

Dear Yogiji, for UP's growth, be bullish on buffalo

SWAMINOMICS



SWAMINATHAN S ANKLESARIA AIYAR

Dear Yogi Adityanath, Many chief ministers — Naveen Patnaik, Nitish Kumar, Shivraj Chouhan, Narendra Modi — won re-election repeatedly because decent economic policy plus improved governance yielded 9-10% GDP growth for years. If you do the same in UP, you will not only get re-elected but become a strong candidate for the next Prime Minister.

You have promised the usual good deeds that all new CMs do, to improve electricity, roads, cities, law and order, education and health. These are important. But you need something special for a breakthrough. Seek an area where UP is already No. 1, and build on that.

UP is tops mostly in population, infant deaths, and other negative indicators, reflecting its large size and poor governance. It has some successes. Noida, next to Delhi, has become a hub for IT, media and entertainment. But it's not India's best.

UP is a successful No. 1 in buffalo meat exports. Such exports have quadrupled since 2010 to overtake basmati rice as India's top agricultural export. UP also has the most world-class abattoirs certified for quality and sanitary standards by meat-importing countries. These are rare centres of global excellence in a backward state.

Buffalo meat is one of a triad of interlinked industries — dairy, meat and leather. The same buffaloes yield all three. They are widely owned already. With the rise of tractors, bullocks (castrated bulls) are not needed for ploughing or bullock carts. Because of UP's ban on cow slaughter, bullocks and male calves cannot legally be sold to abattoirs. The price of fodder has shot up and grazing grounds have disappeared, so feeding animals is expensive. Hence farmers simply kill, starve or let loose on the roads all male calves, surplus bullocks and cows beyond milk-giving age.

But buffaloes are not cows. Their slaughter is entirely legal. Old cattle fetch nothing but a dry female buffalo or male fetches Rs 25,000. Farmers find buffaloes more profitable than cows, and so UP's cow/bull population has fallen steadily, while that of buffaloes has shot up and overtaken that of cows.

Many male buffalo calves are still slaughtered or starved at birth, wasting half the potential animal wealth. A very modest feeding subsidy for the first year can induce farmers to rear male calves for two years, and then sell them for meat and leather.

Buffalo meat exports shot up from \$1.15 billion in 2009-10 to \$4.78 billion in 2014-15 before declining slightly. The scope for future growth is high. With farm plots getting



NO RAKSHA REQUIRED: As every Hindu knows, the buffalo is as different from the bull as Yama from Shiva

split between several children, many farms are too small for profitable cropping, causing distress and suicides. One obvious solution is to shift from cropping to buffalo rearing for the triad of milk, meat and leather. That can give productive employment to millions and greatly relieve farm distress.

Yogiji, if you want 10% economic growth that ensures your re-election, a vital initiative must be to quadruple UP's buffalo exports. Then leather and dairy exports (and jobs) can quadruple too. Every municipality and district should, by law, have a slaughterhouse for supplying meat. Don't just close illegal or polluting ones, create conditions for a boom industry. Outsource decrepit government abattoirs to top exporters, whose foreign clients will insist on pollution-free systems.

Foot-and-mouth disease afflicts bovines today. Experts say a Rs 2,000-crore programme can eradicate the disease in three years. That will improve the prices of dairy and meat exports by 30-40%. UP also needs city-wide effluent treatment plants linking all leather producers, ending tannery pollution.

Your first aim must be to quadruple buffalo production. With a small feeding subsidy for young male calves, this is entirely feasible.

Unfortunately gau rakshaks are wreaking havoc. Cattle traders say these rakshaks are really bandits demanding bribes, now up from Rs 350 to Rs 500 per animal. If traders don't pay they are beaten, their money is snatched, and the police are called to book them on false charges under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. The police and gau rakshaks share the loot, even though it cripples what could be UP's biggest employer and source of prosperity.

Yogiji, you must stop this. It has nothing to do with cow protection or the Hindu faith. The cow may be holy but not the buffalo. Quadrupling the buffalo industry is entirely compatible with cow protection.

As a Yogi, you know that the bull is Shiva's steed, while the buffalo is Yama's steed. You will sneer at any Hindu who cannot distinguish Shiva from Yama. Equally, you must sneer at those that cannot distinguish bulls from buffaloes.

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Being gay in rural India is different. Literature needs to capture that

In the conventional Kannada literary landscape, Vasudhendra is an outlier. The writer set off shockwaves when he came out of the closet with his collection of semi-autobiographical short stories titled *Mohanaswamy* in 2013. But the book became a landmark, resonating deeply with his queer fans in rural Karnataka who started seeking him out with their own stories. With the English translation hitting bookstores, the Bengaluru-based author tells Prathap Nair why there should be greater representation of the queer regional experience

How would you describe the experience of growing up gay in rural Karnataka?

It took me 40 years to come out. That's what social stigma, prevalent in rural areas around homosexuality, can do to an individual. Thankfully, I had my writing to express myself through but that is not the case with many queer people who live in villages. Gay experience in rural India is very different from urban India, which is much more open and liberal in its values. Homosexuality is taboo in (rural) society, mainly because of lack of knowledge and information. I firmly believe that when more books like *Mohanaswamy* get published, people will be sensitised and educated about sexuality and queer sexual orientation, and things will start to change.

In the story 'Bicycle Riding', the protagonist learns to ride a bicycle in the hope of 'turning from gay to straight' and finally realises that even if he 'learns to fly an aeroplane, he will still want to make love to a man'. Have things changed at all for gay people in rural India?

Things have remained more or less the same since my childhood in Bellary. There is a severe lack of support groups addressing issues related to sexual orientation such as social stigma, bullying and coming out. Most organisations target the urban population, and very few have the necessary outreach in rural areas. That is why books play a significant role in shaping the queer mindset in my opinion. Queer writing in English for an Indian audience is vibrant but the representation of queer regional experience

is insufficient. I hope that changes in the coming years.

FOR THE RECORD

Do you think the success of books like Mohanaswamy and Gachar Gochar (by Kannada writer Vivek Shanbhag) will help bring more translated works from regional literature to a pan-India audience?

I'm heartened by the international success of the English translation of Shanbhag's *Gachar Gochar*. There are more such remarkable literary works in regional literature, over and above Kannada, waiting to be translated for a national and even international audience.

What are you reading these days?

I'm reading multiple books about the Vijayanagara Empire, alongside the richly imagined poetry of Kumaravyasa. I'm also reading some chronicles by travellers from Portugal, Russia, and China containing fascinating ethnographical details on life and times during the Vijayanagara Empire.

Is there a work of historical fiction in the making?

As an engineering student, I

didn't study history in college. In school, I was never enthusiastic about it because of the dates and years one had to remember. When I recently revisited history, I realised how much it fascinates me. The interest is also partly because Bellary was the nerve centre of the Vijayanagara kingdom, which is where I am originally from. I am intrigued by the legacy of the Vijayanagara rulers who held the region for 250 years.

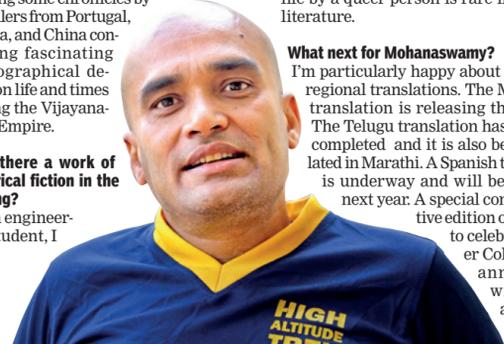
Secondly, I have so far written stories based on narratives derived from familiar turf — rural Karnataka and Bellary, my queer experience, urban living woes, life in IT, and so on. Now I think the time is ripe to experiment with different subject matter. I can't deny I am looking for inspiration for historical fiction but it's still too early to say.

You went from software professional to full-time author. How has life changed after Mohanaswamy?

The English translation has brought more focus on my other work in Kannada. Otherwise, whenever I am invited to talks and symposiums, people are curious to know if the events described in *Mohanaswamy* really happened in my life. People prod me to talk more on the subject but it's more about the shock value of the book. This is why more books like *Mohanaswamy* should be written to normalise the queer experience. Besides, writing derived from experiences in a queer person's life by a queer person is rare in regional literature.

What next for Mohanaswamy?

I'm particularly happy about the book's regional translations. The Malayalam translation is releasing this month. The Telugu translation has also been completed and it is also being translated in Marathi. A Spanish translation is underway and will be out early next year. A special commemorative edition of the book to celebrate HarperCollins's 25th anniversary will be out as well.



It's time for New India to give talaq to old, prejudiced Bharat

BLOODY MARY



SAGARIKA GHOSE

The nuanced and sensitive majority judgment in the triple talaq case, which upheld equality as well as personal law, has been met in some quarters by predictable majoritarian gloating. Muslim-bashing is supposed to be the sneaky new freedom of 'New India' in which unabashed 'nationalists' now feel free to give vent to as much ire against minorities as they want, freed at last from the so-called shackles of secular dominance.

The PM defined 'New India' as a fight against communalism, casteism and corruption, yet for many it is only a licence to be openly prejudiced. Are the revolutionaries of New India purveying the worst of old Bharat and its biases and passing off plain bigotry as some imagined "Hindu" cultural

renaissance? Attacks on women on social media, diktats on what citizens must eat, wear, sing, speak, paint, read, and study, how they must marry, who they must love and hate, are being justified in the name of a 'new' nationalism. New India, it seems, is only about a rather Old Bharat.

Five courageous Muslim women fought inspiringly not only for changes in the law but also for a change in patriarchal mindsets. More than the law, the symbolism of women defeating clerics is a powerful one. The modern woman after all is the enemy No. 1 of organised religion. Religious strictures on menstruation, dress codes, purification rituals, food restrictions play out primarily on the bodies of women.

The women who defeated triple talaq should be role models for women across communities. New India warriors are thumping chests in their "triumph" over Islam, but this is actually a time for introspection. Those who are jubilant at Muslim reform and want to stand up for Muslim women are

precisely those who 60 years ago were at the forefront of opposing Hindu reform. When Nehru's government drove a coach and horses through Hindu marriage and inheritance practices, sangh activists had chanted "Pandit Nehru must perish."

Instead of demonising the Muslim, isn't there a need for the Hindu to turn the gaze inwards? Census data for 2011 shows that there are still a large number of Hindu women in polygamous marriages. In fact, bigamy disadvantages Hindu women more than Muslim, because often Hindu women are simply abandoned without rights. The National Commission for Women has documented how Vrindavan widows have suffered. Politicians have been seen endorsing mass child marriages in Rajasthan, and Haryana CMM L Khattar has said khap panchayats are useful in society. For many, khaps must be defended as a mark of Hindu cultural identity. But any attachment to Islamic cultural identity is seen as treasonous and terrorist-friendly.

The symbolic "victory" of ending instant tri-

ple talaq cannot be allowed to overwhelm the facts. For a society that turns a blind eye to the killing of girls before birth and to the shameful discarding of elderly women, a society that can't recognise gender or caste injustice and even rationalises them, to talk obsessively of injustice to Muslim women is hardly sincere. While mosques are seen as a male-dominated space, don't forget the battles women are fighting for equal temple rights, most notably in the case where two Hindu women have taken the Sabarimala priesthood to court.

What about caste prejudice? Vicious attacks on Dalits in Una as well as recently in Vadodara are signs of how rampant caste violence is being given new energy by the so-called votaries of New India and their championship of the cause of the cow. Dalits form the bulk of manual scavengers, 10 of whom died in a month in Delhi. Yet how many mainstream politicians will lend as much support to manual scavengers as they did to the battle against the Muslim clergy? Why do human beings

daily choking on excreta not disturb us as much as triple talaq did? That's because the language of New India is not really about change, it's only an echo of an old hostility towards minorities.

The PM's hostility for the triple talaq judgment is welcome, but why don't we see similar passionate reformism for gender justice among Hindus, as well as against empty ritualism and superstition? Red Fort rhetoric must be matched by a commitment to frontally challenging social conservatives on the ground: instead, nationalist voices are silenced and dubbed "anti-national" and "anti-Hindu," even as antediluvian godmen are embraced. The triple talaq judgment is a defining moment: it's a conscience call for all reformists to stand together to fight for progressive modern values in every religion: that would be the real New India, an India where every abandoned wife, Muslim or Hindu, is protected.

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Up ahead, bigger battles loom over polygamy, personal laws

RIGHT & WRONG



SWAPAN DASGUPTA

The Supreme Court's majority verdict against the legality of triple talaq has largely been welcomed by both the government and the more articulate sections of public opinion. Even those in the Muslim community that have misgivings over judicial interference in faith-based community practices appear to have chosen the path of tactical retreat in the belief that there are bigger battles to be fought over polygamy and the principle of separate personal laws. Certainly, the different judgments have ignited a hitherto lazy debate over reforms of Muslim personal laws, and for a civil code that goes beyond faith and custom and is applicable to all Indians.

The significance of the abolition of triple talaq shouldn't be underestimated. The Supreme Court has heralded the first major modification of Muslim personal laws in 80 years. Nearly 30 years ago, a similar attempt to grant maintenance to divorced Muslim women had faltered because the Rajiv Gandhi government, despite enjoying a brute parliamentary majority, lacked the moral backbone to stand up to sectarian pressure. The Shah Bano saga is, however, unlikely to be repeated now. On the contrary, the end of triple talaq may energise attempts to enlarge the scope of gender justice through either legislation or judicial pronouncements.

India's socio-political landscape has changed dramatically since 1987-88. First, and very reassuringly, the outlawing of triple talaq has been endorsed by a significant section of Muslim women, particularly from the middle classes. Unlike the past when it was left to the likes of Arif Mohammad Khan to fight a lonely battle, the past decade has witnessed an increasing number of Muslim women willing to speak out against gender injustice. A section of India's population that had remained invisible in the past are now partially visible. On its part, the women's movement has shed earlier inhibitions about not speaking out on injustices in 'minority' communities.

Secondly, and arguably for the first time since Independence, India has a government at the Centre that is not even remotely susceptible to political blackmail by the clerical orthodoxy. It is significant that apart from Mamata Banerjee and Lulu Yadav, most of the other mainstream 'secular' leaders were compelled to welcome the Supreme Court judgment. This, despite

their stated position that personal law reform must flow from within the concerned community and not be imposed from above.

A desire to prevent Prime Minister Narendra Modi — who spoke about the regressive consequences of persisting with triple talaq in his Independence Day address — from running away with the credit and acquiring the mantle of social reformer, was a clear factor. Equally, there was the realisation that 'minorityism' now carries diminishing political returns. Three decades ago, Rajiv Gandhi was intimidated by the threat of a Muslim revolt against the award of a paltry alimony to an abandoned woman. Modi has no such fears. In Assam and Uttar Pradesh, the BJP demonstrated it is possible to override the sectarian veto through countervailing mobilisation. Paradoxically, the much-decried 'polarising' approach attributed to Modi and Amit Shah has become the guarantor of the irreversibility of the triple talaq judgment. India's liberal politics may have its charms but it has invariably succumbed to pressure from the ghettoes.

The real reason why scrapping triple talaq has drawn relatively less flak is because it was an apex court judgment. Had the court directed the government to sanctify the judgment with parliamentary legislation — the minority view of Chief Justice Khehar — the whole business would have become extremely cluttered. The very same parties that welcomed the apex court judgment would have developed second thoughts and been subjected to sustained pressure from Muslim orthodoxy. No doubt the BJP would have loved a battle that would have exposed the existential dilemmas of the 'secular' parties — Mamata at least is being honest in her espousal of old-fashioned vote bank politics — but the clash could well have been bitter and ugly, and even have spilled over to the streets.

By being clear in its verdict the judiciary has averted this tension. At the same time it has further increased India's dependence on judge-made laws, a phenomenon that, in effect, undermines the supremacy of Parliament. It will be interesting to see if Modi's New India can reclaim the turf in a future battle over polygamy.

In the meantime, India can reflect over why it took seven decades to undo a glaring injustice to Muslim women. And why in the end it was so remarkably easy. As Roosevelt famously said: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

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VICTORY: Muslim women are increasingly speaking out against gender injustice

RHYME & REASON

AMIT VARMA

PRIVACY
The Supreme Court upheld our birthright.
I jumped with joy.
I screamed with delight,
"Governments, leave us alone!
We are fine on our own!
You are nothing but a parasite."

RIOTS
There are mobs out there on the rampage.
We must not give in to their outrage.
To crush them is our task,
But we must also ask,
What is the deeper cause of their rage?

INBOX

Feedback is good
This refers to Shobhaa De's 'India@70...' (Aug 20). Considering some of the actions of the present government, not only Hamid Ansari but many right-thinking people feel that the sense of insecurity among the Muslim community has some justification. Instead of criticising Ansari, the government should consider such remarks as feedback from the community and try to address their fears.

Nicholas NC, Mumbai

Wrong medicine

Neellesh Misra's article ('Why the Gorakhpur story is not about one night of horror', August 20) dwells on issues that all public health in India. Rudolph Virchow, the great German pathologist and statesman, once said: "Medicine is a social science and politics is nothing else but medicine on a large scale." Sadly, our polity has failed to deliver the right medicine to secure health for all.

Dr L R Murmu, New Delhi

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Why the privacy ruling may be the finest in SC's history

BY INVITATION

GOPAL SANKARANARAYANAN

When momentous things happen, they usually take a while to sink in. As the nation absorbs the Supreme Court verdict declaring privacy as a fundamental right, its implications would be slow to manifest themselves. I will however venture out on the proverbial limb to say this is probably the finest judgment in the history of the court.

A singular bane of seven decades of governance (if it could be called that) has been the tendency of governments, to quote Ronald Reagan, to run people's lives. Brute parliamentary majorities muzzled their way through excesses of the worst kind, reaching a nadir with Indira Gandhi's Emergency, where even the SC was found to buckle courtesy its judgment in the habeas corpus case (ADM Jabalpur), upholding the suspension of fundamental rights, including the right to life. The court's evolution of PIL jurisprudence in subsequent decades helped neutralise the inequity somewhat, as did the compromised coalition governments that followed. However, the juggernaut of the 2014 electoral victory led to misgivings about executive excess, borne out by President's Rule in Arunachal and Uttarakhand, the National Judicial Appointments Commission that sought to control judicial appointments, and the money bill route to pass laws. With cow and JNU added to the mix, the governance picture was not a pretty one. The time was ripe for a churning. Who knew it would come from the offshoot of a petition challenging the Aadhaar project filed by a former HC judge?

There are several notable facts in the judgment now referred to as *Justice K S Puttaswamy vs Union of India*, prominent among which is that it was unanimous, despite having nine minds attending to it. This itself is reassuring for the court, that its fate is in the hands of those who have no compunction in declaring what is right. Consider also that the Chief Justice of India chose not to pen a piece of his own, leaving his colleagues to author judgments uninfluenced by his views.

With six separate judgments, there was always a fear of ambiguity in determining what was actually said. There is no equivocation here. "Privacy subserves those eternal values upon which the guarantees of life, liberty and freedom are founded," says Justice Chandrachud, with whom Justices Khehar, Agrawal and Nazeer concurred. "Fundamental rights," says Justice Chelameswar, "are the only constitutional firewall to prevent State's interference with those core freedoms

constituting liberty of a human being." Justice Bobde opines that "privacy is inextricably bound up with all exercises of human liberty". Justice Nariman declares that "the inalienable right to privacy resides in Article 21 and other fundamental freedoms contained in Part III of the Constitution". Justice Sapre believes that privacy is a right that "is inseparable and inalienable from the human being" and Justice Kaul extols it as an "important, natural, primordial right". There is no cleavage, no reservation, no doubt. Privacy is a core fundamental right.

Not only was this the single largest bench of the SC ever constituted to determine the existence of a fundamental right, but a composite reading shows the bonhomie and unity on the bench in coming to a common conclusion. References to each other's verdicts are rare in large bench decisions, but here, the judges have clearly had the advantage of perusing each other's drafts well in advance, minimising the overlaps and offering an uncluttered view to the reader. One trusts that this healthy trend will continue.

Distributed merrily across the 547 pages are several nuggets that would rival an Easter egg hunt. Interpreting the right to life and liberty (Article 21), the court attended to two roadblocks (as Justice Nariman refers to it). By a near-unanimous decision, the court at long last has overruled the dreadful ADM Jabalpur decision of the Emergency, which would finally bring peace to the late brave Justice H R Khanna, the sole dissenting judge.

What would come as deliverance for the LGBTQ community however is the express overruling by the majority of the offensive passages of the Naz Foundation case and a declaration that sexual orientation is an inextricable part of the fundamental right to privacy, thereby paving the path to restore the celebrated Delhi High Court judgment on Section 377.

The verdict is also remarkable for its wonderful prose, the myriad resources from across the globe, the illustrations and historical allusions — all of which have carved a clear path for coming generations in understanding and preserving our most basic rights.

In his dystopian graphic novel *V* for Vendetta, the legendary Alan Moore puts the following in the mouth of his protagonist, V: "People shouldn't be afraid of their government. Governments should be afraid of their people." With this judgment, the people have been empowered again.

The writer is an SC advocate who appeared for Centre for Civil Society

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AADHAAR OF HOPE: There is no room for ambiguity in the court judgment