



**A thought for today**

*The opposition must have an agenda and it currently does not have one*

**NITISH KUMAR**

# Nitish's Tightrope

*He must change the political narrative in Bihar to stay relevant at the national level*

Bihar's governing Grand Alliance is fraying at the edges and could be on the verge of coming apart. Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar has made a name for himself due to his reputation for 'sushasan' or good governance, a component of which is cracking down on corruption. He now faces the challenge of grave charges of corruption brought against deputy chief minister (and Lalu Prasad's son) Tejashwi Yadav by CBI. Nitish has called on Tejashwi to respond to the charges against him. This has led to strained relations between Nitish's JD(U) and Lalu's RJD, indispensable partners in the Grand Alliance.

More evidence of the strain came last Saturday when Tejashwi stayed away from an official event, where he was to share the dais with Nitish in Patna. Both JD(U) and RJD appear content to place the ball in the other party's court rather than initiating a break itself; among other things, such a break could lead to a fall of the Bihar government and perhaps fresh assembly elections, at a time when neither party is sure of its political footing. Lalu has tried to placate Nitish by reiterating that the Grand Alliance is unbreakable, while pointing guns outwards as he exhorted his supporters to join him in a show



of strength at the BJP hatao desh bachao rally on August 27.

Between 2005 and 2011, Nitish sacked as many as four ministers over charges of corruption. This included protégé turned critic Jitan Ram Manjhi, who was made to resign due to a pending vigilance case against him. Nitish is therefore under pressure with respect to corruption charges against the Lalu family. Congress is now mediating between JD(U) and RJD, in an attempt to salvage the Grand Alliance.

Nitish must realise the alliance's fundamental flaw: that it is a marriage of disparate parties whose only cementing factor is the desire to contain BJP. Moreover, as opposed to earlier administrations headed by him this has been a lacklustre one, bereft of achievements and ideas other than populist ones such as prohibition. His best bet would be to come up with an aspirational agenda that appeals across parties, and eventually replace Congress - which is spent force - to play a pivotal role in national politics. That would also mean going back to what he does best: 'sushasan'.

# Strong Medicine

*Proposed regulation to check unethical practices of pharma companies and doctors is a good step*

Provision of modern healthcare is characterised by two unique features. There is significant information asymmetry between doctors and patients, and often the demand for medical treatment cannot be postponed. The outcome is malpractice, unless healthcare is carefully regulated. The government will take a stab at this with a regulation to end insidious links between pharmaceutical companies and doctors. The proposed regulation, Essential Commodities (Control of Unethical Practices in Marketing of Drugs) Order 2017, is expected to be notified soon. This is a welcome development, particularly in India where patients and their families have to bear most medical expenses.



The proposed regulation prohibits companies from offering doctors cash, gifts and paid vacations. The penalty for violations could range from penalties to temporary suspension of marketing of a drug. Given the intense competition for most drugs, a suspension is unlikely to have an adverse impact on the supply. Stronger steps are needed to discourage unethical practices. Following the ineffectiveness of attempts by MCI to regulate practices of doctors, government has been left with no choice except to create a framework to target and punish companies indulging in unethical marketing behaviour.

The efficacy of the new regulation will depend on its design. Thus far, attempts to curb unethical practices have not yielded satisfactory results. In this context, it makes sense to focus regulatory attention on companies as it is easier to make it mandatory for them to disclose more information on marketing expenditure. Other countries have got companies to provide granular details of expenditure on doctors, which is the first step towards introducing transparency in the relationship between doctors and pharmaceutical companies. The proposed regulation therefore is a good step and needs to be complemented by more measures to enhance transparency.

# Yadav & Sons Pvt Ltd

*Lalu Prasad was once photographed milking cows, now he's accused of milking the system*

**Sagarika.Ghose@timesgroup.com**



Bihar's original kanhaiya who famously said, "Jab tak samosa mein aloo hai, tab tak Bihar mein Lalu hai," finds himself eating some rather sour potato chips. For years while the price of the aloo went up and down, Lalu survived the ups and downs of political life. He led the Bihar revolution, sending the caste elite to the political guillotine and promising equality for all Biharis. But some became more equal than others and began to sing 'saala main toh saheb ban gaya.'

He was always cheeky; like when he declared he would make Bihar's roads as smooth as Hema Malini's cheeks. Now Lalu's fortunes have run into those erstwhile bad roads of Bihar as investigators accuse him and his family of accumulating benami property. The Yadav patriarch has been the Bihar voters' darling shepherd but the voting public no longer offers sheep-like loyalty.

His supporters say that under the comic act, Lalu is a political genius, the joker who always aces the political poker game. He was the cowherd prince long before the Sangh's recent gau raksha drive, but now as CBI and ED investigate him, have the cows finally come home for Lalu? For Indian netas, politics is a family business and Lalu seems no exception. That's why it's always appeared that India's social justice parties were only dispensing family-based injustice. Remember how Lalu once nominated his wife Rabri Devi as CM even as he administered his jagir from jail? That was a case of Bihar being imprisoned in family law.

Investigators say Lalu and his children acquired vast amounts of land. Even though he was once son of the soil, and always had happy landings, now it looks as if the ground has shifted under his feet. Lalu's tenure as railway minister was hailed by Harvard but it was that very tenure that appears to have derailed the Yadav wagon.

Lalu named his daughter Misa after the notorious Emergency - era law but is now suffering a family emergency even as son Tejashwi who played cricket for Delhi Daredevils could be caught and bowled. It's the agencies that are pressing charges, but Tejashwi's supporters are attacking the press. Lalu's most famous photo-op was the picture of him milking cows but he's now accused of milking the system. Even if Lalu survives this latest round of allegations, it's time there was an image makeover for the Secular Undivided Family.

# No Acche Din Soon

*Three years into Modi government, economic outlook is still cloudy*

**R Jagannathan**



There is an important parallel in the challenges faced by Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government two years before the general election and Narendra Modi's. In both cases, growth has been sluggish, though formal growth numbers on Modi's watch have been higher, possibly due to a change in the methodology of calculating GDP. In the Vajpayee era, growth was partly affected by a political decision he took in 1998 to conduct nuclear tests. This led to global sanctions and the economy bore the consequences.

In Modi's case, the growth retarding political moves involved lighting fires under tax evaders. He demonetised high value notes in November 2016, then pushed GST. We don't know if tax evaders got singed, but the first measure slowed down an already slowing economy.

The jury is out on ongoing implementation of GST but there is little doubt it will be a huge disruption, with consequences for short term growth. If we assume that the new tax regime will take most of the remaining nine months of fiscal 2017-18 to settle into a fine rhythm - and we are assuming it won't create a blowout, either politically or economically - we are left with just one year before general elections are held in 2019.

The big question is whether growth can revive even in 2018-19. The bigger question is whether reviving growth in the last year of a government's tenure will be enough to remind voters that 'acche din' are finally here.

That's another parallel with the Vajpayee years. After struggling with growth from 1998 to 2003 growth took off vertically only in 2003-04, but voters didn't start experiencing the gains at that point. As a result, the India Shining story didn't sell. Will the same happen for Modi, with the benefits of growth not being felt till it is too late for the voter to acknowledge it?

The Modi juggernaut has rolled



Gujarat and now. In his previous avatar as chief minister, he was happy to be seen with business and lauded for being business friendly. Not anymore. This is perhaps where Rahul Gandhi's "suit boot ki sarkar" jibe has had an impact. It has had consequences for growth.

The government has been wary of reviving bank lending by quickly recapitalising them after writing off unrecoverable loans, for fear of being seen as favouring big business. If around Rs 1 lakh crore had been provided for banks in the initial two years, by now bank lending would have been roaring, bringing back the animal spirits of India Inc. Instead, the government has opted for the longer term remedy of forcing the liquidation of bad businesses and seeking a slower resolution of bad loans, now in excess of Rs 7 lakh crore and set to rise even further in 2017-18.

Since the bulk of the recapitalisation will need to be done this year, it means government will have less fiscal muscle to invest in infrastructure and social spending. And if we assume that GST's first year will involve compensating states for revenue losses, Arun Jaitley's fiscal math is going to go for a toss. There will be very little headroom for a stimulus.

Third, while the central government itself will be standing firm on not announcing farm loan waivers the states are under no such restraint. Already UP, Punjab, Karnataka and Maharashtra have succumbed to pressure. Chhattisgarh has waived interest on farm loans, and in 2018 (another big election year) one can expect more bounties from MP and Rajasthan.

Put together, the Centre-state fiscal math is set to go out of control once more unless GST delivers an unexpected bonanza. This leaves little room for raising minimum support prices for farmers, making even a limited farm stimulus difficult in 2018-19.

It will need an economic miracle of sorts for the economy to be kicking in favour of a Modi wave in 2019. Growth is unlikely to revive early enough to give him a tailwind.

*The writer is Editorial Director of Suarajya*

## Modi has changed between Gujarat and now. Perhaps Rahul Gandhi's "suit boot ki sarkar" jibe has had an impact

schemes, one for illegal foreign assets and another for domestic undisclosed incomes, have not yielded any great tax bonanza. Nor has demonetisation. Additionally, the government has closed tax loopholes by renegotiating treaties with Mauritius, Cyprus and Singapore. This has had the net effect of crimping clandestine black money flows. While this is ethically laudable, it has made economic revival slower.

The negative effects of the clampdown on black money are front loaded, while the benefits, in the form of higher tax collections, will be backloaded. The price of a high focus on black money is slower short term growth.

Second, Modi has changed between

# 'India does not need Gopalkrishna Gandhi ... it needs an Indian who will make VP's post what S Radhakrishnan made it'

Former West Bengal governor **Gopalkrishna Gandhi**, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi and India's last governor general C Rajagopalachari, has been nominated by 18 opposition parties as their joint nominee for the post of vice-president in election to be held on August 5. A former IAS officer, Gandhi also had a distinguished diplomatic career serving as India's High Commissioner in South Africa and Sri Lanka and as Ambassador to Norway and Iceland. Gandhi spoke with **Rohit E David** on why he thinks this election matters, on missing out as a presidential nominee and the Modi government's performance:

## ■ Why does India need Gopalkrishna Gandhi as vice-president of the nation?

India does not need Gopalkrishna Gandhi as vice-president and Gopalkrishna Gandhi is perfectly happy to not be in any public office. But India needs an Indian citizen to be elected to that office who will make the vice-presidency what its first incumbent Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan made it: a flagstaff for the Republic's ethos, the Constitution's values and the aspirations of India's 36 states and Union territories.

## ■ Do you have any regrets about missing out as the united opposition's presidential nominee?

## Q&A

None whatsoever, for I was only one among many being considered for it. We have a highly experienced political leader nominated for the presidential election by a united opposition.

## ■ You have got support from 18 parties, how do you plan to get the required votes?

By urging all my prospective electors, across party lines, to remember that the election to the offices of president and vice-president requires them, under the vision of the Constitution, to vote as individual MPs with sovereign minds. They should be completely free of party whips. They can and should choose the candidate they think deserves that office.

## ■ As governor of West Bengal, you spoke your mind on the farmers' agitation that earned the ire of the then Left front government in the state. Now both Left parties and Trinamool Congress are supporting you. Your views on how politics has come a full circle?

I can only salute the far-sightedness and egolessness of those parties. They

have shown themselves to be truly national in the highest sense of the term.

## ■ You have stressed on the need for the country to keep secular values. How can this be achieved today?

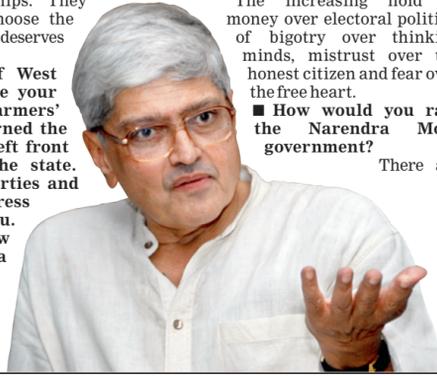
By stopping in its tracks any communal thought, word or deed, just as Mahatma Gandhi did with the three bullets that came hurtling towards him. Nehru did so on a countless number of occasions and Bhagat Singh told us to do so, in his last message to his people.

## ■ According to you what are some of the big crises the nation is facing?

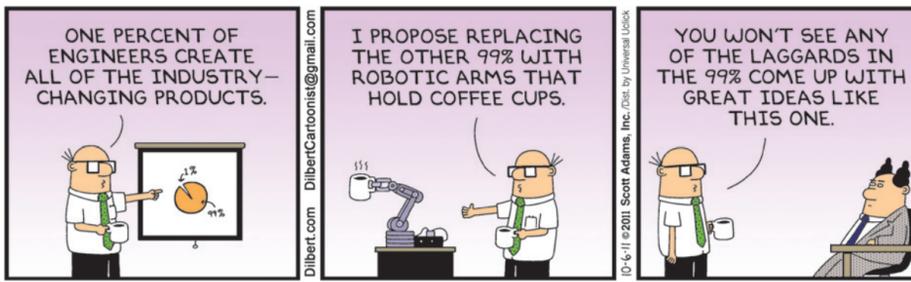
The increasing hold of money over electoral politics, of bigotry over thinking minds, mistrust over the honest citizen and fear over the free heart.

## ■ How would you rate the Narendra Modi government?

There are



## dilbert



**Sumit Paul**

It gets my goat when someone says that he's a "god-fearing person". "To be god-fearing is to be god-unloving because fear and love can't coexist," said Jiddu Krishnamurti. I have been an eternal non-believer, yet I believe that one must never be god-fearing, but god-loving. Fear is a negative emotion and anything that comes out of a negative feeling has a non-productive ramification.

There's a palpable negativism in the very word "fear". Fear engenders all that's undesirable. "If you believe in god out of fear, your faith has no foundation," Buddha said, when a man told him that because of fear, he believed in god. Fear and love are poles apart and they exist at the extreme opposite ends of a spectrum. In Christian or Biblical theology, there's a Greek word "agape". It means not just "divine love" but also

"a mutually loving relationship between god and all its (no gender) creatures, living or non-living".

Love and respect are spontaneous emotions. They must never be tainted with fear, because fear demeans and dwarfs love. Tagore wrote in a verse in Gitanjali: "I'm able to love my god because he gives me freedom to deny him." Fear closes all doors and makes a believer undesirably meek and submissive.

Fear is coercion. It forces one to kow-tow to a higher and greater worldly or spiritual authority. There's no natural or spontaneous willingness in that. Fear precludes one to love wholeheartedly and there's always some kind of a reservation in this type of a relationship with god or anyone in a mundane context. "Love me, fear me not," is god's request to mankind, wrote Jalaluddin

Rumi in one of his Masnavis. Love has no place for fear and vice versa. We're human beings, ergo, more evolved than animals. To love and be loved is the crux of human existence. In all activities and actions of human beings, the overwhelming presence of love is the leit motif. So why shouldn't it be the cardinal emotion while believing in the creator? Why should fear come and act as a spoilsport?

"The god that frightens is no god/ The god that loves, lives in a heavenly abode," wrote the poet, WB Yeats. We've desecrated god and his boundless love by worshipping him out of fear. Remember, fear is like a spear. It pierces and bleeds the possessor to death, whereas love is eternal life. Love resuscitates our dying and dwindling spirits. It gives us a new lease of life. True love makes you

## Sacredspace

*Seek Abundance*

*Make your potential count. Seek more from life. Seek abundance. Every tree, every flower has a season. Everyone will experience spring in their lives, not just once, but over and over.*

**Mahatria Ra**

# Why Love And Fear Cannot Coexist



*the speaking tree*

fearless and emancipates you from all niggling doubts. Remember, it's doubt that gives birth to fear. Love has no room for doubt, fear and trepidation. One approaches god with a doubtless and fearless heart in which love reigns supreme.

"Khauf se khuda khush nahin hota/ Muhabbat pahli shart hai aqeede ki" - God is not happy with fear/ Love is the primary condition of being a true believer. Walt Whitman aptly said in Leaves of Grass, "To love is to believe and to believe is to love."

If only, we all understood this simple principle of faith, the world and human beings would have been far better and much more loving. Alas, we're living in a constantly lurking penumbra of fear and apprehension.

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