



**A thought for today**

There is a deep narrative structure to terrorist acts, and they infiltrate and alter consciousness in ways that writers used to aspire to

DON DELILLO

# Xiamen Agenda

What Modi should do at Brics

With President Donald Trump calling out Islamabad on safe havens for terror groups, Beijing appears apprehensive that Prime Minister Narendra Modi might bring up the matter as well at the Brics summit it will be hosting, starting tomorrow. China's foreign ministry spokesperson has issued advance notice that Pakistan-sponsored terror would not be an "appropriate" topic for the summit. Such an effort at pre-emption, however, betrays anxiety that Beijing may be called upon once again to protect its client and defend the indefensible.

Which is all the more reason for Modi to raise a core concern for India, especially now that diplomatic winds are blowing in its favour:



Pakistan's National Assembly passed an extraordinary resolution declaring Washington's call for an Indian role in Afghanistan's development as "detrimental to regional stability", which betrays a colonial, proprietorial approach towards who can or cannot participate in Afghanistan's development. Nevertheless Islamabad had successfully fended off pressure on safe havens in the past by asking

Washington to reduce Indian presence in Afghanistan, a stratagem whose utility is diminishing. Like Islamabad, Beijing too is belligerent and vociferous about its narratives, as India witnessed most recently during the Doklam standoff. While New Delhi doesn't have to reciprocate in kind, there is no reason for it to be tongue-tied either.

If the Xiamen Brics summit is to have any meaning, its agenda cannot be confined to matters of interest to Beijing alone. Modi must move a resolution condemning internationally designated terror groups working out of Pakistan, and let Beijing embarrass itself by defending these groups. Beijing is relentlessly pursuing what it believes to be its interests, and gives New Delhi little diplomatic quarter. New Delhi needs to correspondingly pressure Beijing, to persuade its client to turn off the terror tap which happens to be the real threat to regional stability.

# Rape In Marriage

Still a violation of consent and therefore rape

The Union government recently told the court that marital rape should not be criminalised, because what an "individual wife" considers rape may not appear the same to others, and because this would destabilise families and be used to "harass husbands". In this upside-down view, the hassle of seeking redress for sexual violence is the problem, not the violence itself.

Across the world, legal frameworks have struggled with the question of marital rape. Some countries, like India, treat it on par with domestic abuse and subject to civil remedies, and criminalise it only if the spouses are separated or if the woman is a minor. Apart from the social reflex that assumes that men have a right to their wives' bodies, the burden of evidence has also been held up as a reason to exempt marital rape - how would one prove that a woman has not consented in this specific instance? But the high hurdles of proof and the cultural bias against accepting the crime, should be all the more reason to legally recognise the crime for what it is.

One by one, most progressive legal systems now recognise that spousal rape is a crime, India being one of the shameful exceptions. Statistics prove that Indian women face the greatest violence and trauma in their own homes; marital rape is usually a long-running pattern of abuse. Recognising it as such is a crucial test for any jurisdiction that claims to treat women as equal citizens.

# Divided They Stand

India hasn't moved beyond Partition, America hasn't moved beyond the Civil War

Gautam Adhikari



Washington: Did the Civil War ever really end in America? Did Partition settle the national identity question in India? Or do they remain open wounds in the world's largest two democracies?

Those who live in India would agree that the issue of what exactly should be the nation's primary identity is hardly a settled matter. That might be the only thing the two sides in the argument would agree on. One camp insists that the Partition of India was a defining moment at which the Muslims chose to have a separate nation carved out for them and therefore the remaining portion of India that is Bharat should be an unapologetic Hindu nation. The other side says the Constitution of India was drawn up in the manner it was because the republic of India would affirm a kind of secularism that would continue to accommodate Hindus and Muslims, as well as Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jains and what have you, in direct contrast to the religion-defined profile of Pakistan.

Between the two nations the argument has continued for seven decades, violently, over the state of Jammu & Kashmir. Within the Indian republic, it is a critical fault line between major political parties and ideological camps. Who do we call an Indian? What truly is the idea of India?

Today the argument, which has waxed and waned over the decades, is at a high pitch. Subsets of questions keep surfacing: Who is a true Hindu? Do Dalits accept they are part of the Hindu family? If they do, why are so many fleeing to Buddhism? Does Hinduism have a fixed contour defined by the Vedas or is it a collection of traditions and practices which some 18th and 19th century scholars and nationalist leaders defined as a collective identity? Should Muslims have personal laws in a secular state? Must all Hindus be vegetarian? Do all Hindus share a singular identity? Do all Muslims? The argument, often violent, is not over.

In the United States, the northern states and the south fought violently in the 19th century over the southerners' assumed entitlement, in the name of states' rights, to own slaves and to continue treating African Americans as less than human. Around seven hundred thousand died in the Civil War which ended in 1865. But did the argument end with the north's victory?

No. Without going into details that can be found in history books, the southern states of the so-called Confederacy quickly established a system of effective apartheid. The southern states, after a period of reconstruction following the war, imposed local and state laws that from 1896 ensured continuing racial segregation. The system was not fully undone until the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts of 1963 and '64. But that was hardly the end of racial hatred in America.

To cut the story short, hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi white nationalists, who were presumed to be on the fringes of the socio-political spectrum, are openly enjoying a revival. After many had prematurely assumed that racism in America had been buried once for all by the election of Barack Obama as president, several observers now feel that the spell of eight years under an African American leader heightened fears among those who felt that their vision of a white America was rapidly fading, a fear deepened by the continuing influx of brown immigrants from south of the border and other parts of the world.

So they put in power a man who spoke their language of intolerance of minorities punctuated by racist dog whistles. The Klan and the so-called alt-right have welcomed his tone on racial matters and assemble now in public without face masks. Meanwhile, an anarchist "Antifa" or anti-fascist movement on the far left has become a source of gratuitous violence that has alarmed moderates and quickly been denounced by the president and his supporters as pre-planned leftist disruption of law and order.

In short, the world's two largest democracies are straining at the seams. How they tackle the rise of violently divisive intolerance might affect the future of democracy across the world.

**justgraffiti**

# Blame It On The Rain

Till we begin to take responsibility, Mumbai will always drown in heavy showers

Chetan Bhagat



First up, apologies for writing about Mumbai in a national column. Mumbai is just one city of India. However, it is also the nation's financial and business capital. The city's health has a bearing on the rest of the country.

Earlier this week, the world saw Mumbai in tatters because of the weather. On Tuesday Mumbai witnessed heavy rains, around 30cm in 24hrs. To place it in context, Mumbai received an eighth of its annual 225cm average rainfall on one day. This level of rain is very high, even though Mumbai has received over 90cm in a day (in 2005).

Having said that, it is also not a level at which the city needs to come to a grinding halt. Local trains stopped due to flooded tracks. City taxis, aggregator cabs and autos went off waterlogged roads. Many school kids slept in schools overnight. Passengers at local train stations parked themselves in abandoned trains, the only dry place they found, for hours.

The response to this avoidable problem followed a standard pattern. The morning started with gushing praise for the spectacle called Mumbai rains. By noon, pictures of waterlogging filled social media feeds. A couple of hours later, there were reports of people braving the rain and walking home, the 'unshakeable spirit of Mumbai' (as if the person walking home had another choice).

Then we had reports of compassion, on how Mumbaiers were serving hot tea and offering shelter to those stranded. At night TV news panelists shouted at each other, perhaps hoping that all the screaming would make the clouds drift away.

Nobody offered any solutions. Nobody knew how things will change. The best hope for Mumbai, which has ramshackle infrastructure even on sunny days, is that God will be kind. Yes, we are a Ram-bharose city. We may have stock exchanges totalling



WITH RESPECT TO MARIO DE MIRANDA

a trillion dollar market capitalisation. We may have civic authorities with billions of dollars worth of budgets. We may have apartments that cost millions of dollars. However, a few hours of rain and the city collapses.

There is no other major city, which happens to be a nation's financial capital, with such terrible infrastructure. The local trains are pitiful even on normal days. In many parts of the world, farm animals travel better. Mumbai roads continue to be poorly made, patched up with materials that don't last one rainy season. The drainage system breaks down in heavy rains.

The authorities care little. Mumbai is a tiny percentage of votes in Maharashtra. Its political clout is less than the high profile of the city. Add the apathy of the people, who gather in lakhs if their religion or guru is hurt, but won't do the same to change their city. If angry Mumbaiers came on the

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road in large numbers for just one day and demanded 'fix my city', the authorities will sit up and take notice. We don't, and prefer to do our bit by retweeting headline numbers and sharing stories of who offered chai. Well, we get the city we deserve.

Meanwhile here are two suggestions that will help, not just Mumbai but other cities as well. The first is easy and should be implemented as soon as possible. The second is harder, but will truly fix the problem. It is now up to authorities to

implement and citizens to put pressure for the same.

One, we urgently need a severe weather warning system. Weather reports saying 'heavy rains expected' aren't action oriented. There has to be a scale of how bad the weather is likely to get, and what actions need to be taken at each level. For instance, we can have a scale as follows: 0: Normal situation; 1: Weather may turn bad, keep watching weather reports; 2: Strong rains/winds, primary schools to be closed; 3: Very strong rains/winds, all schools closed, advise others to stay home; 4: Extremely bad weather, all schools, offices, colleges to be closed, essential services only, limited public transport, stay indoors; and 5: Entire city shutdown.

This simple scale, prominently broadcast, could help people plan their movements and dramatically reduce hardship. For instance, last Tuesday would have been a '4'; in 2005 we had a '5'.

Of course predicting weather is difficult, though technology has improved a lot. There may be an intermittent false alarm. However, nowadays people can occasionally work from home. Hence, productivity losses will be limited. A weather warning system like the above is similar to the typhoon signal system in Hong Kong, which works brilliantly. Hong Kong also receives heavy rain; however, the city doesn't suffer or stall in bad weather as much.

The second suggestion is to fix the roads. Roads in Mumbai need to be made of concrete cement (same as they do abroad, or even in parts of Lutynens' Delhi). Using coal tar is nothing more than placing a coat of paint. It erodes in months leaving potholes. All new Mumbai roads must be made of cement, by law. Similarly, a world class drainage system is required. And yeah, would be nice if the people involved didn't steal public money.

Mumbai has suffered enough. It is time we stopped accepting this suffering, or worse, celebrating it. Record rains are tough to handle. But with the right weather warning systems, good roads and drainage, they need not cripple Mumbai. It is time we fixed the city.

# It was the suddenness of demonetisation that added immensely to its cost, and nothing to its benefits

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Whatever its critics may say, there is one unambiguous achievement of the demonetisation drive. The Reserve Bank of India can surely now claim its rightful place in the Guinness or Limca books for the world record in time spent on a single count of currency notes. But what about the other benefits that the finance ministry claimed after RBI announced the results of this mahayajna of counting?

The ministry says the number of income tax returns filed in 2016-17 was almost 25% higher than in the previous year. This sounds impressive, but is hardly unprecedented. In 2011-12, for instance, the number grew by over 80% and in the next year by over 30%. Clearly, it is possible to achieve a dramatic increase in the number of those filing returns without the shock and awe of a midnight demonetisation.

It has also pointed towards the ratio of physical savings to financial savings tilting in favour of the latter. Again, this is hardly novel. There have been long periods in the recent

past when households have chosen to hold more in financial assets than physical assets interspersed with periods where the reverse held true. Also, the trend from physical to financial savings has been in the making for a few years now.

Increased digitisation of transactions is also cited by the supporters of demonetisation as an achievement. The fact, however, is that after an initial spurt in the November-December period when cash was hard

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to come by, the volume of digital transactions has actually steadily shrunk from that high.

Let us, nevertheless, grant for the sake of argument that all of these claimed benefits could not have been achieved without scrapping the old 500 and 1,000 rupee notes and that they are here to stay. That still leaves us



with a key question.

The question is whether any of these claimed benefits would not have been achieved if the demonetisation had not been sudden. Had the government announced that the old high-denomination notes would be, say, valid only for three months, would any of these benefits been negated?

This question is important because the costs of the exercise were largely due to the suddenness of the move. An economy suddenly starved of 86% of its cash cannot but face some paralysis, even if only temporary. The hours spent by millions in lines, job losses and all the other stories of misery we encountered in those 50-odd days and later were because cash had suddenly been sucked out of the economy. The cost in

terms of reduced GDP too flowed from the ambush strategy. Even if we put that at the conservative 0.25-0.75% of GDP that the Economic Survey indicated, that's somewhere between Rs 38,000 crore and Rs 1.1 lakh crore.

So why did the government decide to make demonetisation an ambush? On the evening he announced the decision, the prime minister insisted that "secrecy was essential for this action". A couple of weeks later, at a book launch, he reiterated the need for catching people by surprise. "The criticism is that the government was not prepared. Their pain is that they were given no time to prepare," he gloated.

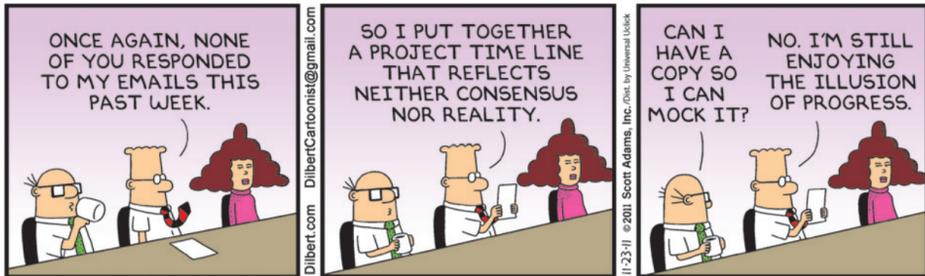
Obviously, the idea was to catch those hoarding cash - presumably black income and

wealth-off guard. Indeed Modi's remark in his November 8 speech that "the five hundred and thousand rupee notes hoarded by anti-national and anti-social elements will become just worthless pieces of paper" makes that evident.

To dispel any doubt on this score, the Attorney General at the time, Mukul Rohatgi, made it amply clear what the government was expecting when he told the Supreme Court on November 23, "We expect people to deposit Rs 10-11 lakh crore in banks. The rest, Rs 4-5 lakh crore, were being used in northeast and Jammu & Kashmir to fuel trouble in India. That will be neutralised."

So what do we make of the finance ministry's post-facto claim that "the government had expected all the specified bank notes to come back to the banking system to become effectively usable currency"? Perhaps it is too embarrassing to admit that the government had actually expected something completely different and that there were discussions on what could be done with the lakhs of crores that would come RBI's way as 'windfall profits'. After all, it's not an easy admission to make that a country of 'sava sau crore' was put through such misery for no good reason.

**dilbert**



# Humanity & Human Consciousness Are Different

Interaction: Osho

**Many western historians feel that humanity is constantly making progress. If so, why is it that human consciousness is so unevolved?**

The progress of humanity and the progress of human consciousness are two quite different dimensions. The progress of history is in time and the progress of consciousness is *not* in time. The progress of all that we can see, of all that is visible, is horizontal, while the progress of consciousness - which we cannot see - is vertical.

That is why history can never be in tune with the evolution of the human mind. At the most, it can deal with the outward form; it can never get to the spirit. But that is not the fault of history, or of historians, or of the way in which history is written. Such is the nature of things. History can never be in contact with the

formless; it can only talk about the form.

The formless is always transcendental to history, and real evolution is always formless. Outward progress is not really evolution; it is simply accumulation. There is no qualitative mutation in it; the change is only quantitative.

History can never transcend time. It can know only about those events that occur in time. It cannot know something that occurs beyond time, that is, non-temporal. Events can be perceived through the historian's eye; events exist at a cross-point between time and space. An event happens somewhere, at some time. So the questions, 'where' and 'when' can be asked about events - it will be relevant - but 'where' and 'when' cannot be asked about spiritual happenings. There, time and space are both irrelevant. Society is never interested in re-

ligion because religion is individual and society is always afraid of individuals. It is fearful of individuals, it is fearful of spiritual persons, because they go beyond society. They are rebellious, but not consciously, not knowingly. The very nature of a religious mind is rebelliousness. Religious people are not against anybody; they are not destroying things. They are not destructive in the least. Really, they are the only creative minds, but their very existence is rebellious.

Society will not allow genuine religiousness. It will only allow the false faces of religion. Society creates civilisations, not religion. Civilisations can have a history, but religion has no history at all. It only has certain religious individuals that exist here and there. Sometimes someone takes a jump, becomes a flame and goes beyond. But

the moment someone, somewhere, becomes a flame - a spiritual flame - the moment he goes beyond our so-called world of forms, he becomes one with all the flames that have ever gone beyond. Jesus is a different person from Gautama Buddha, but Buddha is not a different person from Christ. They are one flame.

Another thing: religious evolution is not collective. It is individual, yet universal. That is what makes it look so mysterious. It is not collective, it is individual, but it is still universal, because, the person who undergoes religious evolution is annihilated. He transcends collectivity, but becomes one with the universe. He becomes cosmic, divine.

This divine phenomenon cannot be recorded. We have tried to record it, but all that we have succeeded in recording is just a bare outline. It looks absolutely dead.

Abridged from *The Eternal Quest*, Osho Times International, courtesy Osho International Foundation, www.osho.com

**Sacredspace**

Profit & Loss

*It's good to have money and the things that money can buy, but it's good, too, to check up once in a while and make sure that you haven't lost the things that money can't buy.*

George H Lorimer

