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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

# The case for lateral entry



There should be a system of annual recruitment into the IAS of mid-career professionals from diverse sectors

DUVVURI SUBBARAO AND GULZAR NATARAJAN

## FOREIGN HAND, AGAIN

Niti Aayog's new vice-chairman revives a longago spectre that is out of place in the modern economy

IN FEBRUARY 2015, a month after the Niti Aayog was set up, a government document set out the new agency's vision: "Today, we live in a global village, connected by modern transport, communications and media, and networked international markets and institutions. As India contributes to global dynamics, it is also influenced by happenings far removed from our borders. This continuing integration with the world needs to be incorporated into our policy-making as well as functioning of the government". Two-and-a-half years later, the agency's new vice-chairman, Rajiv Kumar, appears to be spelling out a rather different outlook. "A key transformation taking place on the policy-front in the current Central government led by Narendra Modi is that the colour of foreign influence, especially Anglo-American, on the Indian policy making establishment that came in the last few decades is fading away," he wrote in a column in the Hindi daily *Dainik Jagran*, while referring to the resignation of his predecessor, Arvind Panagariya.

If the Niti Aayog's 2015 document signaled a measure of welcome alacrity in responding to the imperatives of globalisation, its new vice-chairperson's complaint against "imported experts" augurs an insularity unhealthy for the institution. In the article, in which he also questions the influence of multilateral institutions like the IMF and World Bank, Kumar talks of a new era in policymaking where "we may see experts being posted who understand India's ground realities in a much better manner". He cites the example of China which has always listened to the experience of the World Bank and the IMF but formulated its policies keeping in mind its goals and ground realities. Being informed about the complexities of local situations should, of course, be the bare-bones of all policymaking. But the assumption that only home-grown expertise can unravel such complexities — and its corollary, that exposure to foreign academia or global governance institutions is ipso facto pernicious — is deeply problematic. Kumar's inferences about the IMF, World Bank and foreign universities hark back to conspiracy theories which should have been put to rest by the country's successful tryst with globalisation.

One of the mandates of the Niti Aayog is to build on the successes of the past 25 years as well as to prepare the country for the changing demands of a globalised economy. Several of the government's policies and imperatives — GST, Make in India, Swachh Bharat, Sustainable Development Goals, climate change targets — demand a sounding board that is informed and influenced by international best practices as well as alive to local necessities. The Niti Aayog's vision document signaled its confidence to take on that role. But by invoking the phantom of the foreign hand, the Aayog's new vice-chairman does his institution a disservice.

## HATE AND SPEECH

Arrest of ex-Kerala DGP is a misuse of hate speech provisions, reeks of state arbitrariness

THE ARREST OF a former DG of Kerala police last week on charges of promoting communal enmity is a case of gross misuse of the law. The state police had booked T.P. Senkumar under Section 153(A) of the IPC, a legal provision against hate speech, for remarks he made in an interview to a Malayalam magazine in July, soon after he retired from service. In the interview, Senkumar presented what appeared to be a prejudiced view of the state's Muslim community. He claimed that population growth in the state was skewed in favour of Muslims and that a section in the community promoted religious conversion through "love jihad". Coming from an individual who had led the police force in the state, his views, predictably, stoked a controversy.

Senkumar's views are undoubtedly controversial, even bigoted. That a person who lacks a nuanced understanding of religion, sensitivity to communal concerns and the complexity of social relations headed the state police is indeed a cause for concern. However, to book him under hate speech provisions is uncalled for. It could be said that Senkumar's narrow-minded notions of Muslims and Islamist politics in Kerala have a wider resonance in a climate that emboldens majoritarian assertions and encourages intolerance. Yet, such views cannot be banished by wielding hate speech laws. They call for greater political engagement and debate. Skewed ideas about communities will have to be confronted with arguments and facts. It is undemocratic to demand the curtailment of the right to freedom of expression by raising the spectre of communal disharmony.

In Senkumar's case, the police action appears doubly dubious since the former DGP has a fraught relationship with the ruling regime. The Left government had removed him from the DGP's post after it won the election last year. Senkumar moved the court and was reinstated as DGP on the orders of the Supreme Court ahead of his retirement. Now the criminal case against him rests on slippery ground also because he was booked a month after his remarks appeared in the public domain. Senkumar's remarks need to be challenged in the public sphere, not through criminal action.

## DODO IN SILICON VALLEY

Memo at Google justifying gender discrimination mirrors a striving to turn the clock back to a time of patriarchal privilege

THERE ARE IDEAS whose time has long since passed. Yet they resurface, using inconsistent arguments and manufactured facts to defend bigotry and discrimination. A leaked 10-page internal memo by an employee at Google, titled "Google's Ideological Echo Chamber", attempts to justify gender imbalance and systemic discrimination in the workplace by stating "men and women biologically differ in many ways" and that "Women, on average, have more Neuroticism (higher anxiety, lower stress tolerance)". Google, which was accused of gender pay discrimination by the US labour department earlier this year, has distanced itself from the memo.

While it is tempting to dismiss the pseudo-science and bigotry of the memo as the rant of a single individual, its underlying assumptions are commonly deployed by the guardians of the status quo. The idea is simple: Social and economic discrimination is "naturalised" as is the privilege of those that gain from it. Using this basic format, injustices, from the caste system to slavery as well as colonialism and gender discrimination, have been justified. At the same time, this tendency has been constantly brought into question, even when the intellectual tools to do so were unavailable. Plato, for example, while subscribing to the patriarchal beliefs of his time and place nevertheless argued for women to be soldiers and leaders in *The Republic*. And Friedrich Engels in *The Origin of Family, Private Property and State*, managed, as early as in 1884, to establish the underlying relationship between property and gender relations. Why then, after all this time and multiple waves of feminism, are arguments which ought to have gone the way of the dodo appearing in Silicon Valley?

In 2016, the Elephant in the Valley survey found that 60 per cent of the women working in Silicon Valley received unwanted sexual advances and 87 per cent witnessed demeaning comments from colleagues. Earlier this year, Uber's CEO Travis Kalanick resigned after stories of harassment and discrimination in the company came to light. Ideas like those in the Google document are a poor attempt to turn the clock back to when patriarchal privilege could display itself with impunity. And they use the oldest trick in the book: Blaming the victim.

FEW ISSUES IN civil service reform arouse more passion and acrimony than lateral entry into the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). It is talked about, off and on, both within the government and outside, but has not been acted upon. We believe it is an idea whose time has not only come, but one which is overdue.

The case for lateral entry is strong. First, the IAS has been designed for the pre-reform India of a dominant state. The logic of economic reforms that began in 1991 is for the state to yield space to the market; as we deepen reforms, it becomes even more imperative for the government to understand the impact of its policies on stakeholders — the private sector, the non-government sector and the larger public. The IAS officers, on the other hand, see the government only from within. Sure, there are efforts to reach out to the stakeholders, but is that an adequate substitute to having within the government itself, people who have "experienced" the government from the outside?

Second, IAS officers get recruited at a very young age when it is difficult to test potential administrative and judgement capabilities. Indeed, experience has shown that the IAS examination is prone to both, what statisticians call type I and type II errors; some who are potentially good administrators fail to make it, and some who do make it, fall short of the requirements. Mid-career lateral entrants with proven capabilities will help bridge this deficiency.

Third, career progression in the IAS is almost automatic. Notwithstanding sporadic efforts to introduce meritocracy, very few get weeded out for poor performance. The only penalty, if at all, for failing to make the grade, is fringe postings. Lateral entry is necessary to push the IAS out of their comfort zone and challenge them.

It is not as if lateral entry has not been tried out. It has, but only at the margins. Both the Central government and many state governments have appointed advisers and consultants on an ad-hoc basis, for fixed tenures or even on an open-ended basis. Indeed some of them, recruited into the Finance Ministry, the Reserve Bank, the erstwhile

A distinguishing feature of the IAS, indeed one that is their claim to pre-eminence even among other civil services, is their field experience. This cutting-edge level exposure comes in very handy as IAS officers move up the ladder to policy-making at the highest levels. Some of the Delhi policy mandarins from outside the IAS have never seen a village school or a gram panchayat office. That is not just embarrassing; it is dysfunctional. The lateral entrants should, therefore, have mandatory 'district immersion', serving at least five of their first 10 years in field postings.

Planning Commission and more recently into public enterprises, have distinguished themselves. C. Rangarajan and Montek Singh Ahluwalia, just to name two, have been stellar successes. However, the larger experience from such lateral entry has not been happy. Lateral entrants have struggled to fit into "the system" and understand the processes and dynamics of government decision-making. They have complained of hostility from the IAS network which, they believe, sets them up for failure. "The system", a metaphor for the IAS, in turn, sees lateral entrants as adversaries who have made their way in, not through an open competitive examination like they have, but because of privilege and connections.

What we propose, instead, is an institutionalised system of annual recruitment into the IAS of mid-career professionals from diverse career paths. They could be in the 43-46 years age group. And the qualifications should not be too prescriptive in order to privilege proven talent over paper qualifications. The Union Public Service Commission should design the examination to test analytical skills, maturity of judgement and personality traits.

Lateral entrants too, like the regular recruits, should be allotted to state cadres, and their inter-se seniority should be determined in such a way that the interests of regular entrants and lateral entrants are balanced.

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This proposed institutionalised entry will turn the IAS cadre top-heavy. This can be mit-

igated by weeding out a quarter of the poorest performing regular entrants at the end of 15 years so that they yield space for lateral entrants. Admittedly, such weeding out has to be done based on transparent and contestable criteria so that the rules of the game are known before the play starts.

Lateral entry will bring in much-needed outside experience, buffer the talent within the administration and challenge the IAS into continuous self-improvement. Since the lateral entrants will come through an open competitive examination, they will be as much a part of "the system" as the regular entrants, giving no scope for the adversarial relationship seen with ad-hoc lateral entrants. Besides, the criticism that lateral entrants cherry-pick their jobs, enjoy a system of revolving doors, come to burnish their CVs, or in some cases even to promote private interests from within the government, will have no ground.

Institutionalised lateral entry should be complemented with allowing regular IAS officers to specialise in sectors over time as well as encouraging them to work outside the government for limited periods. This will enable them to compete on an equal footing with lateral entrants.

We want to emphasise that we should not throw away the baby with the bathwater. There is a lot to be said for continuing to recruit young people into the IAS. They bring in youthful spirit, raw enthusiasm and unspoiled enterprise into administration. Many of the major programmes that have been mainstreamed across the country such as the mid-day meal, the employment guarantee scheme or even the right to information are the brainchild of sporadic experiments by these young IAS officers somewhere in the vast hinterland of the country.

Yet, an institutionalised lateral entry into civil service will help the government have the best of both youth and experience and take the system closer to the goal of "minimum government, maximum governance".

*Subbarao, former RBI governor, is a retired IAS officer. Natarajan is a serving IAS officer. Views are personal*



YOGINDER K ALAGH

IN MYTHOLOGICAL LORE which goes for a lot of ancient Indian history, but which is that we have, India was called a *sona ki chidiya*, the golden bird. She was largely invaded from the north-west. Being born in the foothills of the salt range of what is now Pakistan, my ancestors fought the invader and looted him when he returned with the riches of the great kingdoms to the east and south. It is interesting that in issues which relate with the security of India at the most serious level, worried as our ruling groups are over domestic anti-national threats to security, hardly any attention has been paid to the Chinese encirclement of India, dismissed as "nothing very serious".

The Doklam issue is by itself, as the external affairs minister said, not of any great significance and may settle down to face-to-face confrontation. But the selection of geography is fascinating. Defending a road in Bhutan is not a question that the world gets excited about. But it is one of those issues where India's security gets involved in the fundamental sense of the pursuit of the national interest. India is tied to Bhutan with inextricable links. These go in the name of culture and shared historical experience through the centuries. The Chinese know this link since they have played these sentiments in a big way in Tibet, Hong Kong and Macau. Our reaction to the event is muted and that is strange because you can imagine what would happen if India raises churlish

## DANGERS OF COMPLACENCY

India's nonchalant response to external and internal challenges is disquieting

issues in Hong Kong or Macau. One can only look forward to a more serious reaction from the security establishment, in hopefully measured words or what are sometimes called non-papers.

In the Belt and Road initiative, the 2013 version of China's transport corridor, India's essential interest lies in keeping both Gwadar and Bandar Abbas open for energy supply to it from Central Asia. The most optimistic energy forecasts for India with renewable sources including hydel, nuclear and solar still leave substantial gaps. China building the transport links to Gwadar is going to create an environment which should be of concern to us. Our nonchalance is disquieting. Meanwhile, Iran has fired the first salvo amongst the oil producers of the Middle East with an angry establishment comment on goings-on in India and the cosiness with Israel and therefore no special deals on oil purchases as in the past. What is our strategy to ensure energy supplies at reasonable rates?

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Deterioration of the growth prospects this year is again an issue facing a silent wall. It is left to the sagely Nomura and the chief economist of the World Bank to say that 7 per cent or more growth is not on and even 6 per cent is now being questioned. Of course, "8 per cent" went with Arvind Panagariya. The MET department was right in saying that kharif rains, somewhat late, will be around the long period average. But

they should not forecast output. Delayed sowing has an impact. There was a big shortfall in the southern region, fluctuating at around a sixth of expected rainfall until August. High rainfall in the north west and western UP, which are largely irrigated, matters a lot less than the deficit in the dry Deccan plateau. In fact, the forecast for these areas for August is poor and after that, of course, the fate of the kharif will be sealed. It is important that the establishment recognises this and helps the states in salvaging what they can. Rainfall now will also help in retained moisture for rabi and a strong rabi campaign is called for.

The manufacturing sector is again showing that low growth is now the "normal". The new index helped in measuring higher growth for recent years as against earlier lows for the same period with the old index. This column has noted this trend since March. But the June numbers with the new index of industrial production show that growth is only 0.4 per cent as compared to a figure of 7 per cent in June 2016. Tinkering with the interest rate will not bring about the turnaround. Fiscal policy has to be expansionist at this stage. It seems so obvious that one wonders what the policymakers are waiting for. Growth once foregone is lost forever.

*The writer, a former Union minister, is chancellor, Central University of Gujarat*



## AUGUST 9, 1977, FORTY YEARS AGO

TARGET MRS GANDHI THE EFFORTS BEING made by Mrs Gandhi's supporters to enable her to play a dominant role in the affairs of the Congress suffered another setback with Y.B. Chavan, leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party and Brahmananda Reddy, Congress President, making it clear that the party could no longer be allowed to function on the basis of personality cult. Chavan and Reddy, who have of late joined hands in their attempt to keep Mrs Gandhi at bay, chose the valedictory meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party for making their views known on the question. Chavan said that no individual was important. What was important was the

Congress party. He added that if anyone symbolised the party leadership it was the Congress president. The CPP leader went on to say that the Congress had become great not because of any individual's contribution, but because it was built up by its workers over the years. No dispute about leadership would arise if the party's institutional instruments — the Congress Working Committee and the Congress Parliamentary Board — functioned. Mrs Gandhi's supporters have been campaigning that the concept of collective leadership, which was evolved at the AICC session should not mean exclusion of Mrs Gandhi from the party's decision-making process.

### CONG LEADER QUILTS

K. HANUMANTHAIYA, FORMER Union minister for railways, announced his decision to resign from the Congress. He said he would decide on his future plan after consulting friends and well-wishers. He added that Janata Party leaders including Raj Narain called him and invited him to join the party.

### CABINET RESHUFFLE

PRIME MINISTER MORARJI Desai is likely to expand his cabinet by inducting 25 junior ministers — 20 as ministers of state and five as deputy ministers. The ministry has 19 cabinet ministers. He may also utilise the opportunity to reshuffle portfolios.

# 15 THE IDEAS PAGE

## Paradox of the vote

By granting instant universal suffrage, India gave itself a nation-building tool. But it also hurt state-building and state-capacity



SWATI RAMANATHAN AND RAMESH RAMANATHAN

THE AUTHORS OF India's Constitution took the extraordinarily bold step of giving all adult citizens the right to vote, making India the world's first large democracy to adopt universal adult suffrage from its very inception. We call India's move "instant universal suffrage", to distinguish it from "incremental suffrage", when the vote is extended more gradually — what happened in nearly all Western democracies.

We claim that instant universal suffrage has been key to India's national survival — a point that the vast literature on Indian democracy surprisingly overlooks. But we also argue that it has weakened the Indian state's capacity to deliver public goods. This is the paradox of instant universal suffrage: A great nation-building and nation-preserving tool, but one that has hurt state-building and state capacity. The incremental extension of suffrage in the manner seen in US or British history might have strengthened state capacity in India. But it would have risked the very survival of India as a nation.

Alexander Keyssar, in his book, *The Right to Vote*, described the long journey to universal adult suffrage in the US, one replete with conflicts of both interests and ideas. "Admit this equal right," John Adams wrote, "and an immediate revolution would ensue. Women will demand a vote, and every man, who has not a farthing, will demand an equal voice." These arguments were topics of wide public debate. Large cultivators wanted to keep the franchise narrow, while tenant farmers and labourers (not to mention African Americans and women) fought for the expansion of political rights. Similarly, landowners preferred to see the franchise depend on freehold ownership, while city dwellers and shopkeepers wanted taxpaying qualifications. Only in the 1960s did the US cross the final frontiers of universal adult suffrage.

In the United Kingdom, the path to universal suffrage was equally tortuous. The 1832 passage of the First Reform Act was the result of a long political battle. A government (led by the hero of Waterloo, the Duke of Wellington, as prime minister) had fallen over the issue, and there had been widespread protests — to extend the franchise to barely 18 per cent of adult men. The Second Reform Act, which passed in 1867, boosted that figure to 32 per cent. In 1918, late in the First World War, Parliament extended the franchise to women aged 30 and who could meet minimal property qualifications, as well as all men 21 and above. Ten years after that, all women 21 and over received the right to vote.

The processes of incremental suffrage expansion shaped the political systems of these countries in many ways. They defined the (changing) priorities of elected governments. This in turn framed the capacities of public institutions, to deliver on these priorities. As new priorities arose (with new voter demands), public institutions had to be created or overhauled to suit them. Along with this came issues related to accountability: Were these institutions delivering on government priorities? What could voters do to hold governments and public institutions answerable, not only at election time, but all the time?



CR Sasikumar

The fight to expand voting rights also taught different classes and groups profound lessons in the areas of mobilisation and political competition. All groups — the propertied and privileged, the middle classes, the poor and marginalised, and various minorities — learned to forge alliances and reach accommodations in service of their goals.

In sharp contrast to the Western slow-walk of incrementalism, India made a giant political leap, vaulting straight into universal adult suffrage with none of the intervening conflicts. Under the British, only a small share of India's population — never more than 12 per cent — had received voting rights, primarily in two large-scale elections: First in 1937 to choose legislative bodies for eleven provinces of British India, and the second in 1945-46. The "princely" states — which held about a fourth of India's population — had virtually no elections before Independence.

Against this background of almost no voting until 1947, the practice of universal suffrage had by the 1950s become fully established across the country. The transition came with jaw-dropping speed: Before Indians could even get used to the idea of elections, they were going to the polls regularly to fill numerous national and state legislative seats. In the 70 years since, Indians have voted in thousands of elections across national, state and local levels, casting billions of votes — a remarkable testament to the endurance of our electoral democracy.

Starting points matter, and political systems the world over evolve in path-dependent ways. Just as incremental suffrage shaped the political systems of those countries where it was the rule, so has instant universal suffrage had a unique impact on India. In our view, instant universal suffrage has weakened the capacity of India's public institutions.

The challenges of nation-building in 1947 and beyond — enduring the massive violence and population displacements of Partition, stitching the various princely states into the Union, ratifying the Constitution, setting up state governments, surviving wars with China and Pakistan, coping with insurgencies — put a premium on the design and functioning of national institutions, and that too with minimal accountability. India's bureaucracy was a continuation of the British Raj. It was more a machine for keeping order than an instrument of development attuned to citizens' demands. In 1947, moreover, barely 18 per cent of Indian voters were literate. People were just learning to vote, let alone grasping how government worked and laying out coherent demands to keep government accountable.

With so much focus on national priorities, governance capacities in the states suffered, especially related to education and health. Another critical deficiency arose at the local level. Here, the source of resistance was B.R. Ambedkar himself. A friend of robust governance at the Central and state levels, he

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nonetheless retained a deep suspicion of rural panchayats, that they would serve upper-caste interests, or of those with land and education. India's cities felt the effects of instant universal suffrage as well, with insufficient voting muscle in a predominantly rural democracy to generate serious pressure for strong urban governments.

A regime of incremental suffrage extension would likely have empowered local institutions and built their capacities. A heavily upper- and middle-class electorate would have focused on local provision of public goods such as healthcare, education, civic facilities, and the like. Empowered, educated, and tax-paying elite and middle-class voters would have demanded routine and systematic accountability as well, as they did in incremental suffrage regimes. As the electorate widened gradually, public institutions would have had time to grow and improve with a commensurate deliberateness. All this would almost surely have made governance more effective, but at the heavy cost to democracy of giving upper-caste biases and arrangements ample time and opportunity to cement themselves in place.

Yet all this will remain in the realm of the speculative. What actually happened in India was something different altogether. The government did not receive time to build capacity gradually. Instead, it was expected to provide basic public goods right from the outset, and quickly failed at this overwhelming task. Seeing this, the upper and middle classes backed away, choosing private services and giving up the idea of demanding that government meet their needs in the areas of education, healthcare, transportation, or the like.

The consequences have been major, and — most importantly — are ongoing. For one, they shape public-service provision (or its lack) today, and will continue to do so into the future. The withdrawal of the middle class and elites from seeking public provision of such key public goods as education and healthcare, for instance, has made the emergence of a US- or European-style welfare state unlikely in India. Instead, India will probably witness the creation of new "partnership" mechanisms driven by state obligations to citizens but non-state provision of these services. These arrangements will still place different demands on state capacity: To establish and enforce such joint arrangements.

Whether the Indian state can rise to this challenge remains to be seen. Over the coming decades, the answer to this question will have significant implications for the trajectory of development of the world's largest democracy — an improbable path set in motion by one profound choice at our national inception: Instant universal suffrage.

The writers are co-founders of *Jana Group*. This is a condensed version of a paper in the July 2017 issue of the *Journal of Democracy*.

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"If the Narendra Modi government continues ignoring the warning coming from a situation spiraling out of control, countermeasures from China will be unavoidable."

—GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

## The hybrid route

An incremental, technology-neutral approach to the adoption of electric vehicles is the way forward



SURAJIT MITRA

THE AUTOMOTIVE industry and its ecosystem the world over is poised for a radical change with the increasing need to shift to non-fossil fuel based energy for cleaner transportation to protect the environment. This poses a big challenge for policymakers — retaining the competitiveness of domestic industry during the transition.

India deserves a pat on the back for the radical transformation from a minor manufacturer of automobiles to the fastest growing auto-hub within a short span by adopting a consistent, well thought out Automotive Mission Plan 2006-2016 (AMP). Continuous nurturing coupled with a progressive policy has led to India emerging as the fifth largest automobile manufacturing country in the world with the auto sector contributing 7 per cent to the GDP and nearly 49 per cent to the manufacturing GDP. The auto industry provides direct and indirect employment to 32 million people with an annual turnover of nearly Rs 6,00,000 crore and 20 million vehicles manufactured per year. This success has been possible without the adoption of coercive policies for localisation of production as is done in China. Positive engagement with global giants was key to establishing a globally competitive manufacturing base in India. This led to the fast and seamless transfer of technology and skill development and the ambitious AMP target of Rs 1,57,500 crore investment was exceeded. This was a modest beginning to the Make in India story which is a national mission under the current government.

The world is still largely dependent on fossil fuels for transportation but there is now an increased momentum towards alternate energy sources. Besides the environment, India also has strategic and economic interest in shifting away from fossil fuels. In this context, electric mobility is seen as the way forward. The challenge ahead is not only on how to expedite electric mobility but also to take the industry forward without losing India's current competitive advantage.

Electric mobility has multiple options which include pure electric vehicles (BEVs) that use energy stored in batteries obtained from the grid, hybrid electric vehicles (HEVs), plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) and fuel cell vehicles (FCVs). Due to existing limitations, the fast adoption of electric vehicles needs policy interventions and support from the government. Unlike China, India has not invested in technology, particularly for the production of batteries. China has been aggressively pushing for electric vehicles through huge government funding only after establishing a competitive industry for producing lithium ion batteries, motors, controllers, etc. It is a strategic imperative for China to give a big push to electric vehicles in spite of continuing domestic consumer resistance. China aspires to become the biggest exporter of

electric vehicles and its components in the world.

Today, there is a clear divide amongst Indian policymakers regarding the right path for the adoption of electric mobility. One set of policy advocates plead for a "transformational approach" to aggressively promote only BEVs, excluding all other forms of electric mobility technologies. They prescribe lower taxes for BEVs, investments for the overnight establishment of charging infrastructure, facilitation of battery-swapping business models and the setting up of advanced lithium ion battery manufacturing facilities at an unprecedented scale. The fatal flaw in this "energy only" approach is that India, unlike China, does not have the indigenous technology for batteries and other components and will be critically dependent on imports, particularly from China. Secondly, such huge infrastructure cannot come up so quickly and will also involve significant improvement in the existing electric distribution infrastructure. Further, with the existing energy generation mix in India, the overall well-to-wheel carbon emissions of BEVs are not better than HEVs. As such, this may well merely shift the emissions away from cities to regions that produce power.

Global experience indicates that most countries, barring China, have adopted a technology-neutral approach and supported the full range of electric vehicle technologies till such time that they attained market acceptability. This technology agnostic strategy helps market forces determine the optimum technology and allows for the domestic industry and customers to shift to cleaner technologies without disruption. It is based on the fact that HEVs and PHEVs do not compete but rather complement and support faster adoption of BEVs. That is because all these technologies have similar components that can together create necessary volumes to bring down the prices of these components. This inclusive approach accommodates segments like larger vehicles with usage patterns of long distance travel, higher payload etc., which cannot be served by BEVs. Moreover, this also prevents policymakers from placing all their resources in BEVs.

Past experience has established, given the huge success of AMP, that the right approach is the "pragmatic-incremental approach" which will allow India to build on the achievements made so far. Instead of a "one size fit all" electric mobility policy, there is a need for a differential approach that factors in the segment-wise ease to BEV adoption. The government should push more aggressively for the BEV option for two-wheelers and three-wheelers and support the full range of electric technologies for other vehicle segments with a clear roadmap for the evolution towards FCVs. In this context, putting hybrid vehicles in the highest GST bracket is, at best, baffling as it will only encourage consumers to buy petrol/diesel cars. Hopefully, to reduce fossil fuel consumption, lower pollution and encourage electric mobility, a more holistic approach will be adopted.

The writer, a former secretary to Gol and former vice chancellor of the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, is also the architect of the AMP



ANIL BALUNI

## The remaking of BJP

In three years under Amit Shah, party has not played second fiddle to government

IN THE last three years, the BJP has been on a remarkable journey. While the party romped home in the Lok Sabha polls in 2014 with an unprecedented mandate, particularly in the tough electoral arena of Uttar Pradesh, it now has governments in 10 states out of the 16 that went to the polls since Amit Shah took over the reins of the party. At the three year mark of his party presidency, and as he steps into the House of Elders, his greatest achievement is in ensuring that the BJP's grassroots leaders occupy the top three posts — president, vice president and prime minister.

When Shah was asked to lead the party, many had questioned his political experience and declared him a novice having no connect with Delhi politics. What his critics forgot was the way in which he had transformed the party in UP which resulted in the BJP emerging as the unchallenged victor in 2014. This success was repeated in 2017.

In these three years, not only has the BJP's geographical reach increased manifold, the party today rules 13 states and has coalition governments in four states. With 1,350 MLAs and 330 MPs in its kitty, it's the largest political entity in the country today. Even in states

where the party is considered weak, it has managed to make impressive vote gains. Be it elections for local bodies or for Lok Sabha, Shah personally choreographs the party's victory march.

Politics used to be seen as a source of patronage and power, a profession rather than a vocation. Shah changed this mindset. Through his persistent hard work and dogged commitment, and his out-of-the-box thinking, he has taken the party to the level where no Opposition party or coalition is in a position to challenge its supremacy.

There are several examples that speak of his political acumen. For instance, the mega membership campaign by giving a "missed call". Political pundits and sceptics criticised it, Opposition parties cried foul. But today, the BJP is the largest party in the world with over 11 crore active members.

It is widely perceived that after a party comes to power, the organisation starts playing second fiddle to the ruling dispensation. But under Shah, the party is as relevant and vibrant as it used to be before its Lok Sabha success. The organisation's role is as important and it is crucial in assisting the government.

While Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government creates welfare programmes like the Jan Dhan Yojana, Jan Suraksha Yojana, Health Insurance Scheme, Ujjwala Yojana, Mudra Yojana, Swachh Bharat Mission, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana, Shah is ensuring their effective implementation through the party organisation.

Shah is committed to ensuring that the BJP's roots are so deeply entrenched in the Indian political system that no one can easily uproot it. Through the Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Karyia Vistar Yojana workers are told about the achievements of the party and government, who then take the message to the masses. He has already sent 4 lakh party workers across India to ensure that his mission is accomplished.

It was unheard of in India's politics that the topmost leader of the largest political party camps in Lakshadweep island for three consecutive days, working with booth-level workers. It is under Shah's leadership that the North-East Democratic Alliance was formed. He takes keen interest in even local level elections which resulted in the BJP making significant gains in Odisha while in Maharashtra

it has left its once dominant partner, the Shiv Sena, behind.

Since he took over the reins of the BJP, Shah has been on tour over 300 times, travelling an average of 541 km per day, and visiting 315 of 680 districts. During state elections he addressed 500 rallies, and ensured that workers till the booth level actively participated in the campaign. He was instrumental in holding training programmes for workers from the top levels to the bottom, which led to over 8 lakh BJP workers getting election-ready.

Shah is currently on a 110-day pan-India "Vistrit Pravasi" (prolonged stay) visiting all states for at least two to three days. He is mingling with cadres, talking to booth level workers, exhorting leaders to further strengthen the party.

Addressing party workers after the election results in 2014, Prime Minister Modi had named Amit Shah as the "Man of the Match". When the nation goes to polls in 2019, Shah's hard work and strategising will strengthen the BJP's bid for re-election and also shore up his own claim for "Man of the Series".

The writer is head, BJP media cell

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### DEBATE NEEDED

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Beyond Jamia' (IE, August 8). There is a need to look into the regulatory aspect before establishing educational institutions for minorities. But the government is not interested in a genuine debate and is invoking the bogey of appeasement — an old slogan of the BJP. It should look at the regulatory mess and start a serious debate for betterment of minority education institutions.

Fazil M. Khan, New Delhi

### SHARE THE BLAME

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Law's long arm' (IE, August 8). Principles of natural justice require that justice should not only be done, but also seen to be done. Probably, that is too much to expect from the already overburdened judiciary. Perhaps we have forgotten the horrific events of December 16, 2012. Perhaps we have forgotten what happened to Ruchika Girhotra. In the past two or three decades, the reporting of sexual crimes has undoubtedly gone up without a proportionate increase in convictions. But the police and the judiciary are the only one's who should be blamed. We are equally responsible for not standing up for the victims of assault.

Vishaka Singh Deshwal, Delhi

### NO TENSION POLICY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Failing

### LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to [editpage@expressindia.com](mailto:editpage@expressindia.com) or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

our children' (IE, August 7). It is absolutely necessary to have some creative tension for attaining excellence. While the no-detention policy was aimed at containing drop outs, there was more than one flaw in its execution. It led to not only "no detention" but, in fact, it ended up leading to "no tension" for all stakeholders, including the children and the teachers.

Krishan Kumar Chugh, Delhi

# 16 EXPLAINED



## SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

The diet industry can't make us lastingly thin because it is not engaging with what made us manically fat: sadness, self-hatred, loneliness.

**ALAIN DE BOTTON**, Swiss-British author of several bestsellers that his web site says are "essayistic books that have been described as a 'philosophy of everyday life'", 788,000 followers on Twitter.

# Does preschooling prepare kids for school?

Preschools are ubiquitous in India's villages, shows a comprehensive new survey that watched 14,000 children over 5 years. But the benefits they bring are often dependent on factors such as the quality of early education, child's gender and education level of mother. **UMA VISHNU** unpacks the survey.

WHERE IS a four-year-old child most likely to be at, say, 11 in the morning? At home? In an *anganwadi*? A private preschool or even a formal, primary school? And if she is spending her time in a preschool, what is she most likely to be doing? Playing, writing, or nothing at all? Does the time she spends in preschool have any impact on what she does when she begins formal schooling? In short, does preschool or early learning matter?

A comprehensive three-state study by Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), the organisation whose annual survey on the state of primary education is a key barometer on learning levels across rural India, UNICEF and Ambedkar University Delhi shows an early start matters — but so do several other factors.

The study followed 14,000 children from Assam, Telangana and Rajasthan over five years — starting in 2011, from the time these children were 4 years old, and ending in 2015, by which time they were 8 and mostly in primary school (3% of 8-year-olds across these three states were, however, still in preschool).

While international research over the past half century has established the role of early learning in the head start that children get when they enter formal school, in India, the study found, the benefits of such intervention are directly related to a number of factors — among them, the quality of early education, the gender of the children, and the levels of education of their mothers.

So what does the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) map of these three states — Assam, Telangana and Rajasthan — look like?

Impressive, if one were to look merely at the spread of preschools. All the 357 villages picked for the survey had at least one preschool: *anganwadis*, private preschools integrated with primary schools and, in a few cases, centres run by voluntary, religious, or other kinds of organisations. Rajasthan had the largest number of preschools — more than 80% of sampled villages had four or more preschool options; however, over a third of 4-year-olds in Rajasthan did not participate in any institution. This last figure was less than 10% in both Assam and Telangana.

Although *anganwadis* formed the bulk (7 out of every 10) of preschools, parents showed a clear preference for private preschools, the study found. This was because of the emphasis the private institutions placed on reading and writing, and also because they often called themselves "English medium".

"What we found during the survey was that there is a gap between what parents want and what is developmentally appropriate for the child. While parents wanted children to start with the three Rs — reading, writing and arithmetic — experts recommend age-appropriate, conceptual learning as part of early preschool education. Which means, children learn by manipulating objects and understanding concepts like quantity and shape, and not exactly by holding a pencil and copying, which is what many of the private preschools stress on," said Suman Bhattacharjee, Director of Research at ASER.

The National ECCE Policy of 2013 recommended developmentally appropriate, play-

based preschool education for children between the ages of 3 and 6, and a structured school readiness component for 5- to 6-year-olds. The earlier National Policy on Education (1986), too, had discouraged any formal instruction of the 3Rs for preschoolers, and emphasised play-based learning instead.

The study also found that contrary to the assumption that children enter the same class at the same age — say, they are all 6 years old by the time they are in Class 1, as mandated by the Right to Education Act — in Indian schools, mixed classrooms are common. At least 7.1% of 4-year-olds were already in Class 1 in three states, and in Assam, for instance, 3.6% of 8-year-olds sampled were still in preschool.

While gender has always played a key role in deciding access to school, with larger proportions of boys than girls attending private institutions, the report shows that discrimination begins early, with boys standing a better chance of being sent to a private preschool than girls — 48.6% of 3,305 boys surveyed were in private preschools at the age of 5; only 39% of 3,184 girls of the same age were in private preschools.

Which leads to the crucial question of whether preschooling matters at all.

The study shows school readiness at age 5 makes a difference in overall math, language and cognitive domains. As part of the survey, 5-year-olds were told to do a particular activity — from pictures of apple-laden trees, they were asked to identify which of the trees had the most apples and which had the least. The survey shows that children who could do this task at age 5, or, in other words, had better pre-numeracy skills, performed better than those who could not do the task, over the next three years — that is, when they became 6, 7 and 8 years of age.

Although children with higher school readiness levels at age 5 had better early grade learning outcomes at age 6, the study found that the correlation between preschooling and early grade learning weakens over time — that is, with each successive assessment year.

"If quality preschool is followed by quality primary school, then you might expect to see this impact sustain over longer periods, but if better school readiness is not reinforced at the primary stage then it is not surprising that the impact dissipates over time," Bhattacharjee said.

The report ends with a few key recommendations — among them, including preschool education as part of the Right to Education Act. The Act currently covers children aged 6-14, excluding children below age 6 from its ambit. Section 11 of the RTE Act asks state governments "to endeavour to provide preschool education... so as to prepare them for primary education". But it does not make Early Childhood Care and Education a justiciable right of every child.

The report also calls for paying attention to the quality of preschooling, and a regulation or accreditation system for the sector.

Until all this happens, it will remain likely that at 11 am, you will still come across a 4-year-old at an *anganwadi* or a private preschool, but the question will persist: will she be ready for school two years later?

## EARLY LEARNING BROKEN DOWN: A STUDY OF ASSAM, RAJASTHAN AND TELANGANA



### AVAILABILITY OF PRESCHOOLS IN SAMPLED VILLAGES

State	No. of villages	% of villages with		% of villages with 4 or above preschools
		At least one government preschool	At least one private/other preschool	
Assam	115	99.1	27.8	63.5
Rajasthan	120	100.0	93.3	81.7
Telangana	122	100.0	41.8	55.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>99.7</b>	<b>54.6</b>	<b>67</b>

Of the three states, Rajasthan was the most likely to have at least one private preschool (93% of sampled villages). Also, 81.7% of all sampled villages in the state had 4 or more preschools. Telangana had the lowest concentration of preschools available within a village — only 55.7% villages had over 4 preschools; the figure for Assam was 63.5%.

### %AGE OF CHILDREN IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS, BY AGE AND THEIR MOTHER'S EDUCATION

	Government	Private/Other	Not participating
<b>Mothers with no schooling (Sample size = 2,646)</b>			
Age 4 (2011)	61.5	24.8	13.7
Age 8 (2015)	60.2	37.7	2.1
<b>Mothers with more than primary school education (Sample size = 2,074)</b>			
Age 4 (2011)	48.3	47.1	4.6
Age 8 (2015)	35.7	64.1	0.1

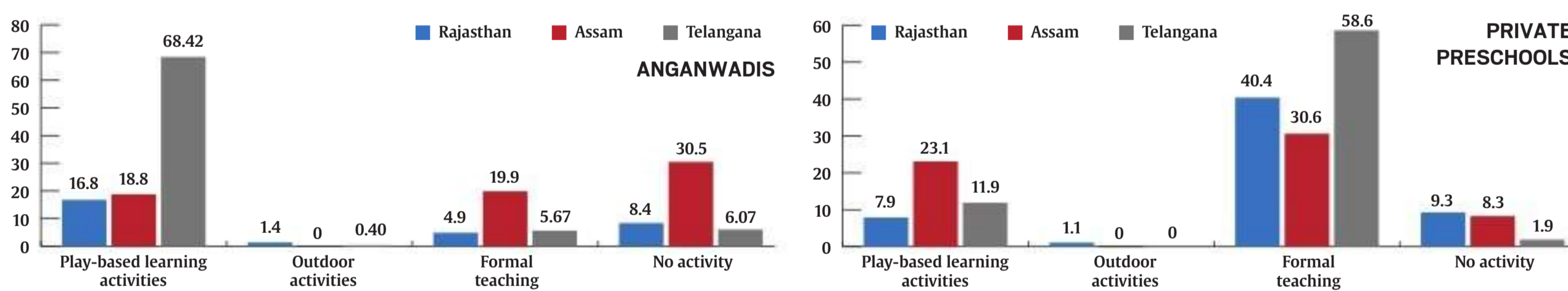
Children whose mothers had no formal schooling were more likely to find themselves in a government institution (preschool or school) than children whose mothers had more than primary school education. Also, the %age of children who did not go to any institution is higher among those whose mothers never went to school.

### WHERE IS A 4-YEAR-OLD MOST LIKELY TO BE

	Sample size	Government preschool	Private or other preschool	School	Other centres	Not participating
<b>All children</b>	<b>11,828</b>	<b>48.8%</b>	<b>23.8%</b>	<b>7.1%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>18.4%</b>

Among the three states in the study, Rajasthan had the highest proportion of 4-year-olds who were not in any kind of preschool (33.3%) and Telangana had the lowest (6.1%). Most children in Assam went to *anganwadis* (79.1%); only 6.5% of 4-year-olds in that state went to private preschools. At 12.3%, Rajasthan also had the highest percentage of 4-year-olds in formal school (Class 1 or above).

### %AGE TIME SPENT ON DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES IN ANGANWADIS AND PRIVATE PRESCHOOLS, BY STATE



Anganwadis stressed more on play-based learning (68.42% of time in Telangana was spent on that) than formal teaching (5.67%). Children in private preschools, on the other hand, spent most of their time on the three R's — reading, writing, arithmetic. Children in Assam *anganwadis* spent 30.5% of their time doing nothing; in private preschools in the state, only 8.3% of their time was spent on 'no activity'. All data from *The India Early Childhood Education Impact Study, 2017*. Photo: Oinam Anand/Express Archive. Photo for representational purpose only.

## PRESCHOOLING IN INDIA

**1.3 MN** early child development centres or *anganwadis* cater to more than 82 million out of 158 million children aged 0-6, 70 million of which are in the age group 3-6 years. These *anganwadis*, run under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, also serve pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls — 102 mn beneficiaries in all

**23,293 CRECHES** operating under the Rajiv Gandhi Crèche Services for Children of Working Mothers, a grant-in-aid scheme of the WCD Ministry that supports running of crèches by NGOs

**2,15,931 PRESCHOOL** sections/classes attached to primary schools in 2012-13, according to the Unified District Information System for Education, NUEPA

**23 PER CENT** of 4-year-olds in rural India are enrolled in private pre-schools, according to ASER data

# Exploring the relationship between religious belief, moral behaviour

Most people around the world, including in India, whether religious or not, presume that serial killers are more likely to be atheists than believers in any god, suggests a large, 13-country study

BENEDICT CAREY

MOST PEOPLE around the world, whether religious or not, presume that serial killers are more likely to be atheists than believers in any god, suggests a new study, which counters the common assumption that increasingly secular societies are equally tolerant of nonbelievers. Avowed atheists exhibited the same bias in judging sadistic criminals, the study found.

The new report included more than 3,000 people in 13 countries, both states like the Netherlands and Finland, and deeply religious ones like the United Arab Emirates. India was also studied.

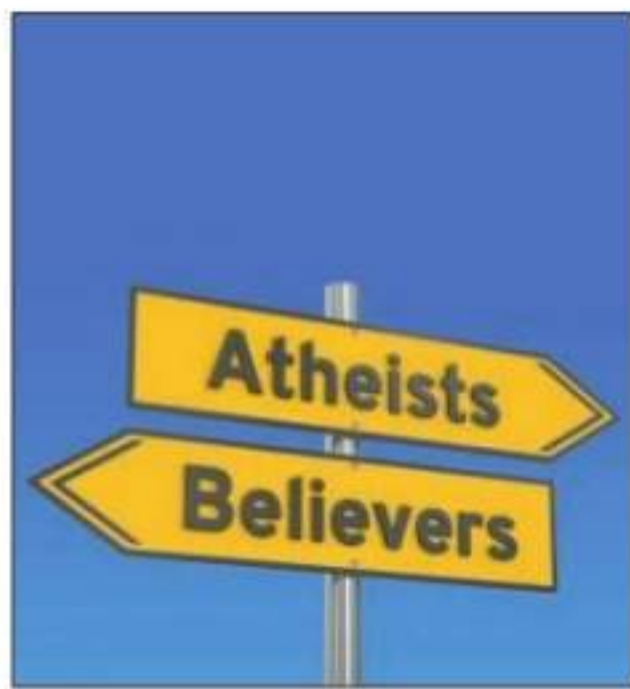
The findings suggest that, despite declining attendance at churches, mosques and temples in many communities, the cultural tenet that religion is a bulwark against im-

morality remains intact, experts said, even in those who deny it explicitly.

Previous studies had found evidence of broad-based public suspicion of nonbelievers in smaller samples within religious countries, like the United States. The new survey suggests the findings may extend globally, and it finds that the same kinds of suspicion pervade even highly secular societies.

The study was as simple as it was ambitious. Led by Will M Gervais, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Kentucky, an international team of researchers recruited samples of about 100 or more adults in 13 countries, spanning North America, Europe, Asia, the Middle East and the antipodes. The participants filled out a short questionnaire, providing their age, ethnicity and religious affiliation or lack thereof, with choices like "atheist", "agnostic" or "none".

One item on the questionnaire began



Belief that religion is a bulwark against immorality, seems to be intact *Thinkstock*

with a description of a sociopath: a man who, having tortured animals when young, later began hurting people and "has killed five homeless people that he abducted from poor neighbourhoods in his home city. Their dismembered bodies are currently buried in his basement". A question followed. Half the

participants in each country got one version of the question: "Which is more probable? 1) The man is a teacher; or 2) The man is a teacher and does not believe in any gods."

The other half got another version: "Which is more probable? 1) The man is a teacher; or 2) The man is a teacher and a reli-

gious believer." The questionnaire also included several brainteasers and other questions to distract from the purpose of the study.

"We used this psychopathic serial killer because we thought that, even if people didn't trust atheists enough to let them babysit their children, they wouldn't necessarily assume them to be serial killers," Dr Gervais said. But they did — overwhelmingly. About 60% of the people who had the option to flag the teacher as an atheist did so; just 30% of those who had the option to flag the teacher as a religious believer did so. Self-identified nonbelievers were less biased than the average, but not by much, the study found.

As expected, the bias was stronger in highly religious countries, like the United Arab Emirates, than in countries like New Zealand. Dr Gervais, whose work explores bias against nonbelievers, had publicly backed off some of his own earlier studies, finding them too small to be convincing. "This time we got the numbers, and the effect was clear," he said.

The relationship between religious belief and moral behaviour is, in fact, not well understood. Some studies find that devout believers live more morally upright lives, compared with nonbelievers; others find no differences at all. The research is plagued by

differing definitions of what moral behaviour is and what constitutes true religious devotion (e.g., self-identification, or daily ritual?). Even the definition of nonbelief is a moving target: A person may identify as atheist, agnostic, "lapsed" or merely indifferent depending on his or her mood and understanding of those terms.

The urge to impute beliefs, motives and mental states to mass murderers, moreover, is often misplaced, experts said. Some mass killers clearly commit atrocities because of their professed religious beliefs, like terrorists. But modern history's register of assorted serial killers, spree shooters and other mortal predators is a rogue's gallery of mostly male, aggrieved actors who are sometimes believers, sometimes not, and who half the time do not qualify for any specific psychiatric diagnosis, as disturbed as they are, according to an analysis of more than 200 such killers by Dr Michael Stone, a New York forensic psychiatrist.

A large number — perhaps 25%, in Dr Stone's estimation — showed evidence of paranoid schizophrenia, which is characterised by delusional thinking. Those delusions, often enough, are infused with religious symbolism. **THE NYT**



## PAPER CLIP

FLAGGING INTERESTING RESEARCH

### HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

#### HOW BIAS WORKS

Published in *Nature Human Behaviour*, August 7, 2017

**AUTHORS:** Will M Gervais, Dimitris Xygalatas and Others