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SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

Intolerance of intolerance is a necessary condition of tolerance.

MATT HAIG, British author, 161,000 followers; in the course of a Twitter argument with Timothy Kalyegira, who said that even as a Black African, he feels that "the problem with liberals is their own intolerant, self-righteous fascism, only their fascism is directed at the fascist Right".

The small portion of the sprawling site of the World Culture Festival on the Yamuna floodplains is seen on March 14, 2016, the day after the Festival ended. The pontoon bridge built across the stream is in the middle of the image. *Ravi Kanojia*

Problem in protecting India's wetlands: technically, there aren't any to protect

Art of Living argument in NGT is hinged on a catch: wetlands get their identity only through notification by govt under Rules. The Rules have been around since 2010, but not one wetland has been notified yet

SIMPLY PUT

BY SOWMIYA ASHOK

EXPRESS EDITORS INTERPRET

LAST WEEK, during the hearing of the case against Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's Art of Living (AoL) Foundation at the National Green Tribunal (NGT), counsel for AoL brought up the concept of wetlands in India.

"The report repeatedly uses the expression 'wetlands'," he said to a Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Swatanter Kumar. "In fact, there are no wetlands. The Ramsar Convention does not enlist this (the Yamuna floodplains) as a wetland and it cannot be termed as such under law."

AoL faces accusations of ravaging the Yamuna floodplains in Delhi, where it organised a World Culture Festival over three days in March 2016. In a 31-page report submitted in April 2017, a seven-member panel of experts appointed by the NGT to assess the damage referred, on at least 10 separate occasions, to the "wetlands" on the floodplains.

AoL's argument is not isolated. The NGT is currently hearing 18 other cases in which "wetlands" are the centre of contention.

■■■

Wetlands are nature's "kidneys" that "purify the system", said Rahul Kaul, Chief Ecologist with the Noida-based nature conservation nonprofit Wildlife Trust of India. "Certain wetlands, like the ones in Kashmir, have a regulatory role — they control floods. They absorb water when the levels are high, release it in times of drought," Kaul said.

In 1982, India became a signatory to the Ramsar Convention, 1971, an intergovernmental treaty aimed at the "conservation and wise use of wetlands", thus committing itself to protecting wetlands in a "wide variety of habitats, such as rivers and lakes, coastal lagoons, mangroves, coral reefs, and numerous man-made wetlands".

In 2010, the central government notified The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules (amended in 2016), which noted that as "vital parts of the hydrological cycle, (wetlands) are highly productive, support exceptionally large biological diversity and provide a wide range of ecosystem services, such as waste assimilation, water purification, flood mitigation, erosion control, groundwater recharge, microclimate regulation..."

According to The Convention on Wetlands signed in Ramsar, Iran, wetlands "include a wide variety of habitats such as marshes, peatlands, floodplains, rivers and lakes, and coastal areas such as salt marshes, mangroves, and seagrass beds, but also coral reefs and other marine areas no deeper than six metres at low tide, as well as human-made wetlands such as waste-water treatment ponds and reservoirs".

The 2010 Rules laid down an equally comprehensive definition: "an area or of marsh, fen, peatland or water; natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water, the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres and includes all inland waters such as lakes, reservoir, tanks, backwaters, lagoon, creeks, estuaries and manmade wetland and the zone of direct influence on wetlands, that is to say the drainage area or catchment region of the wetlands as determined by the authority, but does not include main river channels, paddy fields and the coastal wetland..."

Environmentalist Anand Arya, a petitioner in a Supreme Court case on wetlands, said: "There is no doubt about how to define a wetland. If anyone says they don't know the definition, they are pulling a fast one."

■■■

But AoL is making a technical argument. "Wetlands needs to be preserved everywhere in India, whether coastal, riverine or inland," said a spokesperson. However, wetlands are only "whatever is notified by the authority under the wetland rules, and if it's not notified it can never be called a wetland", the spokesperson said.

At the heart of AoL's argument in the NGT is this crucial catch: not a single wetland in India has been notified by the government as yet. This is in spite of the existence of specific Rules, since 2010, on how to identify wetlands and how to prepare "Brief Documents".

"Currently, there are 7,57,000 wetlands in India," Arya said. "The Supreme Court has extended protection to 2,01,503 of these, which occupy 95% of the wetland area." Each of these wetlands is spread over more than 2.25 hectares. The 2,01,503 wetlands were listed in the National Wetland Inventory & Assessment prepared by ISRO's Space Applications Centre for the Environment Ministry in 2011, when Jairam Ramesh was Minister.

"As a first step, the 'Brief Documents' with regard to these wetlands should be obtained by the Union of India from the respective State Governments in terms of Rule 6 of the Wetland Rules, 2010," the Supreme Court said in its February 2017 order.

The 'brief documents' include, according to guidelines issued by the Ministry in 2010, "broad geographical delineation of the wetland; its zone of influence along with a map; the size of the wetland; account of pre-existing rights and privileges, consistent or not consistent with the ecological health of the wetland".

Yet, the Supreme Court noted, "many of these proposals/brief documents" received from the states "contain deficiencies". In the case of Uttar Pradesh, for instance, which sent 542 brief documents for review, the Centre said maps were "not legible, accurate or, to scale", delineation of boundary and its zone of influence and GPS coordinates were not given, and the proposal was not in conformity with the 2010 Rules. Identical problems were noted for the five proposals that Delhi sent.

"At the Eastern Zonal Bench of the NGT in Kolkata, counsel representing a state said that he was waiting for the water to drain before measuring the wetland," advocate in the NGT, Ritwick Dutta, said. "He completely missed the point of a wetland."

■■■

As part of its February 2017 order, the Supreme Court directed that the amendment to the 2010 Rules — the Wetland (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2016 — be notified on or before June 30. This deadline was missed — and on Wednesday, when the matter came up in the Supreme Court, the court gave the government time until September 30 to notify the Rules, and asked it to make an inventory of wetlands that have already vanished from among the 2,01,503 identified in the 2011 Inventory.

Environmentalists, however, say the 2016 Rules have diluted the spirit of the 2010 original. For instance, the national-level Central Wetlands Regulatory Authority (CWRA) has been done away with entirely.

"Ideally, there should be a CWRA to guide the process. There is need to develop a standard list of activities not be taken up at wetlands in general, besides restricting or banning site-specific activities," said an environmentalist who did not wish to be named. The mechanism to "push and prod" state governments to complete the process in a "timebound manner" has been done away with, complained activists.

Environmentalist Pushp Jain, who has gone to the Green Tribunal against inadequate implementation of the 2010 Rules, said despite the Supreme Court's order, "nobody has bothered" to begin the process of identifying wetlands, since "nobody realises the implication".

It is now up to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to "write to all states and Union Territories as per the SC's order and ensure that the Wetland Rules are implemented", Jain said.

"We have a little more than 5% of (India's total) geographical area occupied by wetlands," said Arya. "And as India grows, we need fresh water."

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Bengaluru's record rain brought largely man-made floods. Here is how, why

JOHNSON T A & AMITABH SINHA
BENGALURU, NEW DELHI, AUGUST 16

Is it unusual for Bengaluru to go under in the way it did on August 15?

Like most of the country, Bengaluru receives the bulk of its rainfall in the monsoon months. Over the years, there have been many instances in which parts of the city have been inundated due to heavy rainfall, sometimes as much as 50 mm, in a very short time. On July 28 last year, a heavy overnight downpour dumped 51 mm of rain on the city, resulting in the flooding of many low-lying neighbourhoods, especially in the south and the east.

How much did it rain on Tuesday?

Between 3 am and 8 am on August 15, a thunderstorm accompanied by heavy rainfall struck the southern and eastern parts of the city. The meteorological observatory at Bengaluru airport recorded rainfall of 128.7 mm during this time, the most in a single day in August in the last 127 years. On August 27, 1890, Bengaluru had recorded 162.1 mm of rainfall. The normal rainfall expected in Bengaluru on August 15 any year is only 5 mm. In fact, the city gets a total of between 130 mm and 140 mm of rain in the entire month of August. On Tuesday, therefore, the city got rain in a few hours what it usually gets in the entire month.

Is this what is called a 'cloudburst'? What climatic/meteorological factors were in play over Bengaluru that caused this phenomenon?

Tuesday's rain in Bengaluru, although a case of concentrated high rainfall, was not a 'cloudburst' event. A rainfall event is described as a case of cloudburst if a small area of about 10 km x 10 km receives rainfall in excess of 10 cm in an hour. Bengaluru received its 13 cm of rainfall over a five-hour period.

Weather scientists attributed the abnormal rainfall activity to an unusual simultaneous presence of four atmospheric systems. Three upper air cyclonic circulation systems were prevailing over different areas — one over the east central Arabian Sea and adjacent to the Maharashtra coast, the second over the coast of Tamil Nadu and neighbouring areas, and a third over southwest Bay of Bengal over north Tamil Nadu and south Andhra Pradesh. Besides, there was also a crucial east to west shear zone along the 0.8 degree North latitude at a height of 5.8 km above mean sea level. The sudden downpour on Tuesday can be attributed to their combined impact.

But does this mean the city can do nothing in the face of nature?

Even small amounts of rain can inundate low-lying areas because the lake system that lay at the core of Bengaluru's drainage has been virtually destroyed by encroachments as the city has grown exponentially. Earlier, lakes in the higher areas of the city would spill into the lakes in the lower areas, creating a natural stormwater drainage system. Bengaluru, which had as many as 272 lakes in and around the city four decades ago, has only about 70 now, the rest having been swallowed by rampant real estate construction.

The government itself has reclaimed dozens of lakes to create bus stands, sports stadiums, housing complexes and for institutions like ISRO to set up facilities in the city. Real estate firms have been allotted land for residential complexes along lakeshores.

In July 2016, civic authorities faced public anger for failing to prevent encroachments of stormwater drains and lakes. The criticism forced the authorities to identify 1,000-odd properties around Bengaluru that had encroached on stormwater drains, but the five-day demolition drive triggered more anger — for it was the civic authorities themselves who had authorised much of the construction on the *raja kaluves* (stormwater drains) and lake beds.

Was Bengaluru the only place in south interior Karnataka that received heavy rainfall on Tuesday?

No. The southern district of Mandya experienced heavy rainfall (133.3 mm), Srirangapatna on the outskirts of Mysore received 110.1 mm, Ramanagara received 75 mm, and Kanakapura on the southern outskirts of Bengaluru got 67 mm of rain on Tuesday. Some flooding was reported in Mandya; the other regions, which are not densely populated, did not report flooding.

Is there a parallel between the situation in Bengaluru and the one that Mumbai faced in 2005, Uttarakhand in 2013 and Chennai in 2015?

No. Although a record for Bengaluru, Tuesday's rain in the city was nowhere close to these other events. On July 26, 2005, Mumbai received as much as 944 mm of rain in 24 hours, an unprecedented event that claimed several hundred lives and completely paralysed the city. In 2013, some areas in Uttarakhand received torrential rain over three days in June — the worst affected areas saw over 300 mm of rain in that period, and thousands were killed. Chennai city received more than 300 mm of rain in a single day. The Bengaluru event pales in comparison.

On Tuesday, in a low-lying area of Bengaluru. *PTI*

What's the Internet 'game' killing young people worldwide?

India has asked top Web firms to take off links to 'Blue Whale Challenge', a mysterious 'game' in which shadowy 'curators' egg young players on to commit suicide. Well over 100 suicides around the world have been blamed on the challenge

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 16

OVER THE past few months, an Internet "game" called the 'Blue Whale Challenge' has been blamed for the deaths of well over 100 young people in countries around the world — including at least five teens in India. The government has now asked Internet majors like Google, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Microsoft and Yahoo to "immediately remove" links of "this deadly game" from their platforms. The Ministry for Women and Child Development tweeted this week that Minister Maneka Gandhi had sought the intervention of Home Minister Rajnath Singh and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad to remove the challenge from social media, and appealed to "parents & elders to monitor the activities of children & dissuade them from falling prey to such challenges".

What is the Blue Whale Challenge?

In the Blue Whale Challenge, also called the Blue Whale game, a group of administrators or a curator asks online participants to complete daily tasks over a 50-day period. Some of these tasks are boring (listen to music sent by curators); some are weird or dangerous (cut your lips, poke your hand with a needle). Participants must share proof — photos — of having completed the challenges/tasks. The 50th task is literally the final — participants have to kill themselves.

Is the game available for download?

This isn't a game you could download from an app store. Users might download an APK sent by an administrator, or by clicking a link on social media platforms such as Instagram or Facebook. Hashtags like #bluewhalechallenge, #curatorfindme, #i_am_whale are seen as signals from, and for, the anonymous curators. On Instagram, users clicking the #bluewhalechallenge or searching for the 'game' are being shown a warning: "Posts with words or tags you're searching for often encourage behaviour that can cause harm and even lead to death. If you're going through something difficult, we'd like to help."

What evidence is available to link a suicide to the challenge?

While deaths in many countries are being attributed to the 'game', independent verification is yet unavailable. The links are usually claimed by family or friends of the suicide victim who claim to have seen the victim perform the tasks. India has reported at least five deaths, the latest being in Kerala. In Russia, over 130 deaths have been attributed to the 'game', and at least two individuals have been arrested in connection. In Europe and America, both school authorities and police have begun issuing advisories to parents, making them aware of the 'game' and urging them to be vigilant.

Who are the targets of the 'game'?

The question everyone is asking is why a teenager — or anyone else — would want to take part in a game of death, or even take up such challenges. Experts suggest that the gamers' victims are of impressionable age, and seeking "validation from the world around". There have been reports that those who try to quit some way through the 'game' are threatened. A correspondent of the US government-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty who signed up for the challenge posing as a 15-year-old was told "they will come after you" when the undercover reporter asked what happened to those who quit.

And what is the so-called 'Pink Whale Challenge'?

This game is the opposite of the Blue Whale suicide challenge, and "encourages positive and generous acts and attempts to bring happiness in the participant's daily life". Conceived in Brazil, the challenge has Facebook and Instagram pages with over 3,40,000 followers taking the positive challenges. The challenge, called Baleia Rosa, was started in April, and has daily 'good' tasks. The project is now aided by the Government of São Paulo state in Brazil. Apart from the social media platforms, the challenge can be accessed via *baleiarosa.com.br* and a free smartphone app for Android and iOS. The administrators say they want to prove that the Internet can be used to viralise the good.

BLUE & PINK: SOME CHALLENGES

- Carve with a razor "f57" on your hand, send photo to curator
- Go to highest roof you can find, stand on the edge for some time
- Curator tells you the date of your death and you have to accept it
- Watch psychedelic and horror videos all day
- Jump off a high building. Take your life
- Grab someone else's littering from the street, throw it in the trash
- Donate something you don't need anymore
- Compliment and hug a fruit
- Yell 'I love myself' in the middle of a street
- Make up a song and post a video of yourself singing it

https://telegram.me/TheHindu_Zone https://telegram.me/PDFEXAMS

WORDLY WISE

FREEDOM IS THE RIGHT TO TELL PEOPLE WHAT THEY DO NOT WANT TO HEAR.

—GEORGE ORWELL

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

CENSORING SARKAR

By not airing an elected (non-BJP) CM's speech, Prasar Bharati undermines its credibility as public broadcaster

THE BLACKOUT BY Doordarshan and AIR of the customary Independence Day speech of Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar casts a dark shadow the day after. By all accounts, after a local official raised an objection, the decision not to broadcast the CM's speech — unless it was "reshaped" — was taken at Prasar Bharati's Delhi office. In arrogating to itself the powers of a censor over an elected chief minister, the public broadcaster has revived serious questions about its mandate, its degree of autonomy from political-governmental control, and its very relevance in a quick-changing media environment.

There is, to be sure, a broadcasting code that schoolmarmishly sets its face against an array of perceived discourtesies and transgressions, ranging from "criticism of friendly countries" to "anything obscene or defamatory", to "anything affecting the integrity of the nation". But that such an imprecise and loosely worded code should be invoked by the public broadcaster to curb the freedom of an elected CM to talk to the people on a day the nation celebrates its freedoms, is outrageous. The speech itself — excerpted today on the Ideas Page - could, at worst, be described as politically charged. Without naming any party or individual, Sarkar spoke of a secularism "under attack", and of "conspiracies and attempts" to create "divisions in society" that are "contrary to the goals, dreams and ideals of our freedom struggle". In fact, the chief minister's speech was no more political than any speech made by any of his counterparts in other states on the day.

Despite a 20-year-long career, and reports and recommendations of several committees, the Prasar Bharati is yet to restructure its operations either to respond to the requirements of changing times, or to establish a record of impartiality and fairplay. Successive governments have also been reluctant to give up control over a captive medium. The censorship in Agartala, therefore, immediately invites suspicions about the role of the Central government in the blackout of an Opposition leader. The NDA is particularly vulnerable to these charges, of course. In its three years in power, it has shown a distinctive intolerance of dissent and the political opponent. It has carried this into spaces that must be insulated from the zero-sum games of electoral battle, and that call for political give-and-take. It has taken recourse to the logic of majoritarianism to have its way even in institutions that must be governed by constitutional norms and principles not subject to the numbers game. It is easy to believe that it was NDA diktat that led to the blacking out of Manik Sarkar on DD and AIR in Tripura on I-Day. If it was not, the government must say so.

FALLING OUT OF LOVE

Delhi cannot match Beijing's economic clout. Chinese leader's visit to Nepal is another instance of its failing soft diplomacy

CHINESE VICE-PREMIER WANG Yang began his three-day visit to Nepal on Tuesday by announcing a $ 1 million package to help the flood-hit country. A few days earlier, India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj assured all help to Nepal to deal with the natural calamity that has claimed more than 100 lives. But with its chequebook diplomacy in Nepal, China has scored over India once again. China has also used Wang's visit to stamp its soft diplomacy. On Tuesday, the Chinese vice-premier inaugurated the reconstruction of the historic nine-storey palace at Kathmandu's Hanuman Dhoka Durbar Square, that was damaged two years ago in a devastating earthquake — China will fund the reconstruction of this world heritage site. India, in contrast, has been conspicuous by its minimal presence in the efforts to reconstruct the historical sites destroyed in the 2015 earthquake.

While India and China have competed for influence over Nepal for decades, the earthquake should be seen as a significant moment in the relations between the three countries. After the calamity, Nepal courted its two big neighbours to rebuild its economy. But India's $ 340 million commitment towards infrastructure projects in Nepal is dwarfed by the $ 8.3 billion China has pledged to Nepal's road and hydropower projects. While India cannot match China's economic clout, New Delhi should be concerned by Kathmandu seeking Beijing's technical expertise in areas as diverse as building energy utilities and restoration of heritage buildings. During Wang's visit, the two countries also signed an agreement to undertake a feasibility study to explore natural gas and petroleum in the Himalayan country. China has also responded positively to Nepal government's appeal to help it reopen the 114-kilometre Araniko highway — an old route connecting the two countries — that was damaged and closed after the 2015 earthquake.

This gesture is sure to be compared in Kathmandu with what Nepal perceives as India's domineering attitude during the Madhesi agitation, a few months after the earthquake. Though New Delhi has refuted Nepal's allegations that it had a hand in the highway blockade by the Madhesis, it has not been successful in changing the popular perception that holds it responsible for the crippling shortage of essential commodities after the blockade. Wang's visit will consolidate the perception of China being Nepal's friend in need. This failure in soft diplomacy should worry policymakers in New Delhi, much more than China's increasing economic footprint in Nepal.

SPEAK, MEMORY

Forgetting is a part of dealing with the trauma of Partition, of course. But so must be remembrance

INDIA'S FIRST PARTITION Museum opens 70 years after the Radcliffe line came into effect, dividing Amritsar from Lahore, Chittagong from Kolkata, India from Pakistan, and turning the moment of independence from colonial rule into a bloody massacre. Nearly 15 million crossed this imaginary line, Hindus and Sikhs fleeing to India, Muslims to Pakistan. For 70 years, that border has run through us, and within us.

Through 5,000 personal objects donated by those displaced by Partition — letters and manuscripts, a coat salvaged from ruin, a refugee registration card — the museum aims to acknowledge the momentous loss of life and amity in 1947, especially in Punjab, which neither India nor Pakistan have quite looked in the eye. Even more unacknowledged has been the displacement in Bengal. Immediately after Independence, unsurprisingly, both countries turned towards the task of nation-building and survival, rather than look back in anger and sorrow. Moreover, unlike in Germany after the WW II, blame wasn't easily apportioned. Hindus had slaughtered Muslims, Muslims Hindus, in a carnage of spectacular proportions. India, as a republic in the making, a secular nation where all citizens were equal, could not bear to remember the violence that midwifed its freedom.

Forgetting is a part of dealing with trauma, of course. But so is remembrance. It has taken us 70 years to make this first step. In these decades, the divisiveness of Partition, its questions of who owns what, and who belongs where, have not been exorcised. Many of the limitations and blind spots of Indian secularism, arguably, stem from this reluctance to reckon with a legacy of violence. India of 2017 seems to be gripped by the debates of 1947. It is precariously poised, with a growing, muscular majoritarianism that points to the past to fan anxieties of Hindu victimhood. But as is evident in the museum in Amritsar, there were few heroes in the massacre that birthed Independence. The best way to memorialise Partition is to shun the path that leads us down another bloody cleavage.

Beyond the lament

Gorakhpur was only the acute manifestation of the chronic malady that ails our health system

K. SRINATH REDDY

OUTRAGE IS A natural reaction to the terrible tragedy that cruelly crushed the lives of many innocent children in Gorakhpur. However, outrage is a wasted emotion if it is not accompanied by honest introspection to identify all contributory causes and followed by a cluster of corrective actions.

The deaths of these children were caused by the cumulative effect of multiple failures of the public health system and skewed developmental processes that inflict innumerable injuries of economic and social inequity on the poor. Life-threatening illness is created by social conditions that make children vulnerable to the assault of infectious agents that thrive in insanitary conditions. When they reach the overcrowded hospital in a desperately ill condition, an uncaring system fails to provide the critical care they need. These causes are not listed on a death certificate but are indeed the unnamed assassins that routinely and remorselessly kill children in large numbers in the underdeveloped and poorly served regions of our country.

Why does eastern Uttar Pradesh have very high levels of infant mortality, low birth weight and stunting compared to the national average? Why is Gorakhpur ranked so low in comparative rankings of urban cleanliness? Why are both the medical college and a large hospital managed by the same doctor who also has to sign off on bills of payment? Why are government doctors allowed to run private clinics? Why is there no electronic inventory of drugs and essential supplies to permit real time monitoring and prevent unforeseen stock-outs? How transparent or opaque is the procurement process? Why were numerous complaints from the vendor unheeded? These questions call for review and reform of a system ridden with faults at multiple levels.

What erupted as a breaking media story on August 11 was only the acute manifestation of the chronic malady that ails our health system. It is not a one-off event that resulted from a callous cut-off of oxygen supply by a rogue supplier. Even that despicable act is now shrouded in conflicting claims of who is to blame and contestation of whether or not the interruption of oxygen supply was a cause of death. The underlying disease is always the recorded primary cause of death but lack of respiratory support in a critically ill state can decrease the chance of recovery and hasten death. It is a contributory cause, just as inexcusable as non-availability of blood for life-saving transfusion when a road trauma victim reaches a hospital. If we now deviously dispute whether oxygen is even essential for the intensive care of comatose children with encephalitis or severe pneumonia, we will fail to ensure that such stock-outs will not happen ever again.

> Early marriage and motherhood of an undernourished adolescent, leading to a low birth weight baby that suffers further malnutrition and falls easy prey to infections — this is the tale that plays out as the backdrop for sick children in hospitals in Gorakhpur and neighbouring districts. As mosquitos breed in rice paddy fields and pigs gorge on garbage piles near human dwellings, conditions are ripe for animal to human transmission of viruses through insect vectors. Bacteria, too, abound in unhygienic surroundings and easily invade the ill-nourished bodies of poor children. It requires an all-round development effort to alleviate poverty, ameliorate child nutrition and obliterate squalor.

We do, however, need to look beyond the oxygen story. Early marriage and motherhood of an undernourished adolescent, leading to a low birth weight baby that suffers further malnutrition and falls easy prey to infections — this is the tale that plays out as the backdrop for sick children in hospitals in Gorakhpur and neighbouring districts. As mosquitos breed in paddy fields and pigs gorge on garbage piles near human dwellings, conditions are ripe for animal to human transmission of viruses through insect vectors. Bacteria, too, abound in unhygienic surroundings and easily invade the ill-nourished bodies of poor children. It requires an all-round development effort to alleviate poverty, ameliorate child nutrition and obliterate squalor. Even as we do this, we need to fix our dysfunctional health system.

Our disease surveillance system needs to be strengthened in both community and hospital settings, to provide reliable real-time data. Given the rising threat of zoonotic diseases that spread from animal to humans, eco-surveillance systems need to be developed for integrating data from wildlife, veterinary and human populations. Immunisation for vaccine preventable diseases, as recommended by the public health authorities, must be effectively delivered by the health workers after gaining community acceptance through culturally sensitive vaccine literacy programmes. The primary healthcare system must be well resourced and adequately staffed, to be capable of early detection and care, appropriate referral for advanced care when needed, and post-recovery counselling and follow-up. Fully functioning health and wellness sub-centres and primary health centres must speedily spring and serve close to the communities rather than rest and rust as undelivered plans in the proposals of health programmes. In cases with disabling sequelae, as in severe encephalitis, rehabilitation services too need to be accessible and efficient.

At the level of the district and medical college hospitals, where advanced care is provided, standard management protocols for clinical care and standard operating procedures for administrative processes are essential for ensuring timely, appropriate and empathetic care. Implementation of a programme of universal health coverage will also make it affordable. Transparent and dependable procurement systems, developed first in Tamil Nadu, will ensure uninterrupted availability of essential drugs and other supplies. Government doctors must be well paid but barred from private practice. Clinical competence must be supported by public health and management expertise.

Periodic quality audits must encompass technical, administrative and social audits. To make this happen, we need to invest in training and deploying professionals in public health management at different levels of the system. Based on a core combination of public health expertise and management skills, further specialisation can be customised for public health programme management and hospital management. While the National Health Policy of 2017 calls for the establishment of public health management cadres in every state, the need was never before as evident as now.

The children of Gorakhpur would not have died in vain if we can put aside political bickering and unitedly resolve to salvage and strengthen our sinking health system.

Reddy is president, Public Health Foundation of India. Views expressed are personal

THE CHIEF'S STRATEGY

BJP president has built a live-wire organisation at the grass roots. It fights to win

G.V.L. NARASIMHA RAO

IN INDIA, UNDER the first-past-the-post electoral system, election strategies often take a perverse shape and eventually end in the fragmentation of the society. Of late, some professional agencies have emerged, which present readymade data on caste lines and promote easy exploitation of the societal fragmentation via vote-bank politics. In this backdrop, when BJP president Amit Shah employed a unifying strategy, while giving demonstrable representation to all major sections of the society, in the selection of candidates for the Lok Sabha elections in UP in 2014 and again, for the Vidhan Sabha in 2017, many Doubting Thomases wondered whether it will work.

But Shah had the last laugh. The BJP romped home with a resounding victory in both the elections, vindicating Shah's vibgyor strategy. Today, one can't deny that Shah's insightful handling of this strategy resulted in the BJP becoming a rallying point for all the non-Yadav OBC communities. It gave the party an unbeatable edge in UP.

Shah created a record of sorts in Gujarat, winning practically every assembly election with a record margin. He has a penchant for setting targets that may appear implausible to some, but motivating to many others. This has prompted his colleagues to "think big" and strive hard to achieve the target. Fighting to win has been the mantra of Shah. He is known to take every election very seriously. He relishes taking on tough challenges. Like Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he does not rest and also refuses to let others rest.

> In UP, Amit Shah adroitly employed social media, mainly Facebook and WhatsApp, to shape public opinion. Informally organised WhatsApp groups involving more than 17 lakh readers were the bedrock of his opinion-forming strategy. The beauty of his communication strategy was its two-way approach. Through "UP ke mann ki baat" he compiled suggestions from crores of voters.

In UP, prior to the 2014 Lok Sabha election, he had travelled to almost all tehsil places, staying at government rest houses. When cadres see their leader fighting a battle with utmost seriousness and sincerity, they also refrain from shirking responsibilities. He is more than convinced that howsoever important is the role of popular perception in winning elections, there is no alternative to strengthening the party's booth units. The grand victories of the BJP in UP in 2014 and 2017 are credited to Shah's emphasis on constituting a 21-member committee at almost every booth. He ensured that these booth committees remain active all through the year.

In fact, the party has made it mandatory that at least six important party programmes are conducted at every booth, and in the process, has ensured a live-wire party organisation at the grass roots. This has also made the election more *karyakarta* centric and proportionately less dependent on satraps.

Come any election, Amit*bhai* literally burns the midnight oil. He keeps a tab on every department. Late night meetings to review ground situation and early morning assessments of media coverage are routine during electioneering. Alert to the progressive unfolding of the ground situation, Shah believes in a rally to rally strategy. Every rally has a customised message and points relevant to the place where the rally is held. What is also remarkable is his understanding of the strengths and limitations of media and advertising. He is known for his dexterity in the selection of the right media for the right message.

In UP, he adroitly employed social media, mainly Facebook and WhatsApp, to shape public opinion. Informally organised WhatsApp groups involving more than 17 lakh readers were the bedrock of his opinion-forming strategy. The beauty of his communication strategy was its two-way approach. Through "UP ke mann ki baat" he compiled suggestions from crores of voters. Many issues raised by the BJP in its UP election manifesto — from banning illegal slaughter houses to setting up anti-Romeo squads — emerged from this innovative crowd sourcing.

Shah's handling of coalition politics has also been remarkable. Not averse to the idea of joining hands with other parties wherever required, he has always ensured that such alliances are not made at the cost of the BJP's long-term interests. Having won assembly elections in Maharashtra, Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir, among others, Shah has his eyes set on 2019.

Shah knows not just the hows of electoral successes, but also its whys. For instance, he said the BJP's UP win is the defeat of the politics of corruption, casteism and nepotism. He neither gets disillusioned by reverses nor is he overwhelmed by success. Which is why, even after bringing a record 18 states under the control of the BJP, his focus on building the party has not shifted.

Shah understands that to make India Congress-mukt, it first has to be BJP-yukt!

The writer is national spokesperson of the BJP

AUGUST 17, 1977, FORTY YEARS AGO

INDIAN EXPRESS

Yashpal Kapoor sent to police custody

BADSHAH KHAN

ABDUL GHAFFAR KHAN arrived in Karachi after being expelled from Pakistan's Baluchistan province. Khan, a legendary figure in the politics of the North West Frontier, was ordered to leave Quetta where he had been seeking help for his son, Abdul Wali Khan, detained leader of the banned National Awami Party. Pakistan's rulers expelled him because he was alleged to be fomenting trouble among Baluchi and Pathan tribes against Pakistan's Punjabi population.

JP ON NAGALAND

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN is of the view that if leaders of Phizo's group agree to Nagaland being a part of India, all other questions regarding special powers, both economic and political and special position can be discussed. He told T.A. Ngullie, former finance minister of Nagaland, who met him in Patna that he doesn't "see any possibility of Nagaland becoming a separate country. We consider Nagaland to be a part of India. It must have its own self-government and more autonomy, but it should be within the framework of the Indian Constitution. Kashmir and Nagaland enjoy more autonomy than any other Indian state in India," he added. If Phizo came to India, "I think he might change his mind because Nagaland has changed a lot," JP said.

ZAIL SINGH NAMED

JAGJIT SINGH, FORMER chairman of the marketing committee, named the former Punjab chief minister, Zail Singh, and the former chairman af the State Marketing Board, Gajraj Singh, among those whom he used to pay a share of the funds collected by him. Jagjit Singh was arrested more than a week ago and was being interrogated by the investigating agencies.

KAPOOR'S CUSTODY

YASHPAL KAPOOR, CONGRESS'S Rajya Sabha MP and a former personal assistant to Indira Gandhi, who was arrested by the CBI, was remanded to police custody.

https://telegram.me/TheHindu_Zone https://telegram.me/PDF4EXAMS

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

Mr. Trump's behavior has become distressingly unsurprising. His default position is retaliation; when threatened, he succumbs to bombast.

— THE NEW YORK TIMES

The battle for one seat

The nation's attention was riveted to polls for the Upper House last week in Gujarat. Two stories of one election:

Congress intimidated its own MLAs, locked them up

BHUPENDER YADAV

THE RAJYA SABHA election in Gujarat last week has led to much debate about the powers of the Election Commission and the future of electoral politics in the country. One of the important issues which arises from the sequence of events in the last week is how do we construct a fair and transparent electoral system, which does not give a chance for recrimination and allegations, specially against the referee, whom we as players respect in the course of the electoral contest.

The other issue is about the use of muscle and money power by the Congress. The party resorted to desperate tactics like muffling the voices of its own representatives. Forty-four Congress legislators were taken outside Gujarat, at a time when they were required to serve the flood-hit people of their constituencies. The Congress resorted to other desperate tactics as well. On the morning of the Rajya Sabha election, a senior Congress leader used the social media site, Twitter, to seek votes for his party candidate on the basis of caste. The Congress representatives even tried to disturb voting by snatching ballot papers. Should this be allowed to become the norm? After all, over time, what is good for the goose is bound to become good for the gander too.

The Rajya Sabha election last week involved a complex question. One vote less to the Congress candidate would have led to victory for the third BJP candidate. Even the cancellation of a few votes as a result of the objections raised by the BJP would have resulted in the defeat of the Congress candidate. But the BJP's objections were not considered by the Election Commission.

The election raised another serious question. The country's oldest national party transporting all its Gujarat legislators from one resort to another and keeping them under constant surveillance in order to protect the interest of one candidate does not portend well for the future of India's electoral politics.

The BJP believes that the Rajya Sabha elections have been characterised by the unethical use of money and muscle power for quite some time now. To stop these unethical practices and to give real meaning to the representative powers of the peoples' nominees, the BJP has proposed the open ballot system and the use of party whip for the Rajya Sabha elections. We stand by this recommendation even today, but the Congress has always been opposed to it. Would it change its stance now?

The history of electoral politics in the country is replete with examples of the use of deceitful tactics by the Congress. The party which is a past master at these tactics is not likely to give them up so easily. We in the BJP do not expect it do so, specially after the recent incidents in Gujarat.

In Gujarat, the Congress went out of its way to intimidate its own MLAs. These legislators were not even allowed to meet their relatives. The ostensible reason for the use of such intimidatory tactics was to stop the BJP. However, it was quite apparent that the Congress in the state was deeply divided for reasons that had very little to do with the BJP. It is indeed surprising that the Congress blamed the BJP when it was not able to keep its flock together. The fact that the leader of its legislative party along with the chief whip and senior MLAs decided to leave the Congress can not be blamed on the BJP.

> The BJP believes the Rajya Sabha elections have been characterised by the unethical use of money and muscle power for quite some time now. To stop these unethical practices and to give real meaning to the representative powers of the peoples' nominees, the BJP has proposed the open ballot system.

This election is significant for the BJP in general and for the Gujarat BJP in particular because the party has increased its vote-base by expanding its social constituency. The party has not only consolidated its support amongst the social sections, which have been its long-time supporters, but has also created new support bases in different parts of the state — and the country.

BJP President Amit Shah's nomination to the Rajya Sabha sends out an important message to the workers and sympathisers of the party across the country. That the party's most successful strategist is now in Parliament is a significant step in the party's surge.

We are moving towards a New India, whereas the Congress is still struggling with its contradictions, many which were evident during the recent Rajya Sabha elections. The Congress candidate did manage to win. But it was a pyrrhic victory. Ahmed Patel's victory has split the party in Gujarat. The Congress had to undertake a gross display of muscle and money power to retain a single seat. No wonder the people in the country are losing faith in the party.

The writer is a BJP MP

C R Sasikumar

Vast resources of the BJP could not turn right into wrong

RANDEEP SINGH SURJEWALA

THE OUTCOME OF the Gujarat Rajya Sabha elections, last week, is a fitting tribute to the 75th anniversary of the Quit India Movement. It came at the end of a month where an imperious ruling party, displaying a historically unprecedented level of arrogance and disregard for the law, sought once again to "manage" an election in its favour. It used intimidation tactics involving raids and last-minute attempts to derail the voting process. Despite those efforts, the Constitution and the rule of law was upheld. The Congress party stood vindicated.

No election to the Rajya Sabha has been as bitterly fought or as fraught with attempts at manipulation as the one this time in Gujarat. The Congress had to be cautious because it was dealing with a rival who does not comprehend the meaning of fair play. Our legislators in Gujarat, demonstrating the courage of their convictions, had actually gone before the media and made public, their allegations against the BJP's agent. These allegations were not probed and the BJP, instead of behaving in a manner befitting a ruling party, tried to dismiss the allegations. However, the BJP's pride came to a fall. The party made a crucial mistake. The two Congress MLAs who the BJP sought to break away, in their eagerness to please their new masters, showed their votes to their new masters in the BJP. Our authorised representative noticed this and the Congress filed a complaint before the Election Commission.

The Congress' request was simple: Examine the video footage to determine if the offending MLAs had shown their ballots to anyone other than the authorised agent. A matter that could have been resolved in minutes was stretched to hours by the unnecessary bickering of the BJP.

The Congress held fast to the principles of law and the Constitution: If there was a violation, the Election Commission had to take action. The BJP spread false and irrelevant narratives. These ranged from the absurd — "the Congress didn't file its complaint in the morning, so it shouldn't be allowed to do so now" — to the desperate — "the Congress is attempting to manipulate the ECI". The spurious objections were rightly rejected.

This, above all, was Amit Shah's defeat. His reach far exceeded his grasp as he and his colleagues tried to subvert, first, the voting process and, then, the appellate mechanism. Blinded by hubris and political heft, the BJP leadership sought to turn this election into a referendum on their control over Gujarat. They were reminded that not all men and women have a price. The Congress rank and file rallied behind Ahmed Patel while the BJP sought to plant stories of factions and separations. The Congress stood together while the BJP propaganda machine did what it does best, spread vicious lies.

In this din, the Election Commission stood out as a beacon of hope for upholding the Constitution and the law. Despite six senior cabinet ministers attempting to "convince" the officers of the futility of the Congress cause, they acted as per the law. The entire country was witness as the Union Finance Minister and Union Law Minister abdicated their constitutional functions and acted as party pracharaks. The end result is that they stand exposed. The vast resources and influence at the BJP's disposal could not turn right into wrong. In the conflict between truth and state power, truth and democracy prevailed.

These events are important for another reason. A section of the media was peddling a narrative that the BJP had pulled off canny political stratagems and the Congress should have been more careful. This was a disappointing display of attempting to be more loyal than the king. Their reluctance to highlight the series of electoral malpractices by the BJP shows a deeper, and a more worrying, bias. It was akin to congratulating a thief for a well-executed theft and blaming the victim for not having installed sufficient alarms. Some news channels had even begun to write obituaries by early evening. But finally, none of that mattered.

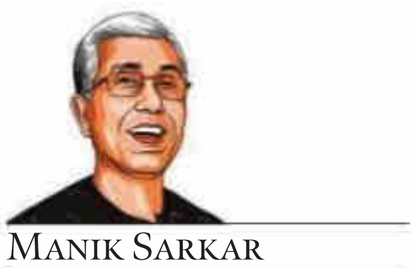
This is also a reminder to the BJP. It has spent three years desperately usurping power, controlling the media and persecuting opponents by unbridled misuse of state power. Raids, false criminal cases and hounding everyone who disagrees with the government, appear to have become the new normal. This drama has also exposed where the BJP's priorities lie. Their ministers run to the Election Commission to display their loyalty to their leaders, instead of performing the functions for which they have been elected. The government and the party apparatus is used only to subjugate, suppress and persecute. In one single night, the BJP crumbled unto itself when it found that it couldn't bend the democratic institutions to its perverse will.

It would be too much to expect statesmanship from the BJP and for it to congratulate those who have won. But it would be appreciated if its leaders also find the time to govern a country growing increasingly tired of their brand of politics.

The writer is a member of the Haryana Legislative Assembly and in-charge of the Congress Media Cell

FOR THE RECORD

The speech that did not pass the AIR test



MANIK SARKAR

ON THE occasion of Independence Day, I convey my greetings and best wishes to you all. I pay my homage to the great memory of the martyrs of India's freedom struggle. I would also like to offer my personal regards to those freedom fighters who are amongst us today.

Independence Day is not just a ceremonial occasion. Keeping in view the historical significance and tremendous emotional attachment to this day for Indians, it has to be treated as an important ceremonial occasion for national introspection. Before us on this year's Independence Day are quite a few very relevant, important and contemporary issues.

Unity in diversity is India's traditional heritage. Great values of secularism have helped in keeping Indians together as a nation. But today, this spirit of secularism is under attack. Conspiracies and attempts are underway to create an undesirable complexity and divisions in our society; to invade our national consciousness in the name of religion, caste and community, by inciting passions to convert India into a particular religion country and in the name of protecting the cow. Because of all these, people of minority and Dalit communities are under severe attack. Their sense of security is being shattered. Their life is in peril. These unholy tendencies cannot be harboured or tolerated. These disruptive attempts are contrary to the goals, dreams and ideals of our freedom struggle.

The followers of those who were not associated with the Independence movement, rather sabotaged the freedom movement, were servile to the atrocious, plundering and merciless British, aligned with the anti-national forces, having decorated themselves today in different names and colours are striking at the root of unity and integrity of India. Every loyal and patriotic Indian must take the pledge today to remain committed to the ideal of a united India and counter the attempts towards such destructive conspiracies and attacks. We must all collectively strive to ensure the security of minorities and Dalits and preserve the unity and integrity of our country.

Today, the gulf between the haves and have-nots is widening. The nation's vast resources and wealth are being concentrated in the hands of a few. A large majority of our people are suffering from poverty. These people are the victims of inhuman exploitation. They are being deprived of food, shelter, clothing, education, healthcare and security of job for assured income. This is contrary to the aims and objectives of our Independence struggle. Our current national policies are squarely responsible for this state of affairs. Such anti-people policies shall have to be reversed. But words alone will not achieve this. For this, we need the deprived and the suffering Indians to arise, become vocal and protest fearlessly, collectively. We definitely need an alternative policy that serves the interests of the vast majority of Indians. To bring this alternative policy into reality, the deprived and suffering Indians need to take a pledge on this Independence Day to launch an economic, political and social movement.

The mounting problem of unemployment has created a sense of despondency and gloom in our national psyche. On the one hand, lakhs of employed are loosing their jobs; on the other hand, crores of unemployed youth are waiting for jobs. It is not possible to solve this gigantic national problem without reversing the national economic policies which work to strengthen the very small group of profiteering corporates, and without increasing the purchasing power of the common people of India. Hence, the students, youth, and working classes will have to take pledge on this Independence Day to launch a collective and continuous movement to reverse these destructive policies.

In contrast to the anti-people policies of the government at the Centre, the state government of Tripura despite its limitations has been pursuing policies for the welfare of people in all walks of life with a special focus on the downtrodden and to advance forward with their cooperation. This is a totally different and an alternative path. This path has been able to not only attract the people of Tripura but also elicit a positive response of the downtrodden people of our country. This is not being tolerated by the reactionary forces here in Tripura. Hence, conspiracies are being hatched up by the enemies of the people to disturb peace, fraternity and integrity of the state. And at the same time, attempts are on to disrupt the realm of developmental works. We need to counter all these unholy designs and isolate the reactionary forces. In this background, on this Independence Day, all the right-thinking, peace-loving and development-seeking people of Tripura need to take a determined pledge to come forward and work unitedly against such disruptive forces.

(Edited excerpts from Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar's Independence Day speech that Doordarshan and All India Radio declined to broadcast)

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

LOOK WITHIN

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'My India has changed' (IE, August 15). The Congress Party's account of tolerance has been less than exemplary. But that's no cause for exonerating the BJP. It's clear that the RSS is driving the BJP's agenda of Hindutva. The PM's silence over much of the happenings is disturbing. Donald Trump's silence on violence by white supremacists in the US evoke criticism from major think tanks in the US. What's holding back the so-called intelligentsia that is helping the PM to implement policies. Why was the PM silent on the UP government's diktat to madrasas?

Ashok Goswami, *Mumbai*

REMOVE DISTRUST

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Undoing the economic partition' (IE, August 16). Despite the Partition, our borders were relatively free from trouble in the first two decades of independence. Subsequently external aggression, internal insularity and the formation of Bangladesh made things increasingly difficult for the economic integration of the Subcontinent. Such integration will be even more difficult now because of China's over reach in the Subcontinent. The deep distrust between the countries in the region has to be removed by political measures. But that should be done without compromising India's interests.

Parthasarathy Sen, *Delhi*

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 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

RSS LINKS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'After the speech' (IE, August 16) The PM can't implement all his heart touching slogans because he and his party depend on the RSS cadres to win elections. Let us not forget that the PM himself has been a swayamsevak. How can he reject the RSS' ideology and beliefs such as Hindu rashtra and cow worship.

Ajaya Laxmi, *Faridabad*