the Garden of Eden. Adam ate the apple

VICENTE FOX

A Failing Ban

As states circumvent its highway liquor ban, SC shows welcome openness to revisiting it

It has become clear that the Supreme Court judgment pronounced last December barring liquor vends within 500 metres of highways has failed the test of practicality. Seeking to circumvent this judgment, various states have set in motion a process of denotifying state highways. They are also petitioning the Centre to denotify national highways along certain stretches. This matter reached SC after the Punjab and Haryana high court rejected a petition opposing the Chandigarh administration's decision to denotify highways passing through the city. Now SC appears open to reconsidering its position of December. On Tuesday, it sympathetically observed that the denotified roads in Chandigarh passed through the city "where there is no fast-moving traffic".

In December SC had conclusively rejected pleas to exclude highways that pass through cities and towns, noting that such exclusion defied "sense and logic" and would allow drivers to "replenish their stocks of alcohol". While all state governments are in agreement with SC on the need to curb drunken driving, many of them disagree with its conclusion that liquor sales along highways were the primary culprits. Without seeking a review of the judgment they have proceeded with the seemingly unrelated denotification of highways – an unhealthy development that may hinder the expansion of India's highway network.

SC has preferred not to see such denotification as an affront to its December judgment and has instead linked the categorisation of highways to traffic speed. It's easy to understand why governments and civic bodies are resorting to ingenious ways to circumvent the highway liquor ban. Huge investments that went into setting up hotels, bars and restaurants and procuring licences have been affected, lakhs of jobs lost, and state governments suddenly left without a valuable source of revenue. The tourism sector has been hit big.

There are better ways of addressing accidents caused by drunken driving: first by rigorous patrolling of highways which requires greater allocation by states, followed by faster prosecution of cases by the judiciary and then by strict punishments. Recent amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act increasing penalties for drunken driving help achieve the latter. But the blanket ban along highways that SC envisaged, while well-intentioned, penalises an array of stakeholders not at all engaged in drunken driving. It's actually in the interest of justice that SC should reconsider this ban.

Kollywood Shut Down

States should not arbitrarily graft a new layer of taxes on GST, defeating its purpose

During the run-up to GST rollout, its advocates foregrounded two points. Multiple indirect taxes levied by different layers of government would be compressed into a single tax and a common market would be created. An outcome of this move would be the elimination of cascading impact of taxes, which could make goods and services cheaper for consumers. On early evidence, not all state governments seem convinced by GST's long-term benefits and have chosen to graft a new layer of taxes on GST. This is unfair to both consumers and industry.

Tamil Nadu's local bodies were the first to levy a 30% entertainment tax on top of the 18-28% GST on movie tickets. This move threatens to cripple the movie industry as it comes in the backdrop of price controls on tickets. Consequently, theatres have been shut since the beginning of the week and moviegoers and film industry have lost out. Separately, Maharashtra government has increased a single shot registration tax on motor vehicles to neutralise the impact of abolition of octroi and local body tax. Once again, even before GST is a week old, we are witnessing the return of tax-on-tax.

A grand bargain between Centre and states to usher in GST was made possible when Centre promised to compensate states for any potential loss of revenue on account of GST. Ironically, this was facilitated by levying a cess in addition to GST on some products, to create a compensation fund. Given this context, states should wait a while before they react to possible revenue loss. GST should not be used as an excuse to arbitrarily levy additional taxes. States should repeal additional taxes and wait for GST's benefits to show up.

Damned celebrity again

We need an Indrani to take note of poor Manjula's jail killing?

Bachi Karkaria



Had Indrani Mukherjea not played such a stellar part in the Mumbai women's prison riot, would we/the media have bothered about the custodial killing of Manjula Shetye? The honest, and shameful, answer is 'No'. True, a prison riot grabs eyeballs, and a woman's one doubly so. Not out of greater sympathy but for the less-edifying spectacle of a catfight. Think 'Orange Is The New Black'. So, screaming inmates storming the barricades, yanking off locks and swarming onto the terrace of the Byculla Jail to protest in full public and camera view would have made the headlines for a day, or even two. There'd be the usual indignant noises about sadistic jailors and the same weary demands for reform.

But soon enough, Manjula's brutal death would have stopped exciting us. We need fresh blood on the walls – as Richard Gere's Billy Flynn tells Renee Zellweger's Roxie Hart in 'Chicago', also about a notorious women's prison.

It's the Indrani factor which has extended the riot's sell-by date – and the unfortunate victim's 15 seconds of sordid fame. Convicted for setting fire to her sister-in-law, Shetye had attempted self-immolation in desperation over her fractious time at Pune's Yerwada, and was sent to Mumbai on her pleas. Only to have her tragic life end over something as farcical as two eggs: either stolen or defiantly demanded for a fellow-inmate. Sexually brutalised and fatally punched as punishment, Manjula was a deserving case for public sympathy and flashpoint of prison reform. But, it's heady celebrity that has hijacked the agenda.

Indrani Mukherjea's central role rocketed the riot case into the stratosphere. In the same prison as chief accused in the ghoulis Sheena Bora murder, she was reportedly chief strategist and tactician in Byculla's embattled zone. She claimed she was threatened with sexual retribution for her audacity. Incurable optimists conjure an image change: from 'heartless bitch' to selfless fighter for jailed underdogs.

The sustained media attention may finally force prison accountability, hopefully even reform. This may be an Indrani Redemption, but if meaningful change can only arrive piggybacking on celebrity, what does it say about us?

Alec Smart said: "China's belligerence isn't just Beijingism."

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What After #notinmyname?

There should be #FIRsinmyname, till both the law and the crimes start being taken seriously

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However much sniggers – or opinion pieces – may arise from the #notinmyname gatherings in various metros protesting against the lynch mob attacks on Indians in India, the fact that a very visible number of people are angry and upset is, well, heartening. At a time when dissent and protest against the State was being seen, at least in some quarters, as an option whose door was being shut for being 'anti-national', the mass responses from the 'usual suspects' looked reassuringly democratic in a democracy, with the requisite amount of cynicism that they also invited.

The protest gatherings at Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and elsewhere last Wednesday may or may not have a direct correlation with the prime minister's office tweeting the stern message on Thursday from Sabarmati Ashram, "Killing people in the name of gau bhakti is not acceptable. This is not something Mahatma Gandhi would approve." The murder of another person in the name of gauraksha near Ranchi a few hours before the PMO's welcome tweet on Thursday was almost not certainly the trigger for the call for Gandhian restraint. But the #notinmyname gatherings earlier on were certainly as legit as any other protest gatherings, including those condemning, say, the outbreak of 'western values', or 'cow slaughter' itself.

But the question is whether there were enough people protesting against the vigilante attacks and lynch mobs who seem to suddenly roam about and do their wolf pack thing, one such 'conflagration' resulting in the murder of a teenager on a train.

Does it matter whether there needs to be a critical mass of outraged people appalled at the lack of any crackdown by the state authorities on thugs identifying and then targeting 'gau shatrus'? Like it or not, it does. Otherwise, we will forever have the same people showcasing their anger to each other and comparing each other's catchy placards as if in an agit prop gallery opening show.



Protest gatherings – whether at Jantar Mantar or on Change.org – are counted quantitatively for the effect they can have on powers-that-be, especially if the power-that-be has been accustomed, by tradition, to have a high threshold of reacting to civilian protest. Qualitatively such shows of collective resistance may make headlines and satisfy consciences. But they also have a tendency of leaving things at that – the protest itself becoming an end in itself, rather than a means to an end.

Which is where such protests, when limited to such an action however dramatic and radical and soul-satisfying they may be, resemble at best a loud minority. Which, like eight Shiv Sainiks ranting against Valentine's Day outside a greeting cards shop every February 14 – with their presence and effect amplified by news camera angles and the media – is voluble, yet mostly ineffective, falling into that age-old category of being full of sound and fury, signifying if not nothing, then very little apart from the sound and fury itself. As one knows all too well, the 'silent majority', on the

The very correctness in identifying what marks this brand of lynch mobs to conduct random acts of unkindness is also the very thing that drives perpetrators into taking more perverse pride in their crusade

other hand, is more effective by dint of giving its silent consent. Which brings us back to the protests against the violence against people perceived to be a danger to cows. The #notinmyname protests highlight the fact that many victims belong to certain communities who fall on the wrong side of how self-assigned cow protectors see them through the 'The cow is the nation' prism.

These protests, quite correctly, condemn the trending violence along the lines of community identities. But this very correctness in identifying

what marks this brand of lynch mobs to conduct random acts of unkindness is also the very thing that drives perpetrators into taking more perverse pride in their crusade. A liberal being called a 'sickular libtard' by the other 'usual suspects' is worn as a badge of pride. So the same reasoning works when applied to thugs appropriating 'Hindu ideology'.

Defending cow vigilante thugs, radicalised by what they perceive as a climate of majoritarian numerical heft, can be a parlour game for some homegrown Orientalists in the name of class disaffection – posh liberals looking down on the finally empowered dehati. Statistics will also be trotted out from such armchair anthropologists enamoured of the 'proles' to suggest that the lynch mob violence is not targeted at any particular groups.

A woman was beaten to death by a mob last Tuesday not for 'peddling cow' but for suspected child trafficking. This, in beef-agnostic Bengal. As was the rampaging mob exactly a week later demanding the police hand over a youngster arrested for posting an offensive Facebook post so that he could be stoned to death for blasphemy in Mamata Banerjee's Bengal.

Ergo, much mischievous 'Hindu-baiting' ado is apparently being made of lynchophilic India. Instead, these communal – in the sense of 'community', as in communal kitchens – attacks are as random as they come. Like those on Indians in Australia or the US, where they are turned into racial 'hate crimes' by oversensitive Indians back home.

These are traps that the #notinmyname-ers should avoid falling into for tactical reasons. Because beyond the loud gatherings and placardings, a simple tactic can be tried out in addition to the rightful rhetoric. Brand those killing and beating up fellow Indians on Indian soil as criminals, and push the authorities to see them as so.

Murder and assault are still criminal acts in this country. With #notinmyname, there could be #FIRsinmyname. The law can be summoned, incessantly if need be, till both the law and the crimes start being taken seriously again. Serious to the point of being treated as sacred as a holy cow.

Where contemporary feminism fails: Breaking patriarchy requires equipping women to face the challenges of freedom

Ayushman Jamwal



The core principle of the feminist movement is equality, but contemporary feminism seems to have lost touch with it, strait-jacketing itself into a 'Carnival of Outrage'.

Feminism advocates freedom, but it seldom encourages the responsibility that comes with it. In the patriarchal system, men are trained to understand the risks and dangers of the world and prime themselves to face them, as they are also victims of assault and abuse. Under the same system, women are never conditioned for the 'big bad world'.

As feminism aims to break patriarchy, it does not equip women to face the challenges of freedom. Consider the political tussle over curfew timings for women in educational institutions. Women in the Western world have been fighting against it since the 1960s and it has only recently gained political mileage in India.

The feminist 'freedom' argument focusses on pushing women to escape the 'authority' of educational institutions.

American feminist Camille Paglia says that women in the old campus movements would demand "the freedom to risk being raped, as only that was true freedom". But the question remains: Do a majority of Indian women today consciously equip themselves to counter the dangers of the freedom they are fighting for, namely facing the nefarious and psychotic elements of the world? What has emerged via contemporary feminism is what is

The patriarchal system trains men to understand risks, as they are also victims of assault. Women are never conditioned for the 'big bad world'

being called 'New Paternalism' where women now want to draw out the authority figures namely the government back into their spheres, but at an arm's distance. 'New Paternalism' tends to build the 'Carnival of Outrage' through the media and social media, creating a narrative where women want to take all the risks of freedom but put the onus of protection solely in the hands of authority figures.



Contemporary feminism does not seem to teach women that they must take responsibility for their own protection, as is expected of men. While it is the government's responsibility to swiftly prosecute cases of sexual assault and harassment, the occurrence of the incidents themselves is blamed on ambiguous villains like 'mindsets' and standard punching bags like government and police. A political campaign is waged via the media, which dissipates only to reappear after the next incident. The real activism never matches the outrage.

This becomes particularly problematic, as contemporary feminism does not teach women

that sexual communication is far more than words. A woman's dress contains sexual messages, and while feminism advocates for women to dress how they feel, which is a human right at the end of the day, it never teaches them to defend themselves from the negative effects of the sexual communication to the beasts of society.

Self-defence training is not an everyday part of a modern Indian woman's life. Contemporary feminism does not push women to train in self-defence, does not advocate developing the mental fortitude to take on harassers, as well as the confidence and strength to use weapons without hesitation.

It advocates freedom, fearless expression and economic empowerment, a Spartan way of thinking, but never the Spartan skills to defend oneself. It demands protection as a right from some archaic authority and does not advocate it as a responsibility of the individual. It should be no less than a dictat of the feminist movement as well as a demand to introduce and inculcate it into the education system.

Feminism of today is no longer moulding Amazonian women, but seems to have found comfort in the political messaging of 'victims' and its safe and secure place in the traditional media, seeking equality without responsibility or foresight. This is the reason why misuse of rape laws and sexual crimes against men are never reported and are never raised or decry by contemporary feminists. True equality is gender neutrality of all laws, but they don't see it that way.

Contemporary feminism is lazy and has reduced itself to a political showpiece that is extracting its importance only via banal outrage. It is an ideology that is not creating strong women, but entitled women who believe that simply their entitlement to freedom is true equality.

The writer is a journalist

dilbert



The Seedless State Of Absolute Identity

Shri Shri Anandamurti

Ota Yoga is that pervasive state of turiya, in which the Supreme is omnipresent as the knower of the causal body, just like the sun, that is associated with its own manifestation, the world, by means of its own rays. Here, the sunray is but a particular state of the sun itself, and through the medium of that state, the sun itself is united with this, its manifestation, intimately and physically linked with this world as well as with other planets; it is inherent in their very molecules and atoms.

Similarly, Purushottama is also intimately and physically associated with the manifest and unmanifest unit entities as their witness. This associational bearing of the turiya is called Ota Yoga – the yoga or link that constitutes the witness-ship of the unit entities. That which constitutes the pervasive witness-ship of the collective whole is

called Protta Yoga.

Turiya is connected with the causal body in Ota Yoga just as the sun is connected with the causal body of the world through the medium of its rays. Where the knowership is Purushottama, the known is the causal body. Where the knowership is the Supreme Brahm, the known is the microcosm or reflected Brahm. This knowership is the Infinite Entity, the known is finite.

When the unit entities ascribe pantheistic bearing to the causal body and run after it, they virtually impose turiya-bhava or oneness on the causal body itself. The causal soul itself is Brahm. This bearing being the state preceding the turiya-sthiti or establishment in non-duality, this pre-turiya cosmotheistic state, is called Anujnanta Yoga. It is similar to knowing the sun, keeping in view the

fact of its inalienable relation to the creation, preservation and destruction of the world.

In Anujnanta Yoga, the relation of knowership and known, though not fully manifest, does exist; it is semi-manifest, and so, like Ota Yoga, I cannot call either as the supreme state of turiya.

When the finite, qualified unit entity, makes efforts to reach, through Dhyana Yoga or ideational absorption, the state of infinity of non-qualifiedness or non-distinctiveness, such a state is called Anujnanta Yoga. It is as though attempting through cognitive sadhana, to regard the world itself as the finite form of the sun, while understanding the sun's essential and characteristic unicity with it.

In Avikalpa Yoga, there is no room for any second sentiment or thought. Here, the entity is essentially one, the

soul is purely cognition, devoid of attributional aspects of the three states like knowledge, known and knower. This Avikalpa state is the seedless state of absolute identity with the Divine Essence, the eternal tranquillity of Nirvikalpa Samadhi or indeterminate, super-sensual trance of absorption. He indeed is Shiva, the Macrocosmic Bliss.

Being free from all duality, He is absolute tranquillity. In the state of turiya, not only does subjectivity not exist, but in the fourth aspect of the turiya, the Avikalpa, there is not even a semblance of witness-ship. No matter how assiduously the wavering and indecisive mind exerts itself to reach that turiya, it can never hold Him within its grasp. To attain Him, one has to do the sadhana of self-surrender, that is, surrender oneself wholly.

Ananda Marga Yoga Sadhana Shrivir July 7-9, Khirki Extension. Contact: 9958268578.

Sacredspace

Open The Window

At night, I open the window and ask the moon to come and press its face against mine. Breathe into me. Close the language-door and open the love-window. The moon won't use the door, only the window.

Jalaluddin Rumi

