

Nobody should be forced to sing Vande Mataram

SWAMINOMICS



SWAMINATHAN S ANKLESARIA AIYAR



FALSE NOTE: National anthems and patriotic songs should be instruments to unify people, not divide them

Among the worst examples of judicial overreach was last week's declaration by the Madras High Court that the singing of Vande Mataram should be made compulsory in schools, colleges and both government and private offices...

ancestry to Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's book, Anandamath, about a Hindu revolt against Muslim rulers. Was the song sung by millions of Muslims who participated in the independence movement?

When India gained independence, Vande Mataram was among the songs considered for the status of national anthem. But it was offensive to a large section of Muslims, and hence deemed inappropriate.

Many other songs were associated with the independence movement, including Subhash Chandra Bose's Dilli Chalo Re, which was possibly sung more widely than Vande Mataram.

It may be desirable to popularise all the songs associated with the independence movement. But why make their singing mandatory? Gandhiji would have said no.

Like the article: SMS MTMVSA <space> Yes or No to 58888 @ ₹3/sms

PEOPLE TEND TO BE REALLY HONEST IN GOOGLE SEARCHES

In a new book, economist and data scientist Seth Stephens-Davidowitz tries to answer questions about human behaviour by looking at our search habits. For example, how racist are people actually? Or, do searches on committing violent crime translate into actual crime?



set of who we are and we can use this data to turn calming an angry mob into a science. It is something we haven't previously been able to do.

Has the post-Snowden era led people to self-censor searches? Someone did a study after the Edward Snowden leaks, and there was a reduction in searches on sensitive topics.

FOR THE RECORD

es help people realise that everybody doesn't like this leader.

You found peculiar porn-viewing habits in India: an overwhelming number of people searched for how to breast-feed a husband. Was there any other data from the country that stood out?

Well, the big thing was the breastfeeding. Everyone I have talked to in India has been shocked by this. But a lot of the porn stuff is really more universal than I thought.

How honest are searches in countries with repressive surveillance regimes?

I'm actually just studying that now, so we will see. One does see that in Iran or parts of Russia where there is a lot of anti-gay attitude, gay porn searches are as high as anywhere else.

Your book has a case study on a speech by Barack Obama immediately after a terror attack. You saw how cues from the speech swung the volume of search terms from the negative 'Muslim terrorists' to a positive 'Muslim policemen'.

How Operation Bihar undercut the foundations of the anti-BJP alliance

RIGHT & WRONG



SWAPAN DASGUPTA

There was a time in the 1990s when the BJP leadership despaired of its own lack of a killer instinct in mounting political coups. No longer. Last week in Patna, the Narendra Modi-Amit Shah duo displayed an operational finesse that left both its friends and detractors awestruck.

and speculation over its impact on the 2019 general election, it is important to understand the quantum of devastation.

West Bengal is a good case study. On July 21, just five days before Nitish Kumar announced both his resignation and staked a claim to form another government, chief minister Mamata Banerjee had told her massed supporters in Kolkata that a "gonda" was ruling in Delhi and that she would use the next fortnight to kick the BJP out of West Bengal.

Yadav and even the CPM leadership were involved. The chief minister had herself taken the lead in ensuring a common candidate for the election of Vice President of India.

Politics, like many other activities, often operates in an echo chamber. Consequently, the devotees of Mamata can be forgiven for believing that India was veering towards a momentous political change that would see the ouster of a deeply unpopular Modi government by 2019 and the formation of a secular, grand alliance.

To these partisans, as well as others who are inclined to swim with the tide, the abrupt collapse of the Bihar mahagathbandhan that had decimated the BJP in 2015 was a shock. The shock was even more intense because Nitish Kumar chose to ally with the BJP rather than effect a compromise with Lalu Yadav.

of its natural life, why did a consummate politician such as Nitish Kumar choose to ally with it?

Dubbing the Bihar chief minister a crass opportunist was an insufficient explanation. If, as Mamata was fond of saying, all opposition politicians were being confronted with flimsy and manufactured charges of corruption, why did Nitish choose to rock the boat by making a big deal of the charges against Tejashwi Yadav?

The questions from the Bihar drama have disoriented the opposition. It is one thing to confront an electoral setback such as the Uttar Pradesh assembly outcome or even the NDA's resounding win in the presidential election.

larism is eminently negotiable, it has shown that the basis of opposition unity is neither ideological nor programmatic but based on a touching faith in simple electoral arithmetic.

It is facile to claim that the developments in Bihar have settled the outcome of the 2019 general election. Two years is a long time in politics.

Like the article: SMS MTMVSOG <space> Yes or No to 58888 @ ₹3/sms

Complacency kills: What Indian IT can learn from Japan, Korea

BY INVITATION



VIVEK WADHWA

Japan and Korea were at the top of the world in the '80s and '90s, rising from war-ravaged economies to the ranks of the "developed" nations. Their companies became global powerhouses, and corporate executives became confident and assertive.

I have found the CEOs of Japanese and Korean companies today to be the most attentive and determined of any of the hundreds of executives I have taught all over the world. They are acutely aware of what the World Economic Forum calls the fourth industrial revolution, and are eager to learn about technologies that will enable them to leap into the future and rebuild their competitive advantage.

And what about Indian executives? If they were my students, I would call them "duffers". This is not because of their intelligence and skill — they are amongst the smartest in the world — but because of their overconfidence and insularity.

This is so because a wide range of technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), computing, genomics, robotics, and sensors, are advancing at exponential rates and converging. They are making it possible to build robots that assemble circuit boards; to create AI that can drive cars; to edit genes to eliminate hereditary diseases and create drought-resistant plants; and to replace fossil fuels with inexpensive clean energy.

Take the example of Amazon, which started as an online bookstore. It now rakes in 43% of all online retail sales in the US. With its acquisition of Whole Foods, it is expanding beyond the digital realm, into brick and mortar.

Such disruptions are happening everywhere now, and incumbents are being caught off-guard. The taxi industry was, with the arrival of Uber and Ola. The entertainment industry was, by Netflix and Apple.

The problem for the incumbent market leaders is that they are not ready for this disruption; many are in denial. Look at the shockwaves that the retrenchments in the Indian IT industry are generating. The writing has been on the wall for several years to indicate that the Western markets are changing and that large IT outsourcing contracts are disappearing along with the mainframe computers they supported.

Corporate executives tend to believe that their past successes mean they can succeed in the future; that old business models can support new products. Large companies are usually organised into divisions and functional silos, each with its own product development, sales, marketing, customer-support, and finance functions.



DISRUPTORS: Insular and overconfident Indian executives are about to have the rug pulled from under their feet

This is why the majority of today's leading companies are likely to go the way of Blockbuster, Motorola, and Kodak, all of which were at the top of their game until their markets were disrupted, sending them toward oblivion.

With disruption comes opportunity. The advancing technologies are creating opportunities in everything from improving decision-making with AI, to using sensors to create smart cities and medical devices, to creating robotic manufacturing plants, to fine-tuning agriculture with data and sensors.

Wadhwa is a Distinguished Fellow and professor at Carnegie Mellon University's College of Engineering

Like the article: SMS MTMVCOL <space> Yes or No to 58888 @ ₹3/sms

RHYME & REASON AMIT VARMA

SPIN AND TURN

Ashwin and Jadeja felt the burn. Ash said, 'Amit, I feel great concern. We could be in the bin. Modi's so good at spin, and Nitish is a master of turn.'

SHARAAFAT

Nauaz Sharif is out of the game. I asked, 'Tell me bro, who is to blame?' He said, 'Amit, don't poke. It's all a cosmic joke. See the damn irony in my name!'

INBOX

Missed opportunity

Aakar Patel's diatribe against the RSS and BJP, and his unsolicited advice to Congress has come too late in the day ('Vaghela's exit an opportunity for Congress...', July 23). Congress's fate was decided when it failed to field a competent all-India leader to take on Narendra Modi before the 2014 general election.

Shreekrishna Phadnis, Mumbai

Bovine love

I am so happy that someone has finally spoken out on behalf of the cow (Shobha De's 'Confessions of a desi cow', July 23). The cow is an essential part of our ecosystem and we need to respect and accept her, whether we pray to her or not.

Ali Khwaja, Bengaluru

Email the editor at sunday.times@timesgroup.com with 'Sunday Mailbox' in the subject line. Please mention your name and city

Nitish keeps kursi, but will be a loser in the long run

BY INVITATION



SABA NAQVI

If someone were to hold a gun to my head and say you have three choices: vote for Narendra Modi, Nitish Kumar or a bullet between your eyes, I'd definitely choose to live and in my current frame of mind maybe choose Modi over Nitish. For I would at least know what I am getting.

Nitish may retain the chair of CM of Bihar for a while, but it's only a matter of time before the BJP encircles him, chews him up and if he is not required as the mukhauta (mask) for their Patna dispensation, make no mistake, they will spit him out.

More damaging for Nitish, there's no good reason why people should trust him as he has in effect gone against the campaign line of 2015. It's possible that they may stick with him since the opposition is in bad shape: Lalu Yadav and family may end up in jail (or at least protracted legal battles) and the Congress is in a position where there appears to be nothing left to lose.

Indeed, the entire morality play of Nitish being holier than thou was meant for the audience of intellectual pundits outside Bihar and necessary only as long as the CM had national ambitions. Clearly they are over and he has metaphorically fallen at the feet of Modi and thanked him for tweeting in his support.

There's a bit of a mystery as to why Nitish has walked into a coup so clearly masterminded by the BJP. True, he has worked harmoniously with the BJP for decades. I was in fact present at the modest ceremony in the courtyard of Rashtrapati Bhavan when the process began as Nitish was sworn in as a minister in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government of 1998.

Subsequently, it was the BJP that actually enabled his growth in terms of money and resources and helped position him as an alternative

to Lalu, when the latter ran out of the social justice steam and got embroiled in the fodder scam. In campaign after campaign it would be junior partner BJP that would pick up the logistical costs such as paying for hired helicopters used for electioneering.

But the BJP of that era gave great room and respect to allies as it never imagined the party could get a simple majority on its own. Vajpayee was an amiable sort of individual, lacking in ruthlessness, while L K Advani, the real strategist, believed in the process of incremental growth with the help of crutches in the form of allies in the states.

The BJP today is vastly different. It holds every constitutional office, determines the mainstream media narrative and it does not lean on allies but gradually takes over their space, as has happened with the AGP in Assam and is happen-



ALLIES AGAIN: A reversal in power equations means Nitish may not be in a position to dictate terms

ing with the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. From 2005 to 2013, Nitish kept his ally in check and determined the narrative of the state where he did indeed improve the law and order situation. Now there's a reversal in the power equation: Nitish is at the mercy of a resurgent BJP and is not in a position to dictate terms to them.

It, therefore, suits the BJP to diminish Nitish and they will work towards that end. They can bring him down when they want or continue till 2020 when the term of the current assembly ends. It's all touch and go for Nitish but now he has nowhere to go without the BJP. He would therefore be hoping that Narendra Modi has mercy on him. Maybe another tweet will lift his morale.

Like the article: SMS MTMVCOL <space> Yes or No to 58888 @ ₹3/sms