



**A thought for today**

*We are made wise not by the recollection of our past, but by the responsibility for our future*

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

# Shalom Namaste

PM's Israel visit puts people at the heart of bilateral ties

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Israel trip once again highlights his government's penchant for bold decision-making on the foreign policy front. Not only has this trip brought India-Israel relations out of the closet, it has also elevated bilateral ties to a strategic partnership. There was quite notable personal chemistry between Modi and Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu. From describing the India-Israel partnership as a "marriage made in heaven" to taking a stroll together on the Olga beach, Netanyahu went the extra mile with the Indian premier.

This personal bonhomie has translated into enhanced policy synergies. A slew of agreements have been signed in sectors such as agriculture, water conservation and satellite technologies. India is already Israel's largest defence client, and transactions in this area are slated to further increase in the near future with New Delhi waiting to receive armed drones from Tel Aviv. On the business front, Indian and Israeli companies signed strategic pacts worth \$4.3 billion. Around 30 CEOs from both sides promised to power the economic and investment relationship, commencing the setting up of a \$40 million innovation fund.

Add to this the announcement of a new direct flight between India and Israel, and the simplification of rules for obtaining Overseas Citizen of India cards for Indian-origin people in Israel. Overall the visit garnered significant attention for people-to-people connections, with Netanyahu even stating that the two countries had a human bridge between them. This was bolstered by Modi meeting 26/11 survivor Moshe Holtzberg and visiting the Indian War Cemetery in Haifa. In that sense, Modi's visit has put people at the centre of bilateral ties. This should not only hold the two countries in good stead but also put their partnership on a firm, independent track.



# Chasing Fair Play

Women's cricket vs Waqar Younis

As the Women's Cricket World Cup rolls on, the question is why it hasn't merited the wall to wall coverage that the male version commands. After all, captain Mithali Raj is a cricketing legend, and could well become the all-time highest run-scorer in the world. And yet, this cricket-mad nation has steadily ignored the women's game. Why? Some say it is simply less fun to watch. Waqar Younis suggests restricting women's ODIs to 30 overs to make them seem pacier. While individual women excelling at tennis or gymnastics draw attention, their team sports are dismissed as 'boring'.

Much of that bias lies in the coverage. Research has found that sports media outlets cover the women's game less compellingly, with lazy camerawork, fewer cuts to short and instant replays, and lacklustre commentary. This is not to deny the difference in physical ability between women and men, but the extent to which it affects viewing pleasure. It's a chicken and egg conundrum. Visibility matters, if female sportspersons are to draw larger audiences. Right now, fewer people care about or follow women's sports. There are wide gaps in sponsorship and pay.

The only way to tilt this field is to simply enter it in large numbers: the more women there are who play for fun and professionally, who have a say in the sponsorship, coverage and consumption of sports, the sooner this skew can be fixed. As the Dangal tagline has it, mhari chhorian chhoron se kum hain ke?

# This Land Is Whose Land?

*We are not ordained for a national identity narrowly defined*

Gautam Adhikari



**Provincetown, MA:** This little town on the northern tip of Cape Cod is known for its distinctive, some would say quirky, character. I say 'little town' because its off-season population is around 4,000. But it swells to 2,00,000 every summer when people from all over the world come to visit.

My friend Rajiv visited a couple of years ago and actually tumbled from a sidewalk swinging his head to look at the sheer numbers of Indians around, especially an elderly couple who were wearing wool scarves and jackets in stark contrast to the paucity of clothes everywhere. The rock symphony of languages and accents you hear is an ode to life in all its joyous variety.

Hundreds of colourful flags flutter in the summer breeze. Three flags catch the eye: the rainbow banner, Portugal's flag and the American stars and stripes. They reflect three faces of this town.

Rainbow flags are common because Provincetown is known to many as the gay capital of the world. Being heterosexual here might make you feel you belong to a minority. Gay night clubs flourish, transgender folk wander unselfconsciously, even some cops are obviously gay.

The Portuguese flag adorns housetops because a section of local inhabitants came originally from Portugal. I was initially surprised in a bar watching an international soccer match on TV to find numerous supporters of the Portuguese team even when they were playing against the US. They waved Portugal's flag but spoke in American accents.

Which brings us to the US flag in a symbolic week when Americans celebrated independence day on the fourth of July. Who exactly is an 'American' and therefore a rightful bearer of the stars and stripes? Or, who is an 'Indian'? Are we all ordained from time immemorial to belong to a singular national identity narrowly defined? Or is national identity a recent entry in human discourse and may pass as a phase in history? Who are we in essence: American, Indian, Portuguese, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, atheist, black, white? All of the above?

**justgraffiti**

Such questions are at the heart of fierce arguments in both the world's largest two democracies. In neither nation, in my careful opinion, is or has there ever been an airtight definition of national identity. Both are culturally dynamic. They have evolved into their current identities by absorbing elements from several cultures in a series of passing phases. And yet, that somewhat fluid state itself is a cause of raging debate, sometimes violent, in India and the US.

In India, one side insists nationhood must be based on a Hindu identity; others disagree, pointing to the Constitution which deliberately avoids mentioning the primacy of any particular religion or culture to form the idea of India. Thus, one side insists that cows are sacred, so beef, and even other meats, must not be eaten because the Hindu identity would be sullied; others retort that such arguments sully the constitutionally-defined diverse Indian identity.

In the US, a turmoil of argument over immigration's impact on culture and national identity has boiled over in the months that Donald Trump has been president. Now, even a few progressive thinkers have begun to wonder whether liberals have ignored at a cost the problems caused by high rates of immigration. Peter Beinart, a liberal intellectual, argues in the current issue of the Atlantic that liberals in the past decade have emphasised diversity over unity and it is time to address Americans' yearning for social cohesion.

What Beinart doesn't ask is why the current wave ought to be tackled differently than past waves of immigration which too caused misgivings for a generation or two among natives until a fairly rapid assimilation evolved into place. Is it because past influxes were of a different hue?

Ah well, in my view the late Woody Guthrie had it right when he sang "This land is your land" before "This land is my land", ending with the refrain "This land was made for you and me"...

# Sell Air India For One Rupee

Right now it's a giant black hole relentlessly sucking in taxpayer money

Chetan Bhagat



Recently the Cabinet gave in-principle approval to sell Air India. It is an oft-repeated idea, but this time the resolve seems to be stronger.

Government will really be doing our country a huge favour if it gets rid of this company, which is a giant black hole relentlessly sucking in taxpayer money.

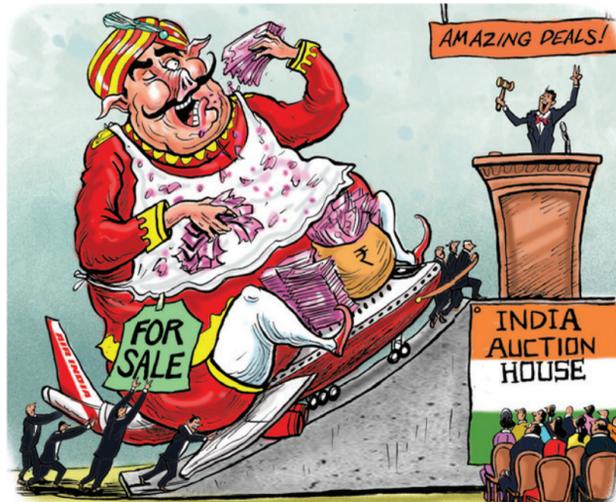
As an ex-distressed banker, I can say this: some companies can be rescued from the hole they have dug themselves in. Others have dug it so deep, they can never, ever get out. Air India is in the latter category. There is no point saying, "But last time I flew, the service was good." It's irrelevant. The hard truth is this: the company is a dud. Sorry.

Here's the math, as an example. Imagine your neighbour has a drinking problem because of which he racks up loans of over Rs 5 crore. But instead of earning money and paying back the loans, he continues to borrow even more and spends another Rs 70 lakh a year on his addiction. Over the decades you have rescued him several times. However, he refuses to change. Now the loans are too big. Even if he did try his best, he can't make more than a couple of lakhs a year. Hence he can never repay his debts.

To understand Air India, multiply the numbers in the example above by 10,000. It has over Rs 50,000 crore of debt and its cashflow negative, reportedly by over Rs 7,000 crore a year - the numbers could be worse, as the company hasn't released recent data and CAG has raised issues even about the data it has released.

Even in the best of scenarios, Air India can't earn enough to repay its debt. So no new buyer can buy it as-is, with its mountain of debt. For there is no scope to repay it. Financially, right now Air India is the worst corporate in the country.

There's no point in casting blame. When sins have been done over decades,



Politicians and bureaucrats, along with their families, friends and neighbours, all abuse Air India to get free upgrades and lavish service from the staff. Getting Air India off the government's hands will end these VVIP joys.

Even if we want to pamper netas and babus, there are cheaper ways. Paying them money to fly business, or even first class, in private airlines will be cheaper than keeping the Air India monster alive. Government can buy upgrade vouchers for its senior functionaries.

So how does one sell Air India? Its assets, office infrastructure, running operation and landing rights have some value - though well below its debt. Government should give it to the highest bidder amongst various private players. Of course the bid is unlikely to pay off the entire debt, so the winning bidder will probably be someone who wants the least discount on the loan.

Employees may be retained or retrenched, something the new buyer will decide. But a decent retrenchment package (say three years' salary) for the entire staff would cost around Rs 9,000 crore (given a salary bill of Rs 3,000 crore a year). The new buyers will take that into account in their bid.

Even in the best case, government will have to give a discount on the loan. It may even have to give the company to the new buyer for one rupee. The process will not make government any money. But it will get rid of a part of the loan and all of the cash burning enterprise. To that extent, this entire exercise is not so much a sale of Air India as good riddance. This is something we need to understand going into the sale, so we don't have unrealistic expectations from it.

Beware opposing voices that will complain after the sale, "We sold Air India for nothing." Tell them, we didn't sell it, we got rid of it, and that has saved us a lot of money every year.

Let's all keep up the pressure to ensure that the Modi government sells Air India. We will be doing the country's finances a big favour.

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standby for occasional rescues. It's better the Centre gives money to private airlines in an emergency. Do we really think if there is a rare, genuine calamity, and government wants to pay to hire a plane, IndiGo and SpiceJet are going to refuse? And isn't this far more efficient than burning Rs 7,000 crore a year?

These two noble arguments to keep Air India alive as-is hide the real reason. It is the netas' and babus' club in the sky.

# We are not in 1962 and we are militarily strong, but India can't afford a piecemeal approach to Doklam style events

Manmohan Bahadur



The ongoing "skirmishes" in the Doklam plateau have been engaging India's attention as a behaviour that is 'different from normal' on part of the Chinese - assertive, provocative and obdurate. That a third party, Bhutan, is involved adds to the murkiness. A closer look, however, shows it as no different from Sun Tzu's principle of strategic deception.

In 1999, two colonels of the People's Liberation Army, Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, wrote in their book, Unrestricted Warfare, how China should prosecute future wars. Stating that "the first rule of unrestricted warfare is that there are no rules, with nothing forbidden," they suggested a multi-pronged approach to attack the target country's vitals in all spheres - diplomatic, political, social and of course military.

That this got an official sanction of sorts got indicated by the decision of the central military commission in 2003 to have a three warfare concept - psychological, media and legal; a development conveyed to the US Congress by their defence department in a 2011 report. It was further analysed and expanded to mean warfare in multiple spheres - like

financial, ecological, technological, trade, media, economic aid and international law. Did this gameplan play out at Chumar and Depsang earlier, and is it now driving events in Doklam?

The Depsang intrusions took place before the Indian foreign minister was to attend the ministerial conference on Afghanistan at Almaty, Kazakhstan. Thereafter, ever since an assertive government took office in Delhi, one can

**China has fished in India's troubled northeast since long and our internal governance has not helped matters**

discern continuation of this trend to keep it occupied with multiple pinpricks.

The Chumar intrusions happened while President Xi Jinping was with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Ahmedabad. Reportedly, the Chinese withdrew after having achieved two objectives: first, a message that they would rake up the border issue as and when it suits them to keep our diplomatic and military establishments embroiled in expending energies and second, the intrusions played on



India's sensitivities of the 1962 debacle to put a lingering doubt in the general public's mind - all to psychologically dilute the muscular approach of the government in Delhi.

The Doklam incident is following a similar pattern as earlier: create a controversy by an intrusion and milk the brouhaha created in the raucous Indian media to strike the general national mood through psychological warfare - that it has coincided with the PM's trips to the US and Israel is also no coincidence.

A new front has been added this time with the Global Times, the mouthpiece of the Communist Party of China, stating that "Beijing should

reconsider its stance over the Sikkim issue" and "although China recognised India's annexation in 2003, it can readjust its stance on the matter." This has introduced a new element of subversive warfare as the editorial further adds that, "since some Chinese support Sikkim's independence, the voices will spread and fuel pro-independence appeals in Sikkim."

This could represent an escalation showing intent but may not necessarily be true. However, a new front may have opened, and even if the Doklam situation gets diffused, this is an argument that the Chinese can reopen any time and address us through their three warfare concept - psychological, media

and legal.

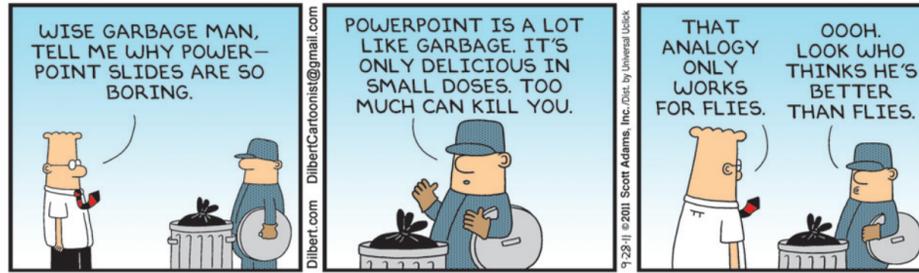
China has fished in India's troubled northeast since long and our internal governance has not helped matters. With the Gorkha agitation having restarted in the hills of Darjeeling, next door to Sikkim, the 'Sikkim-independence' statement by China should not be ignored. It also confirms the unrestricted warfare strategy of China to engage with an adversary in myriad forms of warfare listed earlier.

So, as China tries to apply the geo-political squeeze by its strategy of drowning our neighbours through 'loan warfare' (Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bangladesh, with Nepal to follow) and making them indebted to it, India's political establishment has its work cut out.

The defence minister has stated that we are not in 1962, and for sure we are militarily strong, but Doklam style events must be acknowledged for their long term effects and a 'whole of government' approach adopted - this involves planning at the strategic level and a coordinated implementation of an action plan by all arms of the government. A piecemeal approach, and feeling happy on termination of each individual crisis, would only be detrimental to India's long term strategic interests.

The writer is a retired Air Vice Marshal

## dilbert



## Sacredspace

Your Thoughts

*Thought is a tremendous force in the life of any individual. Thoughts shape our attitudes. Attitudes mould our character. Character influences our life. By changing our thought pattern, we can change our life.*

Dada JP Vaswani

# I Am Not Making Myself A Guru To You

Interaction: J Krishnamurti

**In spite of your emphatic denial of the need for a guru, are you not yourself a guru? What is the difference?**

**Krishnamurti:** Sir, what do you mean by a guru? Why do you need a guru? Whether you make me one or not, I am not making myself a guru to you. That is why a follower is a curse. The follower is the destroyer; the follower is the exploiter. (Laughter.) Do not laugh it away, think about it very earnestly and see the consequence of it.

Let us examine this question. Now, what do you mean by a guru? You generally mean, do you not, one who will lead you to reality? Your guru is not the man of whom you can ask the direction to the station. You would not

call the professor a guru, the man who teaches you the piano. Obviously, you mean by the guru one who will lead you to truth, give you a mode of conduct, one who will provide the key or open the door, give you nourishment, sustenance and encouragement - that is, one who will gratify you profoundly.

You already know the superficial gratifications, and you want a deeper gratification, a deeper satisfaction, so you turn to someone who will assist you; you seek a guru because you yourself are confused, and you want direction, you want to be told how to act and what to do. So, all these things are involved in this; but by a guru we mean primarily one who will help us to unravel life's

problems - not the technical problems, but the more subtle, the hidden, psychological problems.

Now, has truth an abiding place? Has truth a fixed point? Has truth an abode, or is truth a dynamic, living thing, and therefore without a resting place? Truth is in constant movement; but if you say it is a fixed point, then you will have to find a guru who will lead you to it, and the guru becomes necessary as a pointer. That means that both you and the guru must know that truth is there, in a fixed place, like the station. Then you can ask the way, then you can approach the fixed point; and in order to achieve that, you need a guru who will direct and lead you to that fixed thing. But is truth a fixed thing? And if it is

fixed, is it true?

Also, if you want truth and you go to a guru, you must know what truth is, must you not? When you go to a guru you do not say, 'I want to discover reality,' on the contrary, you say, 'Help me to realise truth.' Therefore, you already have an idea of what it is, you already know its content, its beauty, its loveliness, its fragrance. Do you know what it is? How can a confused man know clarity? He can only know confusion, or think of clarity as the opposite of what is. (Poona India 6th Public Talk, 3rd October, 1948. Courtesy: KFI.)

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