



**A thought for today**

*We must declare war on war, so the outcome will be peace upon peace*

SHEIKH ABDULLAH BIN BAYYAH, cleric

# Why Attack Pilgrims?

*The communal designs of the terrorists make Amarnath Yatra a soft target*

The first terror attack on Amarnath yatra in 17 years is an act of desperation by terrorists seeking to communalise the Kashmir Valley and the country after losing several men to security forces. The terrorists picked the weakest link in the security apparatus: a bus with pilgrims from Gujarat allegedly plying in violation of CRPF norms to strike. CRPF has stated that buses registered for the yatra move in a convoy protected by paramilitary/police personnel and halt at 7pm. But CRPF must probe whether checkpoints allowed the bus to travel in violation of security norms.

Intelligence agencies had last month warned of a terror threat to the Amarnath Yatra and more troops were posted along pilgrimage routes. Hurriyat hardliner SAS Geelani dismissed this threat to the yatra claiming that Kashmiris have "always been friendly with yatra".



Geelani and other separatists like Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Yasin Malik have strongly condemned the killing of the seven yatra. But they do nothing to improve law and order in J&K, which allows terrorists breathing space that security forces otherwise deny them.

Hurriyat's intent and feebleness are best reflected in its attitude to the repeated attacks on local police personnel. When J&K police DSP

Mohammed Ayub Pandith was lynched by a mob outside Jama Masjid in Srinagar, almost a full day elapsed before a "moderate" like Mirwaiz offered a half-hearted condemnation. Incidentally, Pandith was part of Mirwaiz's security cohort when he met his end. The turn of events reflect the loosening hold of the Hurriyat to more radical elements motivated by jihad and establishing Islamic law in Kashmir. Pilgrimages are soft targets for terrorists in conflict zones. The Kashmir Valley's syncretic traditions still exist but are being undone by decades of conflict and radicalisation.

National Conference Leader Omar Abdullah called on right-thinking Kashmiris to say unequivocally - this is #NotInMyName. This is an opportune moment for the central and state governments, Valley politicians, civil society and everyone with a stake in the return of normalcy in J&K to come together. A similar movement needs to happen in the rest of the country too, where home minister Rajnath Singh must ensure that Kashmiris - especially students - living elsewhere do not face misguided retaliatory attacks, while beef lynchings and anti-minority hate crimes are curbed with an iron hand.

## In The Game

*Opposition puts Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Gopal Krishna Gandhi for vice-president*

Elections for president and vice-president (VP) may be all over bar the shouting, but still retain symbolic value as they indicate the extent to which opposition parties are capable of rallying their forces around common candidates. After weeks of confabulations, 18 opposition parties have finally agreed to the candidature of former diplomat and governor, Gopal Krishna Gandhi, for the VP's post. In a boost to opposition unity the candidature of Gandhi - who comes with impeccable family lineage in that he is a grandson of both Mahatma Gandhi and C Rajagopalachari - has also been backed by Nitish Kumar's JD(U).

Relying on family lineage is unlikely to cut much ice in 21st century India. Nevertheless Congress appears to have learnt a lesson after having been out-smarted by BJP earlier when the latter named Ram Nath Kovind - former MP and Dalit lawyer from UP - as its candidate for president.

This drove a wedge between opposition parties as Nitish broke ranks and backed Kovind, the then Bihar governor, a day before the opposition parties were to finalise their candidate. In stark contrast, Tuesday's meeting for selecting the VP candidate was attended by top leaders from Congress, TMC, SP, BSP, JD(U), DMK and Left parties among others. Congress wisely refrained from selecting a candidate like it did with Meira Kumar, instead it chose to endorse Gandhi's name only after a nod from other parties.

NDA still retains the numerical advantage with close to 500 votes out of the 790-strong electoral college in both houses of Parliament. It needs, however, to win the prestige battle as well. It can still outwit the opposition if it decides to field a Muslim face like Najma Heptullah. That way, it can demonstrate it is more politically imaginative than Congress.

## Plane talk

*Some feel that selling Air India is like selling their birthright*

Jug Suraiya



Two netas in worried conversation:

**1st neta:** What is all this nonsense about privatising Air India? I just can't understand it.

**2nd neta:** Neither can I. How on earth can anyone privatise something that has always been privatised, like Air India has been ever since we sarkari types took it over from that Parsi fellow and made the Maharaja say 'Tata to him'?

**1st neta:** Just so. Before we took it over and privatised it for our own private use to junket about all over the world free of cost, with kith and kin in tow, Air India was public property, in that the tax-paying public, the aam janta, could use it.

**2nd neta:** What a waste of a national resource that was. What's the use of having a national airline which everyone in the nation can use? After all, if something belongs to everybody it ends up belonging to nobody in particular.

**1st neta:** Exactly. And by taking over Air India we ensured that it belonged to us, and to us only.

**2nd neta:** Right on. We made Air India our own private zamindari, the whole jing-banglot.

**1st neta:** What a jolly state of affairs that was. But now they want to change all that and sell off Air India from under our private feet. Or rather, private seat. It's so darned unfair. And all on the flimsy grounds that our private airline is losing thousands and thousands of crores of taxpayers' money. What rubbish.

**2nd neta:** Absolute rubbish. Taxpayers' money be blown. After taxpayers pay tax, the tax becomes our money, and we can blow it any which way we like, on Air India or anything else.

**1st neta:** You never said a truer word. Not only the taxpayers' money, the taxpayers themselves belong to us. Indeed everything in the country belongs to us. We are heir to it all.

**2nd neta:** Hear, hear: Or rather, Heir, heir. We should keep our private airline. And just rename it Heir India...

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Sanjeev Sabhlok



At a recent India Meeting in Switzerland organised by Horasis, the question was asked whether India can achieve 10% growth given the wide range of reforms underway, such as GST, bankruptcy laws, privatisation and digitisation impelled by demonetisation. Present was CII president Shobana Kamineni, who made some back-of-the-envelope calculations and suggested 10% may well become a reality.

But maybe we should ask an entirely different question - what will it take for India to become a First World nation? Such a question is about matters more important than mere economic growth. It is about freedom, rule of law, justice, separation of religion and state. Such a question can reset our expectations and start a meaningful conversation about what we want to be as a nation.

Our party, Swarna Bharat Party, was the only political party other than BJP and Congress invited to this conference. Perhaps our fledgling party's reform fervour caught the fancy of Horasis chairperson Frank-Jurgen Richter. But more likely, Frank is merely responding to demands of international investors who are getting tired of endless bouts of fantasy and want some plain talk.

I joined with others in congratulating the Modi government on reforms. However, some Indian and foreign business leaders told me in private they have experienced no real change on the ground. Despite that, I asked international businesses to continue to invest in India, but with a large pinch of patience.

It is time for us as a nation to step back and look at the big picture. The facts that face us are not pleasant. Transparency International has ranked Indian governments as the most corrupt in the Asia-Pacific region. Our businesses, despite being one of the world's best, continue to be let down by our governance system. We continue to rank close to the bottom on ease of doing business. We remain one of the least free countries in the world.

# Can India Be First World?

*We dream of leapfrogging to First World status, here's how to do it in real life*



valid vote received. Under the current model, candidates spend crores of rupees during elections and since they get back nothing, they inevitably become corrupt ministers.

Next, we need to reform local government. Elected councillors must be empowered to hire the chief executive officer of their municipality from the open market on conditions similar to those outlined above for the general bureaucracy. Our manifesto thereafter outlines a myriad other reforms - such as in urban planning, labour market regulation and comprehensive redesign of our education system. The Modi government should implement all these on a priority basis. Our party will be happy to support the government in the detailed design of these reforms.

But there remains a matter on which only PM Modi can directly respond. Our party is gravely concerned about his chronic failure to defend liberty, the most cherished human value. A government has no business to interfere in what Indians eat, wear or speak. I eat beef and so do many other Indians. A government should assure humane slaughter of large animals and assure the safety of the food chain, but there can be absolutely no public policy ground in a free country for any government to arrogate to itself the right to tell citizens (who are its masters) what they shall eat.

Modi must come down harshly on violent gau rakshaks. These people are emboldened by anti-cow slaughter laws which are the root of the problem. Such laws are destroying the fabric of India. Governance and religion must be kept separate at all times. Likewise, we ask Modi to modernise all laws, including decriminalising gay sex and abolishing all restrictions on speech.

I know this is a tall order given BJP's foundational ideology that is grounded in swadeshi, Hindutva, Ram janmabhoomi and gau raksha. But the fact is that the whole world is becoming wary of BJP's agenda. This is not how we will become a great nation.

The writer is senior leader of Swarna Bharat Party

## International investors are getting tired of endless bouts of fantasy and want some plain talk

We do not protect private property. We do not have credible rule of law. The concept of justice is largely fictitious. There is very little infrastructure. Our school systems are dysfunctional. Vocational training is non-existent or of very low quality. And we continue to be one of the world's poorest countries.

Our party wants to raise our expectations significantly. We believe that strategic interventions can fix India's poor governance system and entirely rewrite India's future. What should the Modi government do? In a nutshell, it should make our policy and governance systems incentive compatible.

Policies in India are not transparently designed and do not consider unintended consequences, implementation issues including strategic behaviour, or costs and benefits. We need legislation to embed a world class policy making process into every decision. Never again should a decision like demonetisation be taken without a supporting cost-benefit analysis to be followed by a full and transparent evaluation of the results.

Second, we need to redesign our

governance system. Today, neither ministers nor bureaucrats are accountable. They see themselves as rulers. We need to invert this mindset and hold our servant - the government - to account.

No First World country has India's antediluvian, super-centralised IAS-type tenured service to govern everything. Prime Minister Narendra Modi should replace all such services with a contractual modern bureaucracy in which the best talent is hired from the open market for specific roles, paid well, and terminated without notice for failure to deliver. Our manifesto provides the detailed transitional path to achieve this reform.

Even more urgently needed is electoral reform. All candidates should get a certain cash reimbursement (subject to an upper limit per constituency) per

# 'Many people provoking Nitish to remove Tejashwi from cabinet ... Will corruption end simply by going after Lalu?

Recent CBI raids on properties associated with Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad, his son Bihar deputy chief minister Tejashwi Prasad Yadav and other family members have strained relations with its ruling alliance partner JD(U). Senior RJD leader Shivanand Tiwari spoke to Rohit E David on the political fallout of the raids in Bihar, chief minister Nitish Kumar's strategic moves in the last few days and the prospect of the alliance breaking up.

### Q&A

**■ Why should the Bihar deputy chief minister Tejashwi Yadav not resign given the allegations against him?**

There is no reason for Tejashwi to resign. BJP doesn't have so much power that just by giving false statements in newspapers it can get Tejashwi removed.

**■ Are you upset with JD(U) and Nitish Kumar for not publicly defending the Yadavs so far?**

They are going to have their party meeting soon. Rest assured that JD(U) will speak on this matter after talks with everyone. Nothing will happen to this government. This alliance will survive.

Does Nitish not know what is going on in Bihar? Is Ram Vilas Paswan a sadhu who is speaking against Lalu Prasad? Will the country's corruption come to an end simply by going after Lalu?

**■ But hasn't JD(U) said that it won't attend RJD's upcoming Modi Bhagao rally?**

This is incorrect. Nitish has categori-

cally said that if they get an invitation they will definitely be part of this rally. Many people had asked him about the invite so he said that he has got an informal request and not a formal one. This is on record. There are no ifs and buts, Nitish had said it himself, period.

**■ Lalu says the raids are an attempt to destroy his party but how can you defend corruption?**

There is nothing new in these CBI raids. These raids have been done with vendetta in mind: to destroy RJD in Bihar. Can anyone tell me why there are raids happening in Bihar now? Why is corruption being seen only in this state? Only one set of people are being targeted: like Akhilesh Yadav and Mayawati. Is there no corruption anywhere else?

Why is no one seeing former Gujarat chief minister Anandiben Patel's daughter Anar Patel's land scam? Anyone who is opposing BJP is being targeted. Their aim is to finish their rivals. CBI is being fully utilised by the political party in power. The same thing is taking place with the income

tax department. They are not acting as independent bodies.

**■ But what about the ethics of Tejashwi continuing as a minister?**

There are many people who are provoking Nitish to remove Tejashwi from the cabinet. I want to ask a question to Narendra Modi. How come he has kept Uma Bharti in his cabinet?

Why is no one speaking about this? A trial is going on by order of the Supreme Court for her. Why is everyone mum? In Tejashwi's case, not even a charge sheet has been placed and people are raising their voices against him.

**■ Do you still believe there is no danger to your coalition government in Bihar?**

There is no danger to the alliance. Why would Nitish break away? These raids have not been done by Nitish.

Moreover, Lalu was convicted in the fodder scam. The alliance happened after all that took place. For the 2019 elections, Lalu is working on a grand alliance with a common agenda.

**■ How confident are you that Nitish won't break your alliance and go with BJP?**

Will he run the government with the support of BJP? The people of Bihar know that Nitish has been against Modi. Nitish had cancelled Modi's dinner when the national executive meeting of BJP was going on in Bihar. How can they come together?

If by any chance, Nitish does make the government with the help of BJP, will he get the same respect?

**■ In 2008, you had filed a petition in court against Lalu but now you are defending him. How can you justify this?**

I was with Nitish in 2008 when, along with Lalan Singh, I pressed charges against Lalu. Later, Lalan Singh gave a memorandum to Manmohan Singh for an enquiry into this matter. No enquiry took place. It must have been that the previous government didn't even consider the case liable to be investigated. From then on, this matter had been pending. Now, three years have passed since Modi's government came to power. So, it took them three years to do the raids?

The only reason I am backing Lalu is because if he doesn't stay in Bihar, BJP will come to power there.

## dilbert



Pulkit Sharma

What kind of lifestyle would facilitate achieving liberation? Should one progressively withdraw from the external world and its inconsequential activities and live in isolation? Or contemplate the Divine while being engaged in worldly affairs? Some sages advocate the path of rigorous asceticism, while others believe that one can gain enlightenment even as a householder. A spiritual aspirant is constantly debating - which out of the two is the better option?

The Mahabharata says, a sage named Jajali stood motionless for many months while practising extreme asceticism and some birds built their nest and laid eggs in his hair. Overcome by the thought that if he moved, the birds might suffer and die, Jajali remained in that position without food and water till the time the birds grew up and flew away. Jajali rejoiced that by doing so he had reached

the pinnacle of asceticism, compassion and spiritual growth.

Just then a heavenly voice told him that a merchant named Tuladhara was more advanced in spirituality than him and he must visit Tuladhara. When Jajali met Tuladhara he observed that as Tuladhara went about his business of selling goods, different kinds of people came to the shop. Some customers were good, others were bad; some expressed gratitude while others ridiculed the merchant. But Tuladhara remained in perpetual equanimity, he was neither exulted by the love nor distressed by the hatred and went about doing his work honestly. While balancing the scales in his business, Tuladhara had achieved an inner balance that transcends duality.

Enlightenment is a transcendent state where one realises that the Self is different from body, mind and its sensory

objects. Also, pairs of opposites such as pain and pleasure, love and hate, birth and death, attachment and detachment, loss and gain, activity and passivity are nothing but a playful manifestation of consciousness.

Consequently, the person remains in a balanced state, at all times and under all circumstances. The individual is full of bliss, having experienced the vision of absolute consciousness. And all the emotional, physical and psychological problems that troubled him dissolve completely.

Enlightenment is achievable if one makes rigorous effort to know the truth. What is important is that the individual contemplates absolute consciousness constantly and uproots whatever it is that creates false illusion in his mind and drives him away from the truth. Whether he is meditating in a remote cave or envisioning the

## Sacred space

Infinite Potential

*We are unaware of our potential, because we think of ourselves as limited creatures. We have identified ourselves with a biochemical mental organism. Our true Self is the Atman - with limitless potential!*

Dada JP Vaswani

## For A Balanced State Of Mind



the speaking tree

Divine while doing his job in a metropolitan city is just an ancillary event.

One powerful yogic technique that can help a person achieve this difficult task is Pratyahara, elaborated in the Shandilya Upanishad. Pratyahara is the withdrawal of the senses from their objects. It is crucial to understand that the 'withdrawal' is of the senses, and not the external objects per se. Therefore, one can withdraw one's attachment and attention to external objects anywhere, whether it is a secluded forest or a busy shopping mall.

This is accomplished when one repeatedly tries to see the one absolute consciousness hidden in all forms and aspects of creation. With repeated practise, awareness comes up, that all the senses and their umpteen objects, mind and body, are a manifestation of absolute consciousness. The mind then gives up craving, it reflects this one consciousness and stays in perfect balance.

(The writer is a clinical psychologist.)