



A thought for today

The mentality of enmity can poison a nation's spirit

LIU XIAOBO

Dissident's Legacy

Liu Xiaobo and China's great leap backward

Prominent Soviet dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote *Cancer Ward*, a novel in which cancer becomes a metaphor for the state of society. And prominent Chinese dissident (as well as fellow Nobel Laureate) Liu Xiaobo has perished in a cancer ward, even as Beijing rebuffed attempts to have him treated abroad. This makes him the first Nobel Peace Prize winner to die in custody since the Nazi era. Liu was a prime mover behind Charter 08 signed by 350 Chinese intellectuals, calling for rule of law, democracy and freedom of expression in China. So far, however, his story has not proven so hopeful as those of other prominent dissenters such as Solzhenitsyn, Sakharov or Nelson Mandela.

As China rose, its middle class and global connections grew, many had expected the space for citizens' personal freedom to grow as well. However, in recent times China has moved mostly in the opposite direction with President Xi Jinping, in particular, tightening restrictions on civil society and discourse. Reflecting this heightened repression, Liu has been in prison since 2009 and even his wife has been placed under house arrest. Concurrently, China appears to have largely abandoned its earlier doctrine of peaceful rise as it presses border and jurisdiction disputes with most of its neighbours: the standoff with India at Doklam is an example.

China has largely been successful in persuading Western countries to abandon their earlier evangelising for democracy and human rights: witness the lack of outrage over Liu's treatment compared to the West's support for Soviet dissidents. But while the West now accepts coexistence of different political systems, does China accept this principle? What explains, for example, its preference for authoritarian Pakistan over democratic India? If, one day, Liu Xiaobo's principles were to become acceptable in China, that would certainly improve India's geopolitical situation enormously.



Maryam's Mandate

Nawaz Sharif's daughter is also his defender No 1

If America has Ivanka Trump its on-off-on partner Pakistan has Maryam Nawaz Sharif. Not only did she help manage the election campaign that brought her father to power, she has since grown in reputation as a trusted and influential adviser. Now that the prime minister is embattled in the so-called Panama Papers corruption scandal, his daughter has also emerged as his defender number 1.

Even as a joint investigation team seeks to establish money laundering charges against the first family, the telegenic first daughter with an MA in English literature, a biggish youth connect and around 3.5 million Twitter followers avows the whole case "will not only be contested but decimated" in the Supreme Court. Of course her name is very much in the Panama Papers too, something the opposition is fully milking, hoping it will "kill" any aspirations to perpetuate the Sharif dynasty - through her at any rate.

But South Asians know well that a setback or two or ten can be just political rehearsal for promising young dynasts. First daughters like Indira Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto trod quite a few heated coals before ascending in their father's place - even though they would likely not have been allowed as many fresh starts as first sons like Rahul Gandhi or Bilawal Bhutto. Meanwhile the Maryam bulwark is holding firm, giving the doughty warning that "those who think Nawaz Sharif's daughter is his weakness will find she is his strength."

The Doklam Standoff

Both India and China need a face saver to avoid further deterioration in relations

Kanti Bajpai



It is one month into the military standoff between India and China, with no indication either side will back down. There is a sense in India that it will be resolved short of war. Can we be so certain?

Two things about the confrontation seem reasonably clear. First, China's extension of its road in the Doklam area has seriously worried both Bhutan and India. Bhutan believes that Doklam belongs to it and that Chinese encroachments, over several years, have gone too far. India has two anxieties. It is determined to stand firm by the side of its ally, Bhutan. It is also determined that Chinese forces must not be allowed any nearer the thin wedge of Indian territory pinched between Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. If China were to cut off this "chicken's neck" in a future conflict, it would sever the links between northern and northeastern India.

Secondly, China insists it is extending a road on its own territory, and this is no business of Thimphu or Delhi - and particularly not Delhi. For Beijing, the Doklam area is on the China-Bhutan border and therefore the quarrel is not India's. Worse, it has seen Indian troops push back its troops in an area it claims is Chinese territory. Beijing is not used to weaker powers pushing back, and its recent statements have been the most belligerent on record since the 1960s and certainly since the Sumdorong Chu crisis of 1986-87.

Veteran commentator Prem Shankar Jha has argued that the situation today is eerily reminiscent of the build-up to the 1962 war. There are similarities. India decided in 1962 to push Chinese forces out of areas it considered Indian territory. And China grew increasingly shrill and threatening. The gap between Indian and Chinese military capabilities now, as in 1962, is large (even if not in Doklam). Beijing now, as in 1962, has an eye to a much larger geopolitical game - its status in Asia and the world.

India cannot afford to be complacent about the prospects of violence. China has a reputation for using force after carefully weighing the costs and benefits and the chances of success. The list of its militarised conflicts is long: with the US in 1950 (Korea); with Taiwan in 1955, 1958 and 1995-96; with India in 1962; with the Soviets in 1969; with Vietnam in 1974, 1979 and 1988 (over the Paracels, border and Spratlys, respectively); and with the Philippines in 2012 (Scarborough Reef).

In addition, should China choose to attack, there is no reason to think it will attack where India is strong, such as in Doklam/Sikkim. Over most of the border, China has the advantage of heights, infrastructure, logistics, numbers of troops, and quality of weapons (at virtually all levels). If it chooses to "teach India a lesson", it will attack at a time and place of its choosing.

With its military superiority, China will have "escalation dominance" - the ability to increase the intensity of violence at every level. Beijing will aim for attrition and some territorial grab not for largescale territorial incursions because if it intrudes deeper into Indian territory its supply lines will be stretched and its forces vulnerable to counterattacks. An Indian riposte into Tibet will suffer the same fate as a deep Chinese thrust into India and is therefore not viable.

New Delhi must carefully consider its options. In contrast to the 2013 and 2014 confrontation when India was vocal and active in seeking a resolution of the crisis, it has been curiously silent and inactive diplomatically. Both countries need a face saver to avoid a further deterioration in relations. One possibility is for China to quietly stop work on the road, for India just as quietly to pull its troops back from the arena of confrontation, and for the NSAs to meet.

Is this commonsense beyond Narendra Modi and Xi Jinping? Let's hope not.

Dipankar Gupta



What comes first, the question or the answer? If you believe in numbers, as many social statisticians do, the answer comes before the question. Hence, the chances are that only those issues will be raised which can be resolved through government, or quasi-government, statistics. Anything outside of this is over-spiced and bad for contemplation.

It is this attitude that has kept our understanding of informal labour on a low calorie diet, though it gobbles up 93% of our economy. As information on this is sparse, even if the issue is so big, it is convenient to look the other way. This explains the administrative reluctance to bulk up on policies related to this subject. The system works best when answers predate and frame the questions, leaving little to chance. The stage is now set for the policy maker, as diviner, to deliver with a flourish.

This method actually resembles the way religious discourses are conducted. The Church opposed Galileo and Copernicus because they asked questions for which the sacred texts had no answers. As Joshua had bid, in the Old Testament, the sun to stand still and not the earth, therefore, Martin Luther concluded, Copernicus must be wrong. The Catholic establishment even accused Galileo of planting little figures in his telescope and passing them off as planets. Therefore, if the answer is not in the Bible - or Quran or Gita - ask not that question, admonish religious gurus.

Likewise, as there is very little that is reliable about informal labour, either in the Census, or in surveys (the equivalent of the Bible/ Quran/ Gita), it does not count. Information, such as is available, is scattered and sniggered at as 'anecdotal'. Consequently, a big chunk of our society is deprived of attention. Numbers don't come easy in the informal sector, especially when

Empire Of Numbers

We have no interest in informal labour, as data on it is scarce



commandeered from above and afar. However, our ignorance of these very vital issues does not disturb us too much.

For example, we rarely give any thought to strategising cottage industries, international competition, even worker-management relations, for they all include informal labour. When industrial strife is being discussed, figures tell us of a dramatic drop in strikes over the past three decades. This should mean that shop floors everywhere are buzzing with happy activity. Could it be that the sinister foreman, after a routine body check, swapped his old heart for new? Nor do we know how many unregistered units shut and open shop; or of workers who are routinely fired; or of wages unfairly held back.

As a result, we do not have a measure of what India needs to do to become a global power. If there are so many microenterprises, why are we still poor? Also, why don't graduates from

The system works best when answers predate and frame the questions, leaving little to chance. This method actually resembles the way religious discourses are conducted

vocational institutes find skilled jobs in the marketplace? When we laud our export earnings, the informal sector is rarely acknowledged, nor the millions who bent their backs night and day. We have not even spared a thought for the health of these units; what if they collapse? The ruling view is that if it ain't broke, and no emergency declared, why break the glass? Instead, we imagine ourselves lounging with the big boys, after elbowing the rat pack out.

The consumer price index falters at

the sight of informal labour. Nevertheless, we continue to extrapolate from those figures, even if it hurts. As long as the tag says the size is right, who cares if the shoe pinches?

Was demonetisation a success? By all accounts it was an electoral bonanza, yet so many questions remain unasked and unanswered. If livelihoods impact voting behaviour then we should know whether demonetisation affected workers differently. This is particularly so in the case of informal labour simply because of the many varieties they come in.

It is said that many lost their jobs, but who were they? Were those who were employed by the week, or month, worse off as high currency notes would be needed to pay them and these were now demonetised? Did daily wagers fare better, for they could be paid in small change? Or, perhaps it did not matter; they sank or swam randomly.

We can only guess the outcome, but where are the facts? Political analysts could have helped. But instead of asking tough questions on informal labour and voting behaviour, they are obsessed with caste. As many of them suffer from economist envy, they look out for issues where numbers tumble out.

Nor should one argue that precision does not count. It is a good idea when disciplinary questions and real world issues prompt the search for exactitude. When this route less travelled is taken, statistical exercises become legitimate. On the other hand, when it is independently pursued for its own sake, social science becomes a closed box; nothing new is found, nothing new is said. Have wages for informal workers kept pace with inflation? "But we don't have numbers on that," says the policy maker. How often have you heard that being said?

This is what makes it an egg and chicken issue. As informal labour lacks ready numbers, you can eat it before it is born and after it is dead. Either way, it does not stand a chance.

What does Israel get from India? A market and a vacation spot for its youngsters, plus India 'normalises' Israel

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The Indian Hospice in Old Jerusalem is the only one the UN still uses for refugee welfare activities, others having changed hands and disappeared. In fact, some years ago, it took an Israeli PM to intervene against several settlers who had arbitrarily moved in, just so the unique character of this building could be preserved. In some sense, it symbolises the unique nature of the India-Israel relationship, which was in full bloom last week.

PM Narendra Modi was always going to make Israel the last stop in his Middle East outreach, despite the fact that among the first congratulatory calls on May 16, 2014, came from PM Benjamin Netanyahu. India's Think West policy is a series of balancing acts, with Israel as a third pole all by itself. Given the nature of politics in that region, India had to secure all its other relationships before venturing into Jerusalem.

But once there, India embraced Israel wholeheartedly. Two things stood out for all watchers. First, Modi did not visit Ramallah to tick off the Palestine box, and second,

among his first stops was the memorial for Theodor Herzl, founding father of the Zionist movement. The second was probably more significant, because it anchors the relationship in the recognition of its founding ideology. It was not surprising that the former US ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro tweeted, "The stunningly successful visit of Indian PM Modi this week was a huge strategic win 4 Israel. Arguably more important than a POTUS visit."

A sense of existential mission underlines Israel's creativity, that desire to stay alive when everyone around wants you to sink. India needs all of these in spades

The Modi welcome was certainly a papal order, with a long line of religious leaders waiting for him at the tarmac. Over the next couple of days, a close relationship came out of the closet and acquired dimensions away from spooks and armies. Many have wondered, somewhat derisively, if agriculture and water, the stars of the



show in Jerusalem, were a facade for the "real stuff" of counterterrorism, intelligence and defence. All these have been happening for years now - Israel is the only country with which we have a pact on homeland security, which allows cooperation at the police thana level.

What is clear is that water is a national security issue for India, as it was for Israel, before they actually did something about it. For people following the multiple stresses in the farm sector in India, Israel's agriculture knowledge could modernise our neanderthal systems. There are multiple points of convergence between Israel and India in the development space, and all well documented.

De-hyphenating Palestine

is as important for Israel as de-hyphenating Pakistan is for India. India delivered on that. Mahmoud Abbas was a state guest in India just weeks ago, a visit that not only reaffirmed India's commitment, but may have even secured Abbas's own future for some time. Martin Indyk of Brookings observed recently that Abbas may have been overthrown by a group of Arab countries if he hadn't suddenly been invited to White House and New Delhi in quick succession, giving him much-needed legitimacy.

It's easy to see what India gets from Israel - agriculture technology, water technology, an opportunity to tap into Israel's thriving innovation culture, security and defence

toys and tech, hopefully a sense of existential mission that underlines all of Israel's creativity, that desire to stay alive, to stay afloat when everyone around wants you to sink. India needs all of these in spades.

What does Israel get from India? A market and a vacation spot for Israeli youngsters. Look deeper. Israel's innovators are famous for selling their creations within years. Indians are great at market integration of new technologies, potentially big for Israeli and Indian companies.

Politically, India 'normalises' Israel, just like it does Japan. To these historically crippled nations, India brings a clean slate. Jews have never been persecuted here, nor was Japan ever an enemy - without that historical baggage we are just 'regular' nations striving to maintain a certain way of life. That's why, even though China is a bigger trading partner and investor in Israel, India holds far greater promise.

Netanyahu will be in India before the year is out. It's time to look for the next big thing and this would breach the final frontier. Civil nuclear cooperation holds out great promise, and could be the next big thing. It's time to take that cooperation out of the basement.

dilbert



The Wonderful World Of Inspired Living

Jaya Row

We live in the best of times. We have lifestyles that are exciting, so many exotic locations to vacation in, and technology that makes life magical. Yet, in these exhilarating times, people are bored. In the past, generations of Indians were brought up on a diet of inspiration. This led to the glorious golden era of phenomenal prosperity as well as happiness that attracted people from across the world.

In a new culture obsessed with measuring talent and ability, we often overlook the important role of inspiration. Inspiration awakens us to new possibilities by enabling us to transcend our limitations. Inspiration is a breath-taking feeling of elevation, a burst of energy, an awareness of enlarged possibilities. This happens when you think beyond yourself. People look for

inspiration from outside. Wouldn't it be cool if on every single day you faced opportunities that could change your life? But every day is just another day. Inspiration does not find you. You've got to have the attitude of the inspired even when you don't have the circumstances. It is in your hands! This may sound like a responsibility but it is super empowering. It puts the ball in your court.

When you are not inspired, your thoughts gravitate to just, 'I, me, myself'. You develop a myopic vision and every little thing becomes an issue. You follow the dictum, 'It's my way or the highway' leading to conflict and loneliness in life. You believe it's you versus the universe. You create imaginary enemies and are consumed by hatred.

You may be super talented and rich, but if you are super selfish as well you

will neither be successful nor happy. Uninspired, you live a life bereft of enthusiasm, excitement and energy. You get stressed and depressed.

Inspiration is not driven by a desire for money, grades or status. The inspired person is driven intrinsically by the work itself. Inspiration is necessarily transcendent and transformative. You lose the sense of doership and agency. Inspiration can be infectious, too. The word itself comes from the Latin *inspirare*, meaning 'to breathe into'. One inspiring achievement tends to raise the sense of possibility in others.

Go beyond the world to find spiritual inspiration and you tap into the highest energy source. No obstacles come in your way and you become a powerhouse of infinite strength. We all have different physical attributes, emotional strengths and

intellectual capabilities. But everyone has equal measure of Atman, Spirit. Tap into Atman and you attain perfection.

Think beyond yourself. Expand your mind. After you must be the default setting in your mind. Fix a higher goal. Work energetically, enthusiastically, excitedly, yet detachedly, for the ideal. Enlarge your circle of love. When you learn the art of celebrating others' achievements as if they were your own, you never experience failure. Think beyond the universe. Marvel at nature. Reflect on the Permanent that runs through the impermanent world and exists beyond, in its pristine state. Gain knowledge of Vedanta - the science of self-management.

You will then experience a creative download. You will be successful in the world. You will gain happiness within. And you will grow spiritually.

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More Aware

When will you become spiritually aware? Ultimately spiritual awareness unfolds when you're flexible, when you're spontaneous, when you're detached, when you're easy on yourself and easy on others. That's when it happens!

Deepak Chopra