

Vol: 30 | No. 1 | January 2022 | ₹20

OPINION EXPRESS

www.opinionexpress.in

A MONTHLY NEWS MAGAZINE



Cover Story

THE CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER

India must take the threat of the Tablighi as an
eye opener for future planning

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The magazine is published and printed by Rajiv Agnihotri for Opinion Express Communications & Entertainments Pvt Ltd, from Kumpu Graphic Press 2 Ashok Nagar, Lucknow & printed at Kumpu Graphic Press 2 Ashok Nagar, Lucknow - 226001
Tele : 91-522-4060880 &

Nikhil Offset An ISO 9001 : 2008 Certified Company
223, DSIDC Complex, Okhla Industrial Area Phase
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Tablighi Jamaat banned in Saudi Arabia, what next?

TablighiJamaat is often considered extremely orthodox in its interpretations, with *the ability to convert Muslims into radical believers*. The Tablighi-Jamaat members have declared they are not political but they tacitly supported secular political parties in India to protect their interest after the partition of the country. They say the Prophet Mohammed has commanded all Muslims to convey the message of Allah, and the Tablighis take this as their duty. They divide themselves into small Jamaats (societies) and travel frequently across the world to spread the message of Islam to Muslim houses. During this travel, they stay in local mosques. This free spread has enabled them to meet vulnerable deprived section of the Hindu population in India and backed up by the power of petrodollars & ISI dirty money machine including the vast network of Dawood Ibrahim and other anti-national entities, they have converted a large section of the population in the last 70 years with ease and without force.



Radicalism and Role in Acts of Terror Some TJ followers have worked as allies of Jihadi and sectarian organizations. However, once they joined the militant organizations, they cut off their links with the Tablighis. The terror groups have used the TJ congregations as a selection camp for recruitment. TablighiJamaat has been a

When the conservative societies are getting modernized in a fast-paced globalized world, Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman (MBS) is being credited with ushering in a reform phase in Saudi society and politics and giving up age-old religious and societal customs and laws.

sympathizer and supporter of jihadi organizations such as the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami, the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Al Qaeda and Taliban. According to the India Abroad News Service report, "As per WikiLeaks, some of the 9/11 al-Qaeda suspects detained by the US in Guantanamo Bay had stayed in the TablighiJamaat headquarters in Nizamuddin West, New Delhi, years ago". According to Pakistani security analysts and Indian investigators, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM) members, involved in the hijacking of Indian Airlines Flight 814 in 1999, were members of TablighiJamaat.

Recently, TablighiJamaat has been banned in Saudi Arabia, Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, whose governments see its puritanical preaching's as extremist. When the conservative societies are getting modernized in a fast-paced globalized world, Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman (MBS) is being credited with ushering in a reform phase in Saudi society and politics and giving up age-old religious and societal customs and laws. Under his stewardship, theatres have been opened up in various Saudi cities, women have been allowed to drive cars, women can visit markets or shopping malls without any male chaperone, they have been allowed not to wear Hijab or Abaya in places or to cover their faces.

In India, policymakers need to answer a simple question, how do we want to shape the future of our country? The constitution has declared India a secular state, then can TablighiJamaat or Bajrang Dal coexist with the secular system?

—Prashant Tewari,
Editor-in-Chief

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MAULANA, TABLIGHI JAMAAT AND POLITICS OF RELIGION

Despite clear evidence about its complicity in terror activities, the TJ has had a free run so far. It's high time now that India must go for a crack down



Prashant Tewari

The Tablighi Jamaat (Society of Preachers) was founded by a Deobandi Islamic scholar Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandhlawi in Mewat, India, in 1926 with an objective to establish a group of dedicated preachers as a Muslim revivalist society, who could revive “true” Islam, which he saw was not being practised by many Muslims. The slogan Al-Kandhlawi coined for his new organisation captured the essence of its activities — “Oh Muslims, become true Muslims”. By the mid-1930s, Tablighi Jamaat had a programme of belief, which included, beyond the five pillars of Islam, and Islamic doctrinal staples, the following: Islamic education, modest Islamic dress and appearance (shaving the moustache, and allowing the beard to grow long), rejection

of other religions, high regard for Muslims (yet allowed to operate in India since 1947), propagating Islam, self-financing of Tablighi trips, lawful means of earning a living, and strict avoidance of divisive and sectarian issues. Tablighi Jamaat is often considered extremely orthodox in its interpretations, with the ability to convert Muslims into radical believers. The organisation grew fast in British India. In its annual conference held in November 1941, some 25,000 people attended. After Partition, it grew stronger in Pakistan and East Pakistan (lately Bangladesh). Now, Tablighi's largest national wing is in Bangladesh. The group has presence in 150 countries and millions of followers. Incidentally, it was our great Mahatma Gandhi who convinced Maulana Ilyas to stay back in India at the time of partition and India has to pay a huge price for Mahatma Sin. The Tablighi Jamaat members have declared they are not political but they tacitly supported secular political parties in India to protect their interest after the partition of the country. They say the Prophet Mohammed has commanded all Muslims to convey the message of Allah, and the Tablighis take this as their duty. They divide themselves into small Jamaats (societies) and travel frequently across the world to spread the message of Islam to Muslim houses. During this travel, they stay in local mosques. This free spread has enabled them to meet vulnerable deprived section of Hindu population in India and backed up by the power of petro dollars & ISI dirty money machine including the vast network of Dawood Ibrahim and other anti national entities, they have converted large section of population in the last 70 years with ease and without force.

The group's modus operandi is deceptively peaceful, so much so that Ajit Doval, now India's National Security Adviser and a former intelligence boss, said in 2013. "The movement was never viewed adversely by the government." But the Tablighi Jamaat has been banned in Saudi Arabia, some Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, whose governments see its puritanical preachings as extremist.

Radicalism and Role in Acts of Terror

Some TJ followers have worked as allies of Jihadi and sectarian organizations. However, once they joined the militant organizations, they cut off their links with the Tablighis. The terror





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groups have used the TJ congregations as a selection camp for recruitment. Tablighi Jamaat has been a sympathizer and supporter of jihadi organizations such as the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami, the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Al Qaeda and Taliban. According to India Abroad News Service report, "As per WikiLeaks, some of the 9/11 al-Qaeda suspects detained by the US in Guantanamo Bay had stayed in the Tablighi Jamaat headquarters in Nizamuddin West, New Delhi, years ago". According to Pakistani security analysts and Indian investigators, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM) members, involved in the hijacking of Indian Airlines Flight 814 in 1999, were members of Tablighi Jamaat.

The 2011 U.S investigation reports suggest that Tablighi Jamaat had supported members of Al Qaeda to get visa and funds to travel from Pakistan. Moreover, there are many more such cases from Kenya, Somalia and Pakistan. It brings us to the conclusion that Tablighi Jamaat is used as a conduit by Islamic terrorist organizations to facilitate travels for their members. The Tablighi Jamaat has become jihadi spotter

as they train or preach the Muslims to devote themselves to religion

Saad-The new Khalifa

Born on May 10, 1965, Maulana Muhammad Saad is the Amir (chief) of the Tablighi Jamaat. He is the grandson of Maulana Muhammad Ilyas, who founded Tablighi Jamaat*. Maulana Saad became the chief of the Tablighi Jamaat on November 16, 2015. He was a member of 'Shura' (central consultative council) of Tablighi Jamaat from 1995



to 2015. He studied Maulviyat from the madrasa Kashif-ul-Uloom located in a part of Markaz. Former head of the Tablighi Jamaat Inamul Hasan Kandhlawi had formed 10-member legislation before his death in 1995 to look after the Tablighi Jamaat affairs and this legislation (commonly shura) was intact until 2015. Most of the scholars in this group passed away during these 20 years including Zubair ul Hassan Kandhlawi. A meeting was held in Raiwind Markaz on 16 November 2015 to fill up the vacant spaces of the shura legislation and a new shura consisting of 13 members including Muhammad Abdul Wahhab was formed. Kandhlawi did not agree with this shura and declared himself as the head of Tablighi Jamaat. Kandhlawi leads the Nizamuddin Markaz faction of the Tablighi Jamaat. Some of the statements of Kandhlawi lead the Deobandi scholars to issue fatwa against him questioning his leadership.

Saad claimed to have 100 crore followers in 214 countries, this includes almost 3-4 crore converts in western UP that his Jamaat has successfully targeted in the last 70 years in connivance with the so called secular political parties of India. Tablighi Jamaat has





The country must take the threat of the Tabligi as an eye opener for future planning that must include the complete ban on TabligiJaamat in India, seizures of entire assets base of Tabligi Jamaat, identify ancillary units of Tabligi Jamaat so that they can be stopped in operating with different name

changed the religious landscape of UP, Bihar, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Maharashtra extensively by targeting vulnerable and marginalized section of Hindu population with the power of petro dollars aided by the greed of secular ruling elites of India by creating vote bank for secular parties and in return, converting millions of Hindus by exploiting weakness of Article 25(1) (this article guarantees to every person, and not merely to the citizens of India, the freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice, and propagate religion). Tabligi Jamaat used “not merely to the citizens of India” weapon extensively over the years under the nose of Indian state for the last 70 years by inviting many radical preachers and import of petro dollarsto facilitate the growth of Muslim population from less than 7% In 1947 to 14.5% in 2011to likely 16.8% in 2021 Furthermore, there are

indeed some links between Tablighis and the world of jihadism. First, there is evidence of indirect connections between the group and the wider radical/extremist Deobandi nexus composed of anti-Shiite sectarian groups, Kashmiri militants and the Taliban

Why is Tablighi Jamaat Antagonizedtheir Defence?

Spitting and pelting stones have almost become weapons for the Tablighis. It makes one question as to what can be the reason for this kind of deplorable behavior? According to some news reports, there have been protests against medical staff and resistance against going to hospitals is not related to Covid-19 but some of the real issues cited by them are CAA, NRC, Triple Talaq, Babri Masjid etc. Unfortunately, the community is still hanging on to the political matters with a focus on discrediting

Narendra Modi government at any cost while the entire nation is combating the national health emergency. The country must take the threat of the Tabligi as an eye opener for future planning that must include the complete ban on TabligiJaamat in India, seizures of entire assets base of Tabligi Jamaat, identify ancillary units of Tabligi Jamaat so that they can be stopped in operating with different name, immediately amend Article 25(1) so that the money and preachers from outside the country can be restricted in operating in the country (it is a national security threat), set up expert committee to re-examine provisions under Article 25-30 in the Indian constitution and give additional power to the police in IPC & CRPC to identify and book the anti national culprits. It is important that Deoband, Bareilly, Salafi ideologies managing the network of mosque in India must be brought under government supervision and control as the temples of India are supervised under Religious endowment Act 1873. India is the only place on the earth where Hindu has a claim left;it is the last chance for the Hindu community to save from the onslaught of the ever increasing threat of monotheism cult.

(Writer is Editor in Chief Opinion Express he can be contacted at Prashant.tewari@opinionexpress.in

Saudi ban on Tablighi Jamaat: A reality check

By Asad Mirza

Recently most of the Indian newspapers and news channels in English, Hindi and Urdu carried a news story stating that the Saudi Arab has banned the Indian organisation Tablighi Jamaat from functioning in Saudi and carrying out its activities in the Kingdom.

The manner in which the story was reported mostly, based on a series of tweets from the official Twitter handle of the Saudi Minister of Islamic Affairs, Dawah, and Guidance Sheikh Abdul Latif bin Abdulaziz Al Ash-Shaikh, made it look like that the Indian Tablighi Jamaat has been banned by the Saudi government from carrying out its Tabligh and Dawah activities.

Before reaching any conclusion, we need to verify some facts related to the tweets by the Minister.

Firstly, though in most of the countries it has become a normal trend to announce the official policies or stand through the social media, in Saudi an edict or a rule becomes a law only when

Firstly, though in most of the countries it has become a normal trend to announce the official policies or stand through the social media, in Saudi an edict or a rule becomes a law only when issued through a Royal Decree. Though the targeted audience may act on the guidance given on social media yet it is not a law in the larger sense.

issued through a Royal Decree. Though the targeted audience may act on the guidance given on social media yet it is not a law in the larger sense.

Secondly, nowhere in the tweet, the words Tablighi Jamaat, Deobandi Tablighi Jamaat, Indian Tablighi Jamaat or Pakistani Tablighi Jamaat is mentioned.

Thirdly, the tweets ask the Imams to follow four points while denouncing the Tabligh and Dawah activities by any group, referred to as Al Ahabab in the tweets.

In reality Al Ahabab is a Nigerian terrorist group and Al Ahabab in Arabic means a group of friends, persons known to each other or your near and



dear ones.

Fourthly, in Saudi Arabia no political or religious organisation is allowed to function without the state patronage or recognition or registration. So one wonder how an organisation, which is not even present in the country, could be banned.

Fifthly, the tweets have been translated using Google Translation, which sometimes leaves scope for non-clarity or ambiguity while translating.

Sixth, one needs to understand that the Tabligh activities are focussed towards Muslim audience and the Dawah activities are focussed on non-Muslims, or in other words they are like missionary activities, which are controlled

by the Saudi government through the DawahCentres called Markaz-e Dawah-WalIrshad are managed by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and are usually engaged in publishing and disseminating literature, not through any public engagement. And the TablighiJamaat is never engaged in any Dawah or missionary activity. Also in a Muslim country there is no need of Dawah work, so the word in the tweet has been used superfluously.

The Saudi politics

Moreover, we also need to understand the phase through which the Saudi Arabia is currently passing. The Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman (MBS)

handles majority of state functions, but important portfolios are still handled by the Saudi King Shah Salman.

In addition, MBS is being credited with ushering a reform phase in the Saudi society and politics and giving up age old religious and societal customs and laws. Under his stewardship, theatres have been opened up in various Saudi cities, women have been allowed to drive cars, women can visit market or shopping malls without any male chaperon, they have been allowed not to wear Hijab or Abaya in places or to cover their faces, even they can perform Umrah and Hajj, the two most significant Islamic practices without any male accompanying them.





These reforms initiated by MBS have alienated a large percentage of the Saudi population, which still wants to carry forward with the age old Islamic and societal traditions. But even the MBS is against the fanatical groups operating in the country. So these tweets might have been an endeavour by the minister to make him seen as one more nearer to the King and MBS, both.

In addition, the words 'opens the gates of terrorism' have been used to make the recommendation carry weight and also address the issue which the Saudi government faces in provinces nearer to other countries and which mostly comprise Shia, Houthis and Lebanese groups.

So one can surmise that the Indian TablighiJamaat has not been mentioned in the tweets and the Indian media should have acted more responsibly by fact checking the contents of the tweets, which it started reporting on after five days on December 11.

Last week only some Urdu newspapers also carried out a story that the

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Saudi government has recently banned some books by Hassan al Banna, Yusuf Qardawi and MaulanaMaudoodi. This story is completely false and the fact is that the Saudi government had banned

these books in 1990. Even countries like the UAE had banned books by these and other authors in 2011, when the Morsiled Muslim Brotherhood had taken over power in Egypt.

The fact is that most of the Islamic states are afraid of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas and the tweet while not mentioning the Muslim Brotherhood might have been targeted towards it as its propaganda is also conveyed through groups of Ahbab. Most of my journalist friends working in the Saudi or other middle eastern countries, and I too fully concur with it, that it might be the case and the Indian TablighiJamaat has been maligned for none of its fault.

Thus, it would be better if the Indian media takes a more responsible approach towards sensitive issues, which might create unwanted controversies and an atmosphere of hate in the country.

(Asad Mirza is a political commentator based in New Delhi)

COLLATERAL DAMAGE....?

Shivam Jha

Last Friday in my Indian Foreign Policy's class, my professor who belongs to Assam brought up AFSPA for discussion. While she said that the incident was 'unfortunate', she referred to the whole incident as "collateral damage". She went on explaining that the armed forces are just trained to shoot, they have no time for analysing the situation or for interrogation. This nowhere means that she had more respect for the armed forces, and I didn't. It is very normal for me to ask questions.

This whole point was unacceptable to me. I just couldn't accept this and I said that killings of innocent civilians couldn't be just termed as "collateral damage". Those people who died also had families, they were also a very part of the society, how could you explain to their families that the people who died were just only "collateral damage".



So there are a few things that a regular undergraduate student like me can understand on the whole fiasco related to AFSPA and northeast:

The state must recognise that in a modern democracy in the twenty-first century, legislation like the AFSPA has no place. Continuing to enforce the draconian laws like AFSPA will only serve to prolong militancy and discontent. To enhance India's developing democracy, it is past time for the government to abolish this terrible remnant of the past.

The repeal of AFSPA is required not only to restore the constitutional order, but also to acknowledge the plight of the victims. Their voices are often unheard, neither the state nor the mainstream media have their focus on them. They are far away, lesser in number and do not have the means to come up in large numbers and continue to protest as we have seen in the recent farmer protests.

Talking about insurgency, the most

brutally affected region with left-wing extremism or Naxalism or insurgency is the Naxal belt region, why we had not imposed this extraordinary law in those regions? Why it has been selectively used for only a few regions? If the paramilitary forces can contain some threat in one region, they can be used the same for another region. Maoist Insurgency has done a lot of damage than any other internal rebellion in the country. As our ex-PM, Dr. Singh said "Naxalism is the biggest threat to internal security".

Accountability of the Armed forces? Though many committees had advocated the repeal of AFSPA (the Jeevan Reddy Committee), some even talked about amending it (Ex-HM P Chidambaram). There are a number of cases filed in the SC related to fake encounters (1,528 cases to be more precise), extrajudicial killings under the blanket immunity provided by AFSPA. There has not been a single hearing in this

case to date.

There has been a sharp decrease in incidents related to insurgency in north eastern states. Many of the rebels are allies of the central government. Many areas have recorded no insurgency activities. These areas deserves normalcy, the civilians their deserves the peace. They have suffered a lot both by the insurgents and also the brunt of this black law. Few states saw the voting turnout higher than the national average (Manipur in 2019 LS elections recorded a voter turnout of over 80% which was significantly higher than the national average i.e., 67.1%).

States of the North East deserve the same peace and freedom which we are enjoying here in Delhi and Haryana. They are no less citizens than us. We talk about Act-East Policy, we talk about connecting the north east of India to the rest of the country but in actual we are pushing them aside, alienating them, not even trying to connect them to the mainstream.

I wrote this article as we the youth of the country have a responsibility; it is necessary for us students realising the importance of our relationship with the society. When we become socially and politically conscious, basic issues could be brought into the national discourse. We cannot remain self-centred, with a narrow vision. We are the future, some of us may have to lead this great country ahead. We cannot limit ourselves to partisan and narrow ideas. As our CJI recently said, "A responsive youth is vital for strengthening democracy".





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INDIA'S RISE ON THE WORLD HORIZON

BY D.C. PATHAK

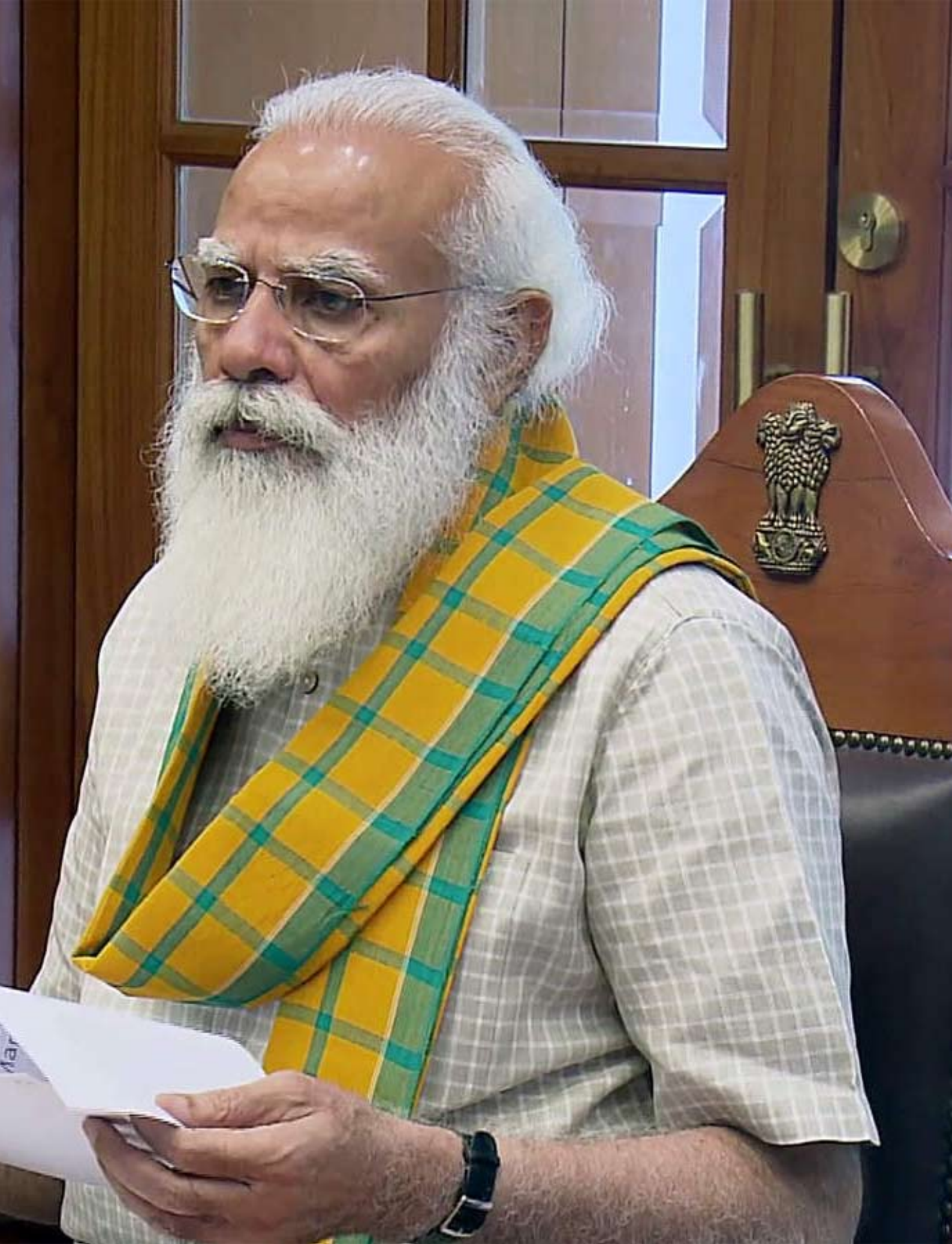
In the narrow narrative of domestic politics - marked by minority versus majority controversy whipped up in the name of 'secularism', a distorted projection of the strong governance of Prime Minister Modi as a symbol of 'authoritarianism' and a deliberate attempt to misinterpret nationalism as the promotion of 'Hindutva', what stands out in bold relief is the rapid advance India has made internationally to get an unprecedented recognition from the world community as a major power influencing the issues of war and peace. This is a major development.

One can recall the regime -- preceding the arrival of Modi on the national scene -- when corruption was at its peak, policy making was at its weakest and development was subordinated to communal politics. In the area of foreign policy there was no independent evaluation of threat to India's security from hostile neighbours and a kind of towing of the American line of that time was in evidence. A telling illustration of this was the Indian response to 26/11 when the government of the day meekly accepted the US stand that the horrendous attack on Mumbai was the doing of 'non state actors' in Pakistan and that the Pak army could not be blamed for it -- this all was meant to ensure continuance of the Indo-Pak dialogue in which the US was interested for its own strategic reasons.

Prime Minister Modi's quick rise as a popular leader was attributable to his personal integrity, firm control on the administrative machinery and political will to take bold decisions. Indians were looking for such a head of the national government. People of India have always favoured strong policies to safeguard national security and while looking for economic development, not hesitated to

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sacrifice personal comfort for the cause of the nation -- it is relevant to recall how they positively responded to Prime Minister Shastri's call for skipping one meal in a week, in the difficult environment created by the 1965 Indo-Pak war.

Ever since Union Home Minister Amit Shah has taken charge of internal security, externally instigated terrorist violence has been contained, communal conflicts have been controlled and political voices against symbols of nationalism seem to have subsided. He has sent down a message to the states to take firm action against political violence in keeping with their prime responsibility for maintenance of law and order. The threat to India's security today is not so much from an external attack as from the 'new proxy war' in which hostile lobbies at home and abroad instigated by the adversary took to subverting the belief of the citizens in one nation, undivided people and strong national security. These covert attempts should be countered with the help of public education on the role of the citizen in safeguarding a democratic state and by invoking action against any serious breach of the country's laws relating to maintenance of internal security.

Prime Minister Modi embarked on a number of people-related projects as a part of his 'development for all' mission

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and launched a massive infrastructure development programme -- some of it catering to the dual civil-military use -- but his image soared when he invoked India's sovereign right to deal a blow to the external adversaries, suspended talks with Pakistan on the grounds of cross border terrorism and sent a clear message to the US that the American policy of hyphenating India and Pakistan and making a distinction between 'good terrorists' and 'bad terrorists' would not

do. He has stuck to the line 'terror and talks do not go together' amidst pressure at home and abroad built by vested interests, mobilised world opinion against the threat from terrorists harboured by Pakistan and what is remarkable, built a strong relationship with the US under President Donald Trump and later in the Biden Presidency on the plank of mutuality of interests in the spheres of economy and security. The presence of an extremely competent National Security Advisor by his side has greatly contributed to the success of Prime Minister Modi's policies.

Current developments in the Pak-Afghan belt revolving round the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan -- the battleground of the longest 'war on terror' launched by the US in the wake of 9/11 -- following negotiations with the Taliban and return of the Kabul Emirate with the total support of Pakistan, have created a major security threat for India.

In an extremely fruitful initiative AjitDoval, our NSA, hosted the Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan -- a conference of the countries in the Afghan neighbourhood at the level of National Security Advisors, at Delhi on November 10 -- to discuss the Afghan scenario in its totality. There was no question of the unrecognised Taliban government

being invited to this round table. The meet effectively created a broad convergence amongst countries with security stakes in Afghanistan, on the threat of terrorism emanating from the return of Taliban Emirate at Kabul marking the spread of 'radicalisation' in the region. The conference specifically called upon the Taliban government to ensure that Afghan territory was not used for terror activity. India invited Russia which has been with the Central Asian Republics - all of whom including Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan also positively responded to India's invitation. Both Pakistan and China though invited stayed away - the former questioning India's credentials for holding the meet and the latter falling in line with Pakistan in pursuance of its larger geopolitical strategy. Their absence only helped to draw the attention of the meet on the collusive role of the Sino-Pak axis in promoting the Taliban in Afghanistan.

India did well to invite Iran as well - the Shiite country might be having problems with the US and Israel but the fact that Islamic radicals harboured extreme hatred towards Shias puts Iran and India on the same side so far as the Taliban was concerned - and this is of strategic significance for India. India may not have involved the US with the regional dialogue considering the fact that the Biden Presidency was still handling the American pullout from Afghanistan carried out in an embarrassingly messy environ marked by the hos-

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tility of the Taliban - despite the Doha agreement. The US would in any case welcome India's initiatives on Afghanistan.

The Delhi meet has given a vital lead to India on Afghanistan. It is good that this regional conference was hosted by the NSA because Afghanistan under the Taliban Emirate is more of a global security problem than a diplomatic issue - the democratic world was still pondering over the question of giving recognition to this regime in the first place. It has to be noted that the NSAs of the Central Asian Republics around Afghanistan who were present in strength at the Delhi Dialogue, all represented predominantly Muslim states which favoured moderate Islam and clearly saw the risk of being overtaken by radicalisation if the Taliban were to have a free run in Afghanistan.

The conference adopted the 'Delhi Declaration' that reaffirmed the commitment of the participating countries to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations including its financing, work for dismantling of terrorist infrastructure and counter 'radicalisation' to ensure that Afghanistan would never become a safe haven for global terrorism. It expressed 'deep concern' over the deteriorating socio-economic and humanitarian situation and underlined the need for providing urgent assistance to the troubled country. The Declaration pointed to the critical need for establishing 'an open and truly inclusive government' in Afghanistan that would have representation from all sections of the Afghan society and uphold the fundamental rights of women, children and minority communities.





What is important is that the statement was as comprehensive and complete as the democratic world would have wished it to be and goes a long way in securing international disapproval of the rise of Islamic extremism and radicalism that the return of the Kabul Emirate signified.

The event has brought a great strategic gain for India in as much as it helps the two largest democracies of the world to lead the global combat

against the danger of radicalisation and the threat of a new global terror arising from it.

The Biden administration is currently focused on dealing with the Communist dictatorship of China in the Indo-Pacific and elsewhere in the face of the express intent of President Xi Jinping to make his country the second superpower - in the process it seems to be overlooking the Sino-Pak strategic partnership that had become a notch

deeper since the emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan. The US needs to have a closer look at the significance of a Communist regime and a country standing by Islamic radicals, coming on the same side politically in the emerging 'Cold War' between the US and China. The conference of the NSAs hosted by Ajit Doval has precisely drawn attention to this. Pakistan has predictably responded to India's regional initiative on Afghanistan by calling a meeting of



the big three - US, Russia and China - at Islamabad close on the heels of the Delhi summit, and inviting the foreign minister of the Afghanistan Emirate to it - Pakistan is the only country that has recognised the Taliban government. Pakistan knows that because of its role in Afghanistan it is on a discount in the eyes of the countries of this region. It has however, sensed that the Biden Presidency still valued its friendship for its mediatory role in the Doha negotia-

tions and its importance for the Saudi-led block in the Muslim world that was pro-US. Policy makers in the US however, do seem to be taking cognisance of the duplicitous play of Pakistan in the 'war on terror' and also analysing the implications of the Sino-Pak collaboration for the emerging geopolitics. India is playing its cards well in dealing with the Pak-Afghanistan belt on the one hand and countering China's aggressiveness both on the border and on the marine

front, on the other.

It goes to the credit of Prime Minister Modi that he has in a short span of time elevated India to the position of a major power that had a say in global issues of economic cooperation and security. This has largely been made possible by a combination of policies that drew upon bilateral relations resting on mutual economic and security interests free of any ideological baggage of the past, assertion of India's sovereign strength in handling any adversary and demonstration of political will in taking hard decisions. This has enabled the Modi government to respond to Chinese aggressiveness

The US needs to have a closer look at the significance of a Communist regime and a country standing by Islamic radicals, coming on the same side politically in the emerging 'Cold War' between the US and China.

on the LAC with a matching defence-build up, actively associate with Quad to show its solidarity with the democratic world's geopolitical moves against a hostile Communist dictatorship and send a message to Pakistan - through the surgical strike at Balakot - that any act of mischief against India will be severely punished. Prime Minister Modi has done remarkably well in establishing India's credentials as a believer in world peace, international cooperation for economic development and human welfare, at various forums addressed by him including the UN General Assembly, G20, SCO and even Quad.

India's call for a joint fight against terrorism has been combined with the initiative on vaccination against Covid - this has already been acknowledged by the world - and cooperation in the field of technology for economic advancement. Modi's leadership has taken India's image forward internationally in spite of the disruptive politics that its opponents have taken to, at home.

(The writer is a former Director Intelligence Bureau, article is courtesy IANS)

The Indian Democracy: From Victorian England to Modi Raj

Abhishek Yadav

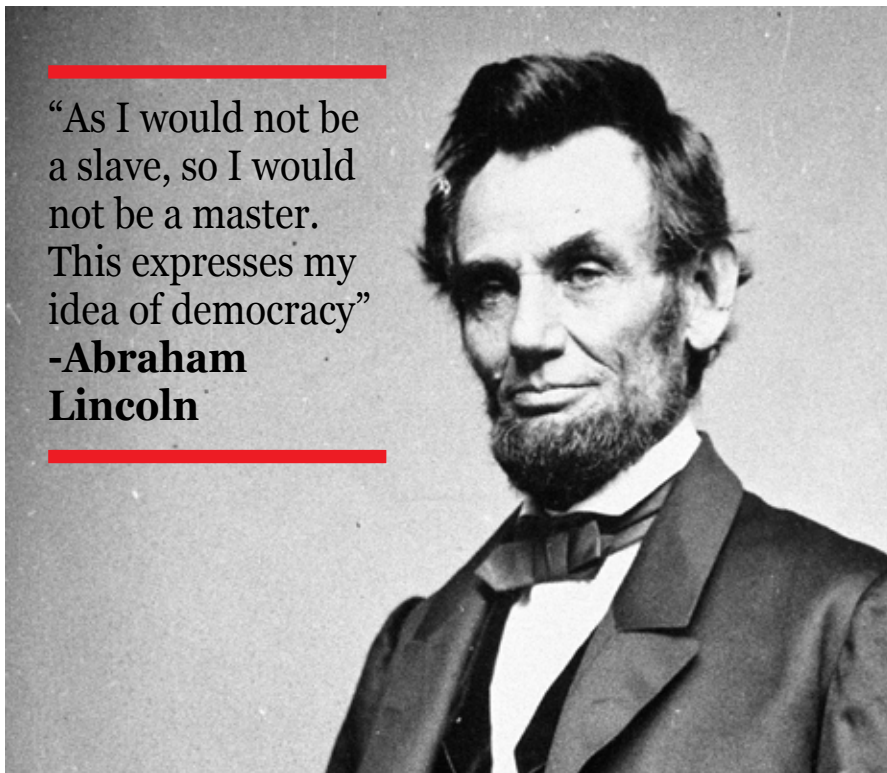
Abstract:

The world in the 20th century broke the chain of colonisation and slavery and has seen the rise of Democracy as the new rule of law. India which was a single nation till the evening of 14th August 1947, was eventually carved out into three separate nation-states in form of India, Pakistan, and later Bangladesh. We attempt to analyse the adoption of democracy as the rule of law in the Indian subcontinent. This article traces the development of the democracy in India from the ashes of the partition to be the world's largest democracy. The beginning of the third decade of the 21st century is marked by the devastating second wave of the coronavirus in India. India being the world's largest functioning democracy has seen the people waiting outside the crematorium with the bodies of their loved ones to lay them on the pyres and on the other hand it saw the election campaigns and the elections in the coastal state of West Bengal. This raises some serious questions about the functioning of democracy in India. This paper attempts to analyse and understand the Indian democracy from being a demand from the colonial masters to being the world's largest democracy with a crippling public sector and poor performance in the various development indexes. Thus, this article will help the readers to understand that the Indian democracy is just a simple flawed version of the democracy borrowed from Victorian England or it is just a myth.

Introduction:

The 20th century globally was a century of establishment and enrichment of democratic politics. The world has seen two devastating world wars along with the rapid colonisation of the countries of Asia and Africa. The second world war ended with the defeat of Axis powers and the allied power emerged as the winner. It doesn't mean that the

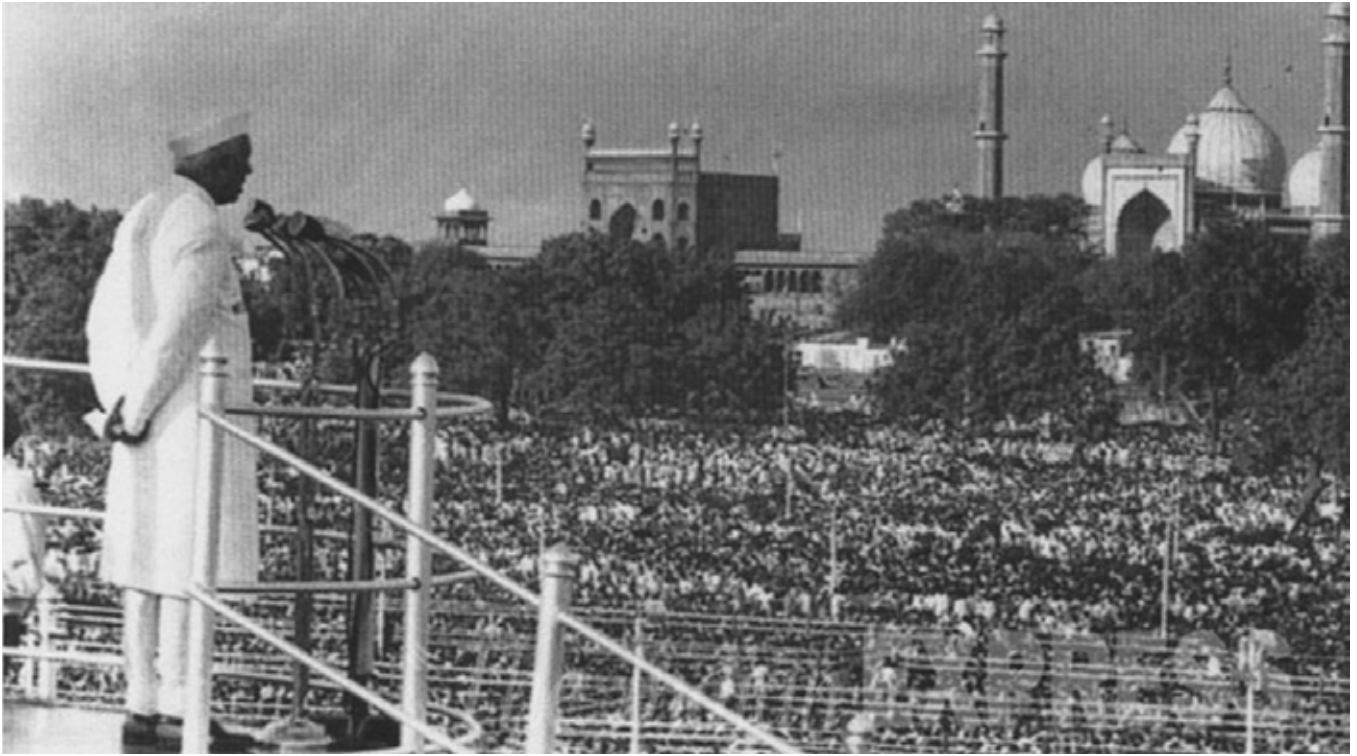
“As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy”
-Abraham Lincoln



axis powers like England and France got a better hold of the world after winning the war. The war cost the colonial powers very heavily which in turn was a burden on the countries being colonised by them. Britain at the end of the war with a struggling economy and was facing strong opposition from the Indians. The common Indian population being colonised by the Britishers from the last 200 years and by the Moghuls before the Britishers, wasn't aware of the modern concept of Democracy and Rights. The land was ruled by the Kings and it was not a single and unified nation-state though it experienced some kind of unity during the reign of Mauryas and Moghuls in the past. The establishment of modern democracy required that the people must understand the essence of the demography.

The expanding English educated middle class formed the ground for the emergence of the modern democracy with rights. The introduction of the modern education system helped in the

assimilation of modern ideas. Those who visited England for higher studies and for other liberal professions like doctors, Lawyers experienced and saw the working of free and modern democratic institutions which they compared to British India where even the basic rights were denied to the population. It was the section of the population that provided leadership to the different political associations in the national movement. The study of western political thought which included the radical and liberal thought of philosophers like J.S. Mill, Voltaire, Rousseau, Spencer etc. provided a new shape to political thinking and awakening to the emerging educated middle class. It was the time when the spread of modern education and modern ideas led to the awakening in the Indian population about their basic rights and freedom. It further led to the preparation of the ground for the freedom movement. The land which was ruled by the kings over the years was preparing its ground

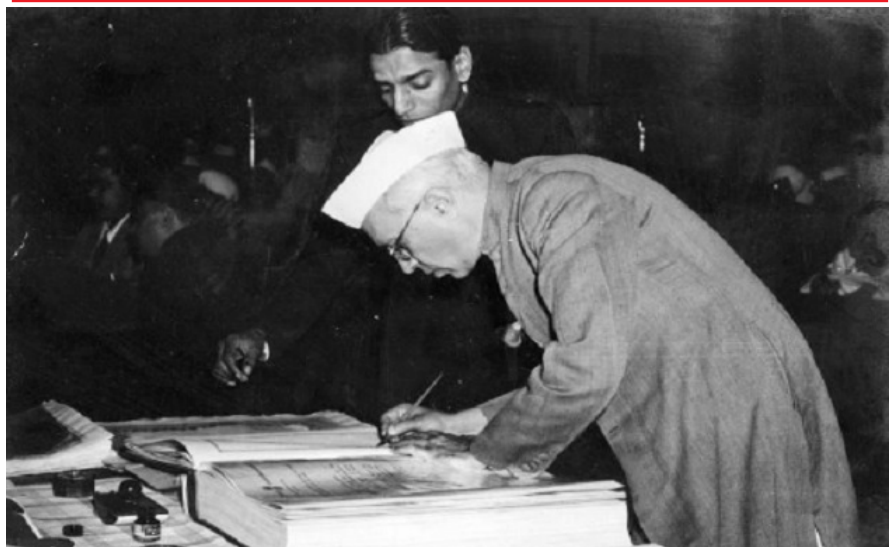


for the age of democracy. India got independent on the 15th of August 1947 after a long-fought struggle for freedom but the independence came along at the cost of bloodshed and partition. India adopted the Westminster model with borrowed features from several constitutions of the world. India began its journey with the promise of being a sovereign, socialist, secular democratic republic that will believe in equal rights and justice for everyone.

The Transformation: From Riyasats to a Democracy (to put federal system)

The transition from a former colony to a newborn democracy was not so smooth. The different constituent units of the Indian Union which were called Riyasats earlier had a different ruler and these different rulers had their own aspirations and hereditary rule over their Riyasats. It was a difficult task to appeal to the patriotic feelings of the rulers to join the Indian dominion. Sardar Patel in charge of the state's ministry in the interim cabinet played a pivotal role in the integration of these states into the union of India and due to his efforts about 136 states had joined the Indian union by 15th August, 1947. It was a crucial task as the constitution-makers knew that regionalism was going to be a big challenge in front of the unity of the newly born nation. The states of Junagarh, Hyderabad, and Kashmir posed a threat to the process but somehow it was managed by the Indian forces in

“There are many in the West, and some in India too, who consider India an artificial construct. The British colonial administrator John Strachey declared in 1888: The first and most important thing to learn about India is that there is not and never was an India.”



Hyderabad and Kashmir and the plebiscite in Junagarh. The dream of the Indian nationalist to see India as a democratic nation-state was going to turn into reality with the adoption of the constitution on 26th November, 1950 and with the first general elections in 1951. The Indian constitution in its article 324 has made the Election commis-

sion an independent and permanent body to ensure free and fair elections in the country. The first major task in front of the election commission was to conduct elections for the very first time and it became more difficult due to the level of illiteracy among the voters. Independent and regular elections are the very first and basic need of a success-



ful democracy but in the first general elections, the election commission had a major task of making the population aware of democracy and the importance of elections in a democracy. The election commission played a pivotal role in the very establishment of democracy in independent India. Indian National Congress (INC) had won the elections with 364 seats out of 489 seats. The essential takeaway from the election was the successful and peaceful conduct of the elections by the election commission in the aftermath of the partition. On the eve of the elections, Sukumar Sen called them “the greatest democratic experiment in human history.” ‘A very significant majority [will] exercise votes for the first time: not many know what the vote is, why they should vote, and whom they should vote for; no wonder the whole adventure is classified as the biggest gamble in history,’ said a seasoned Madras editor.

With the successful conduct of the first general elections in 1951, the Indian democracy geared up for its future endeavors. Most of the historians, constitutional experts and commentators predicted that Indian democracy wouldn’t survive for long and they were

Constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment. It has to be cultivated. We must realise that our people have yet to learn it. Democracy in India is only a top-dressing on Indian soil, which is essentially undemocratic. - Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

quite optimistic about their claims as a country with such vast geography and population with different ethnicities, religions and cultures came together to form a secular democratic republic. There were different fears and one of the biggest fear was the tyranny of the majority over the minority in the aftermath of the partition. The differences be-

tween the communities were large and the bloodshed made it more difficult for the leaders to lead a country different from what the Pakistan sympathisers imagined for their land. Sixteen years before the independence during a tempting respite from civil disobedience the nation’s leaders decided to make public their dream of what they would do for the country’s good when at last it was free. This was laid out in the fundamental resolution, which was drafted by Jawahar Lal Nehru and moved by Mahatma Gandhi at the Karachi session of the congress from March 26 to 29 in 1931[5]. It promised universal suffrage, civil liberty, the abolition of caste disabilities in the public sphere, the state’s neutrality in respect of religion, protection of labour rights, including special rights for women, reduction of land tax, and finally the state’s ownership and control of key industries and services. The resolution on fundamental rights was a milestone to achieve for a country enslaved by the chain of colonialism, casteism, untouchability, illiteracy. The pragmatism and belief the leaders of the Indian freedom movement showed were going to be the basis of the independent and democratic India. But the

big question ahead was that a country which has such vast geography where every subpart has its own struggle, culture, ethnicity, will even be able to survive what the leaders dreamed of!

Federalism and the process of becoming a democracy

It's been seven and half decades since India got independence after throwing off the yoke of colonial rule through a long drawn struggle, one of the major struggles in modern history which got worldwide attention. As mentioned earlier and it was clear through the Karachi congress session that the nationalist movement was not aimed at getting political independence merely but it had a clear perception of how independent India will look like and social plus economic independence is equally for everyone along with the democratic, secular and federal nation. India was turning towards federalism from being a country with of different riyasats with their own rulers and own ruling style. It was merely going to be a historical experiment at that time when even the Indian Standard Time was introduced on September 1,1947, before this different provinces and princely states had their own times and reading which was a complex affair on its own. Also, building a country with 564 or so sovereign and semi-sovereign princely states was a difficult task. Though India became a federal republic with a strong

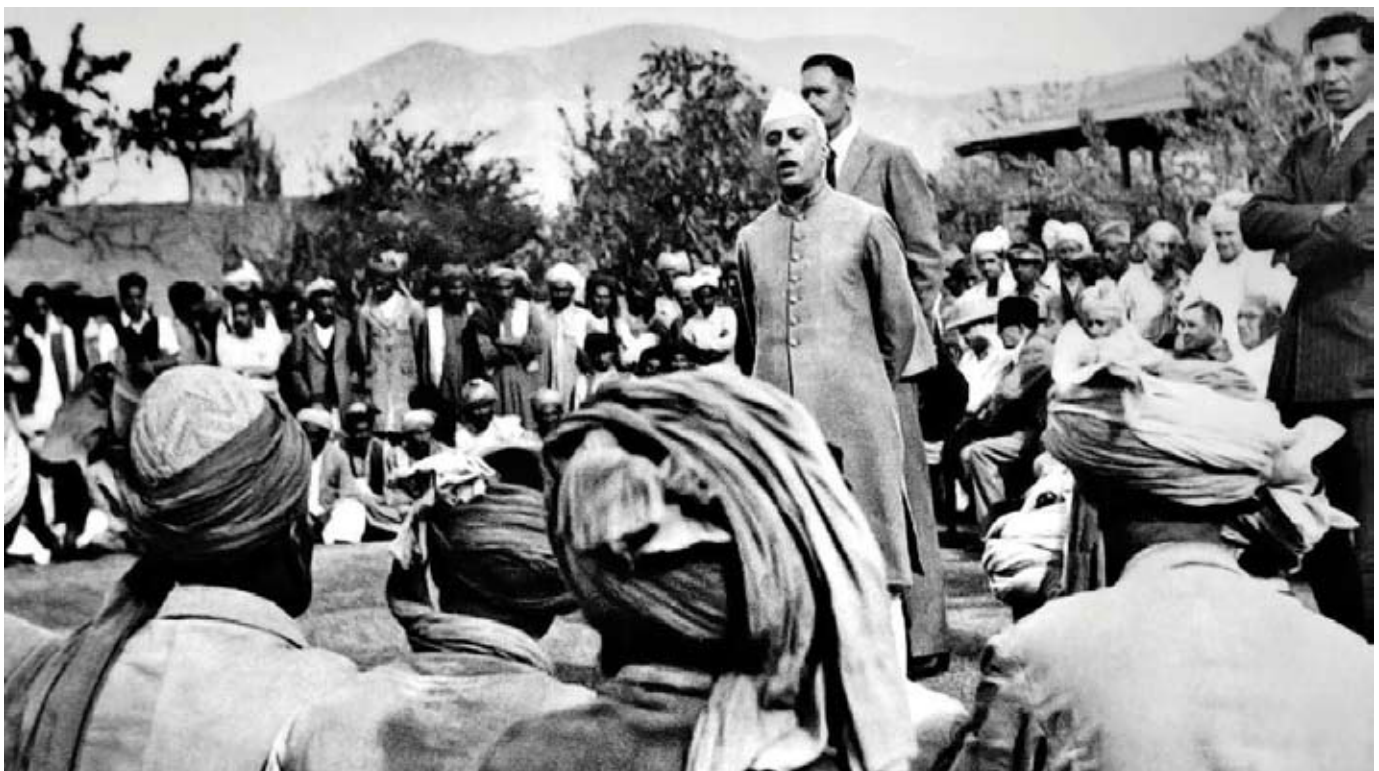
“We choose the system of parliamentary democracy deliberately, we choose it not only because, to some extent, we had always thought on those lines previously, but because we thought it was in keeping with our old traditions also, naturally the old traditions, not as they were, but adjusted to the new conditions and new surroundings, we choose it also- let us give credit where credit is due- because we approved of its functioning in other countries, more especially the United Kingdom” - Jawaharlal Nehru

center and quasi-federal structure, it came along with its own difficulties. As early as 1920, the linguistic basis of states was recognised. For the linguistic reorganisation of states, an arduous struggle became necessary. Linguistic reorganisation at that time was such an issue in the front of a newly independent country which might become detrimental

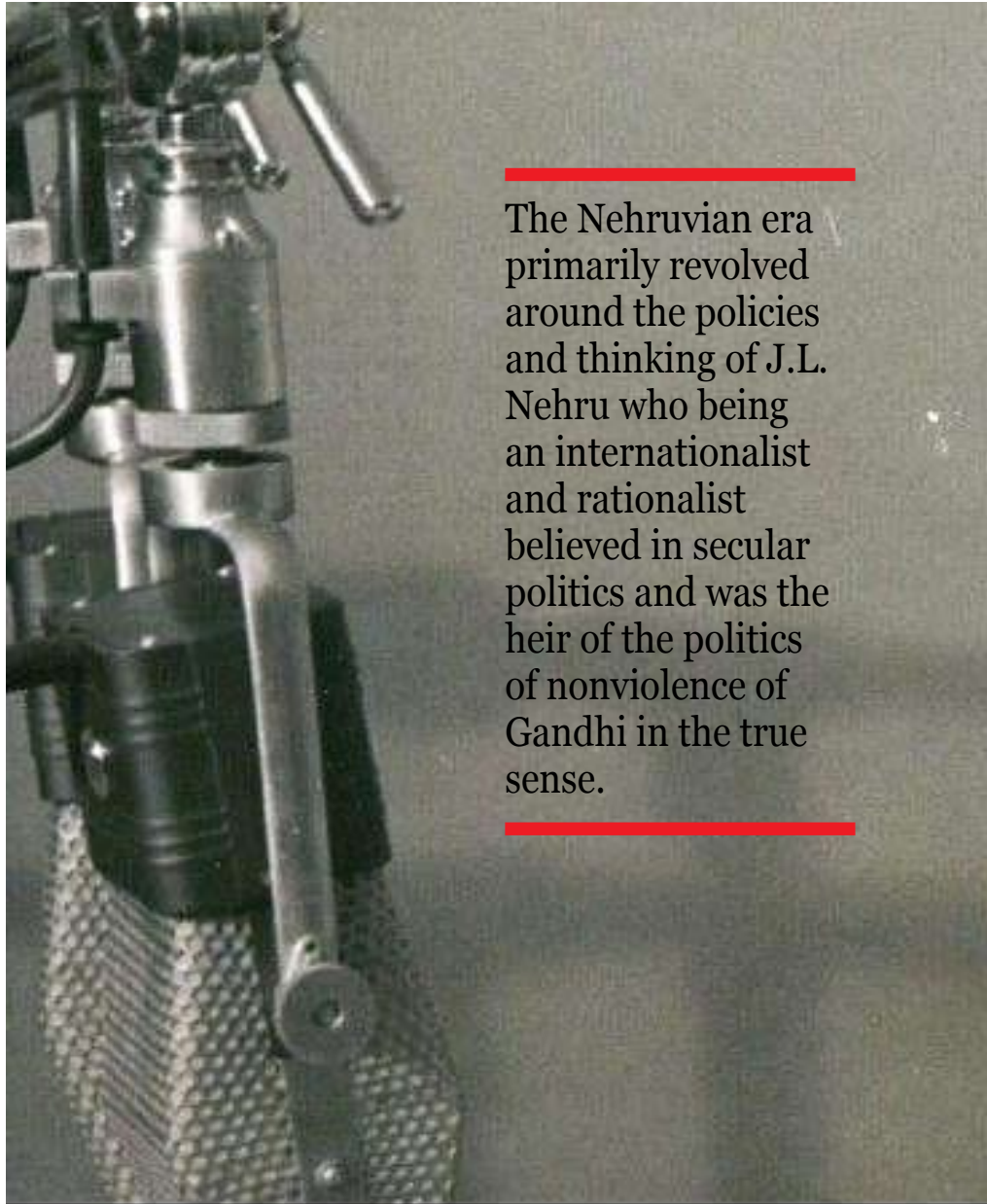
Struggle and Course

Does the Indian democracy being claimed the world's largest democracy really standby to the claim? Does the Indians being ruled by the Kings and Princes from several dynasties are fitted and adhere to the claim of being democratic? Does a country have more than a

quarter of its population being illiterate can claim to be a successful democracy? The answer to all these questions which question the basic essence of India as a true democracy lies in the implementation, adoption, and success and failure stories attached to the institution of democracy. India's constitution being adopted on 26th January 1950 constituted India into a sovereign, democratic, republic. A vast land from the Great Himalayas to the Vindhias in the middle and from the Deccan to the Malda gap to the east of which lies northeast India and to the coromandel coast in the south stretching further to the Andaman and Nicobar islands. It was not an easy task to constitute such a vast tract of land stretching about 3,287,240 km into a



sovereign democracy being ruled from Delhi in the north which symbolises the seat of political power from the era of Mughals to the Britishers and then in independent India. The constitution-makers after rigorous study of different and best constitutions of the world adopted the best features and inserted them into the Indian constitution but as the Chairman of the drafting committee of the Indian Constitution Dr. B.R. Ambedkar said “ however good a Constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it, happen to be a bad lot. However bad a Constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are called to work it, happen to be a good lot”[7]. It was on the shoulders of the coming generations that how the country is going to be ruled and does India will be a glaring example of being a democracy after invasions and being colonised for so many years. The Nehruvian era primarily revolved around the policies and thinking of J.L. Nehru who being an internationalist and rationalist believed in secular politics and was the heir of the politics of nonviolence of Gandhi in the true sense. The current BJP government which holds the power under the leadership of Narendra Modi alleges Nehru and congress for his blunder mistakes for ruining India as a nation from the very beginning itself. Nehru being argued as the truly democratic and secular politician believed in building a country free from the yoke of communalism, casteism, and illiteracy. But as the people in power argue and rapes and murders that happened in the name of caste and religion are sufficient to prove that the ghosts of communalism and casteism still haunt India. Also, the controversy like state reorganisation on the basis of language and debate over Hindi imposition, president’s rule in Kerala in the late 1950s, India’s defeat in indo-china war, India’s import from the USA as India desperately needed American wheat under the US Public Law 480 on rupee payment – and at relatively low prices because the country had no foreign exchange to buy food in the world market. All these factors combined proved fatal and skeptical of the capability of Indian democracy. Political thinkers, constitutional experts, and scholars commented on the fate of the Indian democracy. They become more skeptical after the death of J.L. Nehru, the only major political figure left leading India after the deaths of Gandhi, Patel, and other prominent freedom

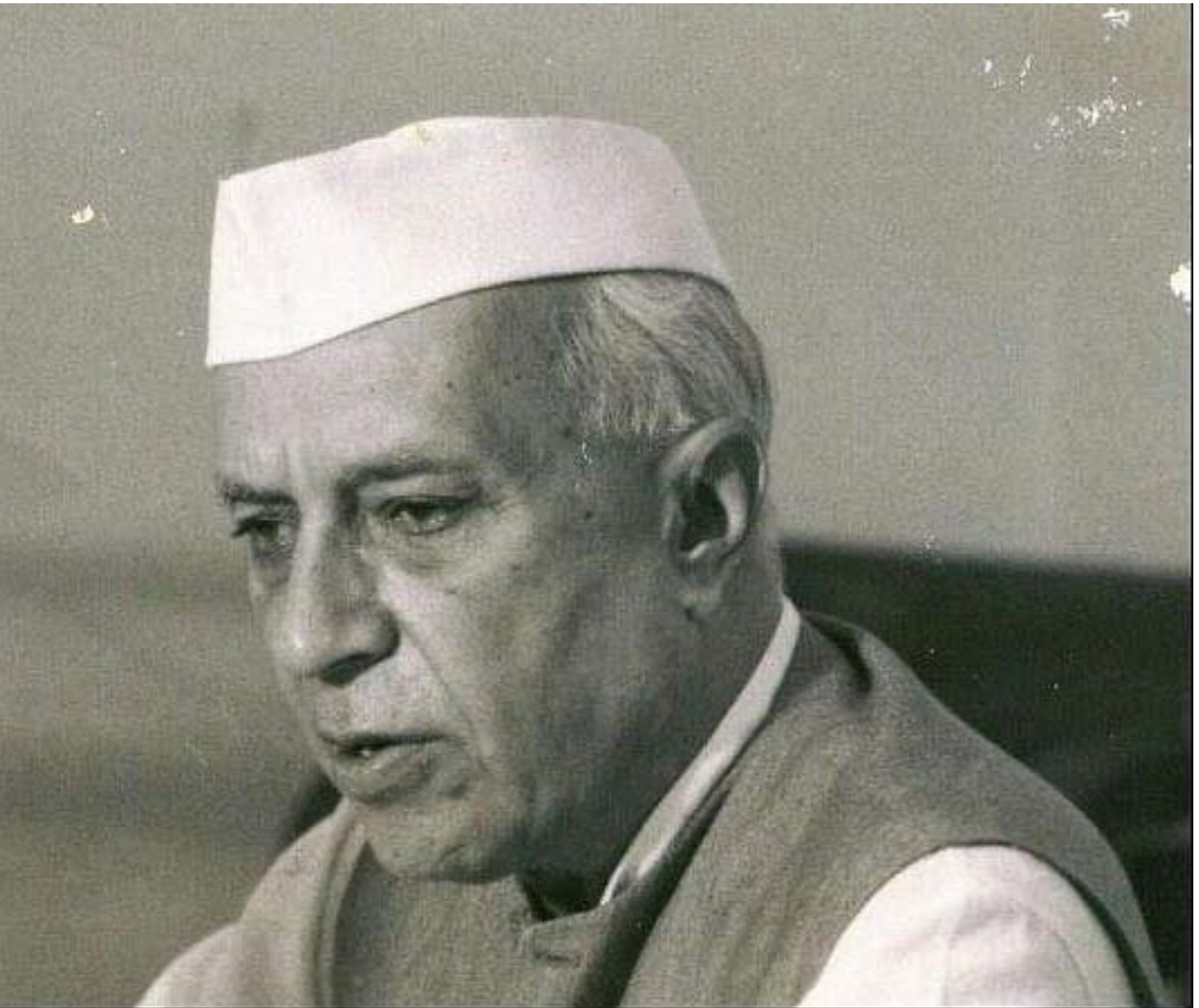


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movement leaders. Amidst all the speculations about the Indian democracy, Lal Bahadur Shastri was named as the successor of the Nehru. It was the watershed moment in the course of Indian democracy when we look back at the journey of Indian democracy. Shastri got command of an infant democracy which lost a war against its neighbour and the friendship about which Nehru was so optimistic, china a friend turned into a foe due to the tensions at the border. And after the war and death of Nehru, India was regaining its strength the result of the Sino-India Conflict of 1962 encouraged Pakistan to seek a military solution to the Kashmir problem: A modernized Army, to which the U.S.A. had contributed substantially, added to her confidence. But India under the leadership of Shastri won the war and defended its borders in the north and northwest. The next halt in

the course of Indian democracy was the infamous death of Lal Bahadur Shastri in Tashkent on 11th January 1966. The second prime minister of the world’s biggest democracy was found dead in mysterious conditions. It came as a shock to many and also as a relief as it was alleged that the Soviet Union put heavy diplomatic pressure on Shastri throughout the talks in Tashkent so that India accedes to Pakistan’s demand for the return of all territories in Jammu and Kashmir which had been taken by the Indian army in the 1965 war. The death of Shastri remains a mystery till date and it was allegedly called a planned murder by some people and they blamed people of some elite circles who wanted a transition of power from Shastri who became the new “Hero” after the war against Pakistan.

The new era in the chapter of Indian democracy started with Indira



Gandhi rising to the power after the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri. Indira Gandhi daughter of J.L. Nehru rose to the power after sidelining the heavyweights like Morarji Desai. Despite being compelled to accept Morarji as her deputy prime minister, the Congress's electoral defeat in 1967 allowed Indira to emerge as a leader on her own terms. Her power conflicts with the syndicate, which included K. Kamaraj, S. Nijalingappa, S.K. Patil, Atulya Ghosh, and N. Sanjeeva Reddy, lasted for at least two years. Following the death of Zakir Husain in 1969, the syndicate and Indira fought openly in the presidential election. Neelam Sanjiva Reddy was chosen as the candidate for president by the former. On the 18th of July 1969, just five days after making this decision, she expelled Morarji from the Cabinet and retained the Finance ministry for herself. She announced the nationalisa-

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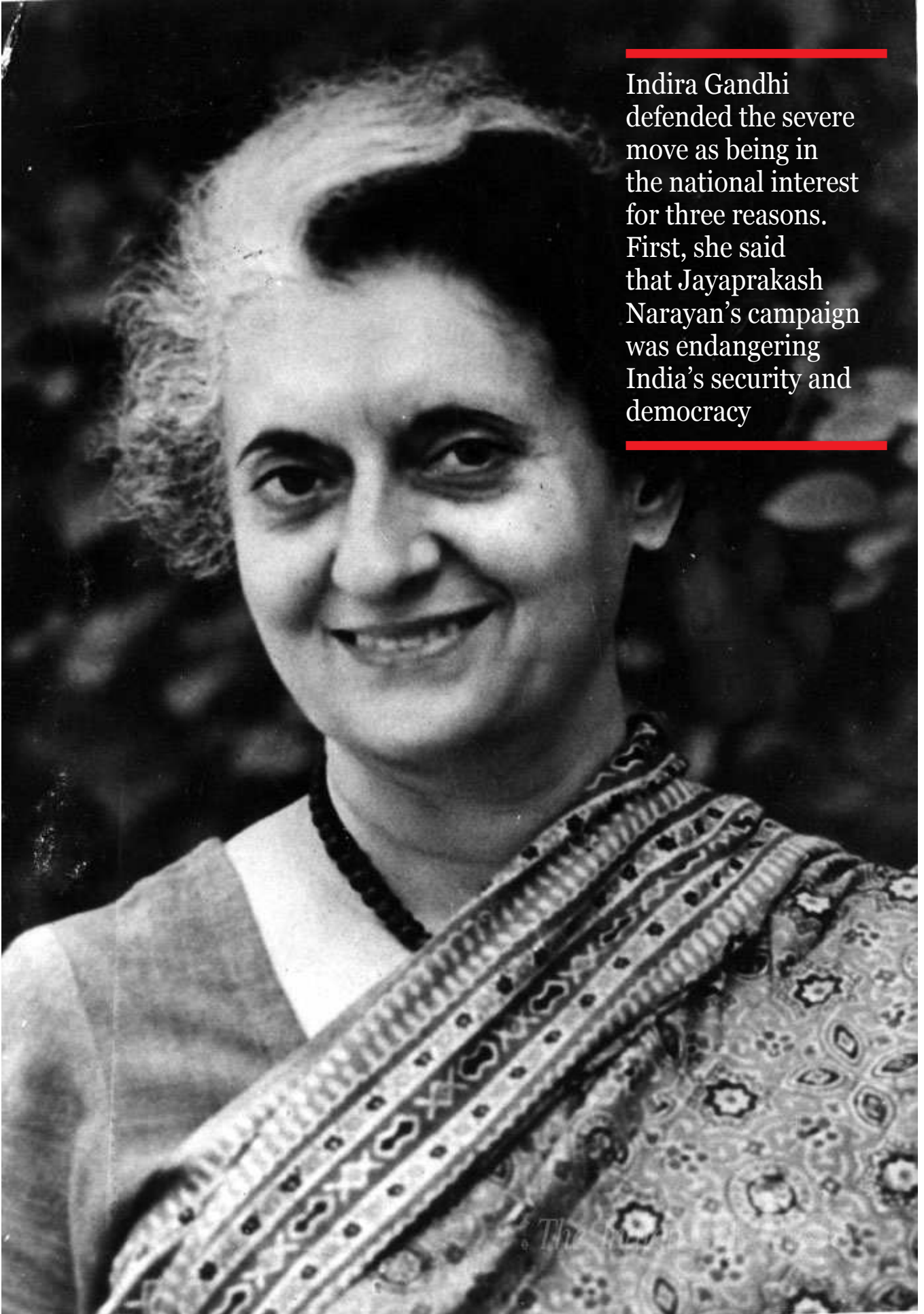


tion of fourteen banks by a presidential edict on July 21, 1969. She later announced the removal of privy purses. As a result, she gained a reputation as a progressive leader among the general public. Indira was outspoken in her opposition to Reddy and backed then-Vice President V.V. Giri for the presidency of India. To assure Giri's victory, she urged the electoral college to vote their consciences, and on August 20, 1969, V.V. Giri was elected President of India by a razor-thin margin.

Indira's tussle with the judiciary came to the fore after the Golaknath case in 1967 which restricted the parliament from any kind of amendment to the fundamental rights. The government responded with the 24th amendment and the supreme court in the Kesavananda Bharti case propounded the Basic Structure doctrine in which the Supreme Court stated that the parliament can amend the fundamental rights but without any changes in the basic structure of the constitution[9].

Indira's popularity rose to new heights after India's win against Pakistan in the 1971 war which led to the partition of Pakistan and the birth of Bangladesh as a new nation. The opposition attacked Indira for her style of running the office and alleged her for the despotic rule by his son Sanjay Gandhi and Indira herself. Jayprakash Narayan from Bihar rose as a strong popular leader with massive support from students from all over the country and as a face of opposition against Indira. The alleged chaos





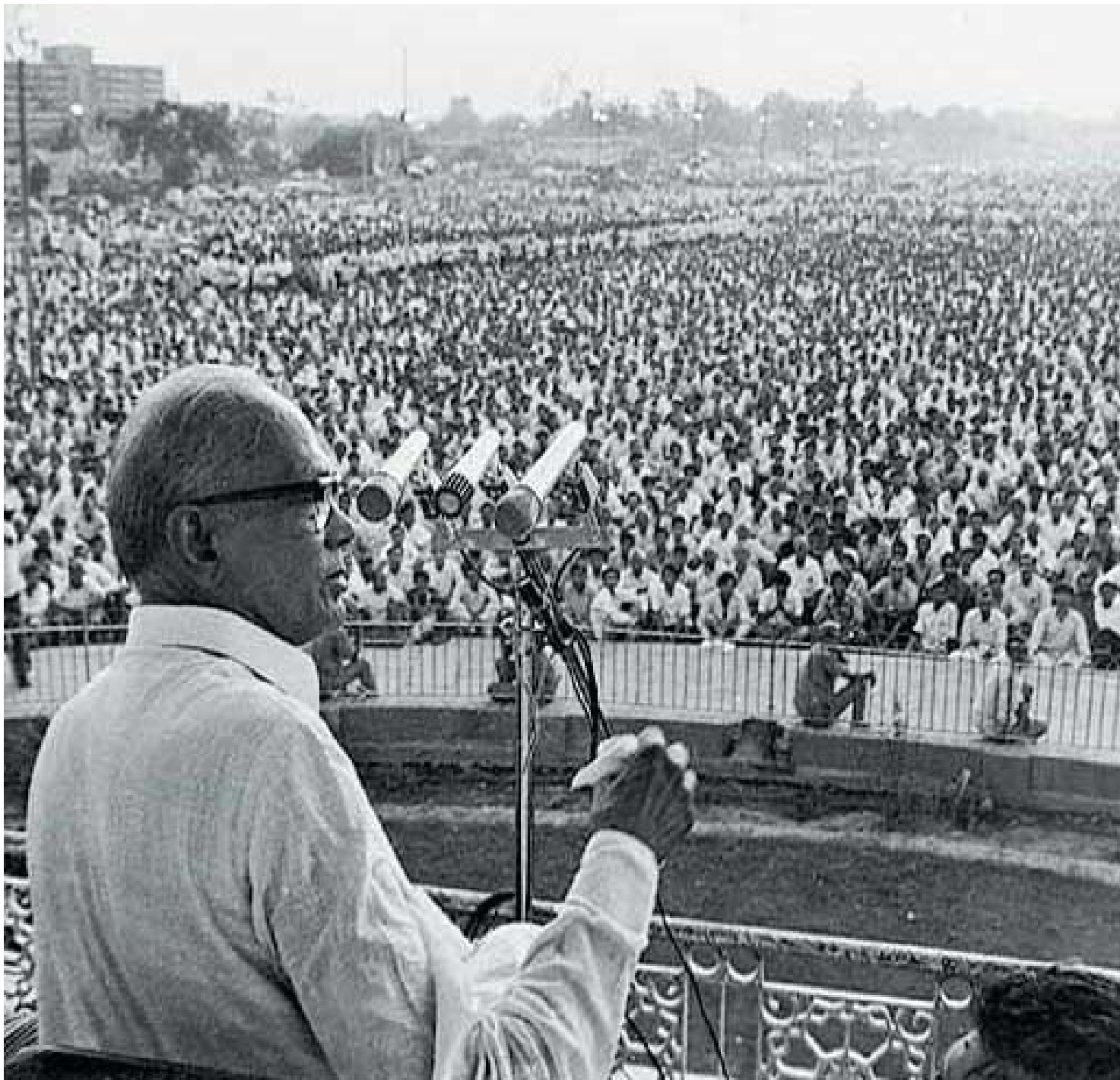
Indira Gandhi defended the severe move as being in the national interest for three reasons. First, she said that Jayaprakash Narayan's campaign was endangering India's security and democracy

and internal disturbance led to the black chapter in the Indian democracy which resulted in the Indira government imposing an “Emergency.” “The president has proclaimed Emergency. There is nothing to panic about.” Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s statements were broadcast on All India Radio in the early hours of June 26[10]. The public, as well as Gandhi’s Cabinet members, who had been told just hours before the PM went to the AIR studio, were completely unaware of what had happened. The Emergency Proclamation had been signed by President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed the night before. Soon after, newspaper presses across Delhi went dark, with no

news being produced for the next two days due to a power outage. Hundreds of political leaders, activists, and trade unionists opposed to the Congress Party were arrested in the early hours of June 26. The purpose of the country’s 21-month-long Emergency was to prevent “internal disturbance,” for which constitutional rights were suspended and freedom of speech and the press were revoked. Indira Gandhi defended the severe move as being in the national interest for three reasons. First, she said that Jayaprakash Narayan’s campaign was endangering India’s security and democracy. Second, she believed that there was a pressing need for quick

economic development and the upliftment of the poor. Third, she warned against foreign countries interfering in Indian affairs, which might destabilize and weaken the country.

Growing unemployment, widespread inflation, and food scarcity characterized the months leading up to the declaration of the Emergency. The poor state of the Indian economy was accompanied by riots and protests in several sections of the country. Surprisingly, the country’s long-simmering borders were relatively quiet in the years leading up to the Emergency. “As if to compensate, there was suddenly unrest in the heartland, in regions of the country that had



long felt themselves vital components of the Republic of India for reasons of history, politics, custom, and language,” writes historian Ramachandra Guha in his book “India after Gandhi.”

Navnirman Andolan in Gujarat

Students from Ahmedabad’s L D College of Engineering went on strike in December 1973 to protest an increase in school fees. Students at Gujarat University erupted in protest a month later, asking that the state administration be dismissed. The movement was dubbed the ‘Navnirman movement,’ which means “regeneration movement.” Gu-



jarat was ruled by the Congress at the time, with Chimanbhai Patel as the chief minister. The government was known for its corruption, and its leader was known as chairman chor (thief).

The Narendra Modi government which has faced huge demonstrations mainly from the students of Jamila milia Islamia, Delhi University, Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi recently during the protest against the Citizen Amendment Act and NRC, got a fascinating connection with the student protests as the Navnirman Movement was the first interaction of Modi with public protest. According to the Navnirman Movement page on Narendra Modi. “the Navnirman Movement was Narendra’s first interaction with public protest and led to a substantial expansion of his viewpoint on social issues.” “It also catapulted Narendra to his first political office, General Secretary of Gujarat’s Lok Sangharsh Samiti, in 1975.

JP Movement and Aftermath

In 1974, Jayaprakash Narayan, armed with the virtues of India’s saintly political tradition, led a mass campaign against Indira Gandhi’s administration. He was imprisoned under the Emergency and the struggle, in the end, resulted in the defeat of the Congress party for the first time in 1977.

Despite the fact that he was the architect of the Janata government, JP, like Mahatma Gandhi, avoided power politics. He inspired a generation of young people to take part in huge satyagraha against corrupt governments in Gujarat and Bihar, to avoid the use of violence, and to fight against caste and class injustice. JP movement was the main opposition force during the Indira Gandhi government. The first non-congress government came into power

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as the “Janta government”, unfortunately, which didn’t survive to complete its five-year term in the power. Indira Gandhi again rose to the power with a massive victory after the collapse of the Janta government.

The next halt in the course of Indian democracy came in the form of Indira Gandhi’s assassination in 1984 by her Sikh bodyguards Satwant Singh and Beant Singh in the aftermath of Operation Blue Star which led to the entry of Indian armed forces in the golden temple of Amritsar which is regarded as one of the holiest places of the Sikh sect. The demand of Khalistan and the terrorism in Punjab led to military action which in turn angered the Sikhs and led them to avenge it with the assassination of Indira Gandhi.

The assassination was followed by



the Sikh riots in Delhi which led to the killings of Sikhs in Delhi and other cities of the country. After the death of Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi rose to power which further consolidated the power of the Nehru-Gandhi lineage. In May 1991, Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by a suicide bomber from the Liberation of Tamil Tigers Eelam (LTTE). After the death of Rajiv Gandhi, the one-party rule or congress rule ended in India and a new era of coalition governments or unstable governments paved its way.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee government formed in 1998 completed its five-year term as the first non-congress government in the office. The Congress again formed a government with the alliance of several regional and national parties from 2004 to 2013 with Dr. Manmohan Singh as the leader of the government.

Narendra Modi Era

The Bhartiya Janta Party which got 2 seats in the 1984 elections crossed the 272 mark comfortably on its own in 2014, without allies winning 282 seats, a gain of 166. This mammoth victory of Bjp which they themselves did not anticipate became possible due to the face of Narendra Modi. The three-time chief minister of Gujarat earlier used to be an active member of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh the parent organisation of Bjp. With its successful campaign of putting the Gujarat Model as the true picture of his leadership, Modi came to the power with the promise of leading a nationalist government and fulfilling the promises such as a decrease in petrol prices, the issue of black money, and raising the nationalist sentiments high on issues of Pakistan and Kashmir. Modi came to Delhi after sidelining heavyweights and potential candidates for the post of prime minister from the BJP side like L.K Advani, Sushma Swaraj, Rajnath Singh. Modi portrayed his Gujarat model while the opposition portrayed Modi as a hardcore Hindu leader and alleged him as being Anti-Muslim.

However, there has been a lot of articles and discussion about the impending end of India's democracy, particularly in the western media. The extreme left-wing in India and from the west compared Modi as being equivalent to Hitler. The reforms like demonetisation and GST which led to Modi's failure on the economic front also led to the criticism of the current Modi government. The recent controversy on CAA and NRC dented the image of the Modi government as being the oppressor of minorities. India's rank in the various indexes like democratic indexes and human rights indexes slipped too. It is said that India is moving towards a one-party state. But do all these claims and commentary on the Indian democracy are justified or these are just rhetorics. In reality, the Indian democracy still remains very much vibrant and particularly in states, it is very much alive. The regular and successful conduct of elections in various states where the ruling Bjp government lost in big states like West Bengal after a long election campaign. It is alleged that India is turning intolerant and the government is projected as pro-Hindu against the sentiments of the minority. But does it really present the true picture of democracy in India and as it is claimed the minority is totally under stress and India is moving towards becoming a Hindu Rashtra! The answer is debatable as Indian democracy and the constitution are still very much alive. The second-largest religious group in the country claims to be the minority in the country. Isn't it ironic that people claim India as a democracy that suppresses its minority to a big extent while its so-called "minority" which is in actual its second-largest and ethnic group protests in large numbers on the roads of Mumbai on the statement given by French President Emmanuel Macron? The so-called "oppressive" democracy includes the same groups and organisations who protested at Azad Maidan in Mumbai in the support of Rohingya Muslims and destroyed public property.

The three-time chief minister of Gujarat earlier used to be an active member of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh the parent organisation of Bjp. With its successful campaign of putting the Gujarat Model as the true picture of his leadership, Modi came to the power with the promise of leading a nationalist government and fulfilling the promises such as a decrease in petrol prices, the issue of black money, and raising the nationalist sentiments high on issues of Pakistan and Kashmir.





The constitution of the Indian republic which gives equal rights to every citizen of the land mentions in Article 44 about the Uniform Civil Code. The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) calls for the formulation of one law for India, which would be applicable to all religious communities in matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption. The code comes under Article 44 of the Constitution, which lays down that the state shall endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code for the citizens throughout the territory of India. The statutory enactments have largely secularised and modernised Hindu personal laws. In 1956, the Hindu personal laws (which also apply to Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists) were defined by the Parliament. The Muslim personal laws, on the other hand, have mostly remained unchanged and traditional in content and manner. The personal affairs of all Indian Muslims in India are governed by the Shariat law of 1937. It expressly declares that the state will not intervene in personal disputes and that a religious leader will issue a pronouncement based on his interpretations of the Quran and Hadith. Apart from that, Christians and Jews have various personal laws to follow. Article 44 in the Directive Principles of the State Policy is still till-date not

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) calls for the formulation of one law for India, which would be applicable to all religious communities in matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption. The code comes under Article 44 of the Constitution, which lays down that the state shall endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code for the citizens throughout the territory of India.

followed by various groups consisting of the religious group which forms the second largest majority of the country. It clearly indicates the collective failure and vote bank politics of all the governments that ruled the country after 75 years and even after the cases like the Shah Bano Case of 1987, the uniform civil code is still not implemented “uniformly”.

The secular politics in the country is not so secular if we look deep into the political discourse around the Hindu religion. The Hindu temple management system is clearly an example of this dichotomy. The Hindu temples have been usurped by the very entity

that is duty-bound to preserve religious freedom—the “Indian state,” argues Supreme Court advocate J. Sai Deepak. After the Supreme Court declared the Hindu Religion and Charitable Endowment (HRCE) Act “unconstitutional” in 1954, Hindu endowments were placed under state control by implementing a similar statute at the provincial level. The key justification was that it would prevent property misappropriation and misuse. However, history shows that it has only resulted in corruption, perpetrated by none other than the state apparatus itself, during the last half-century. There have been a plethora of examples in which politicians in au-

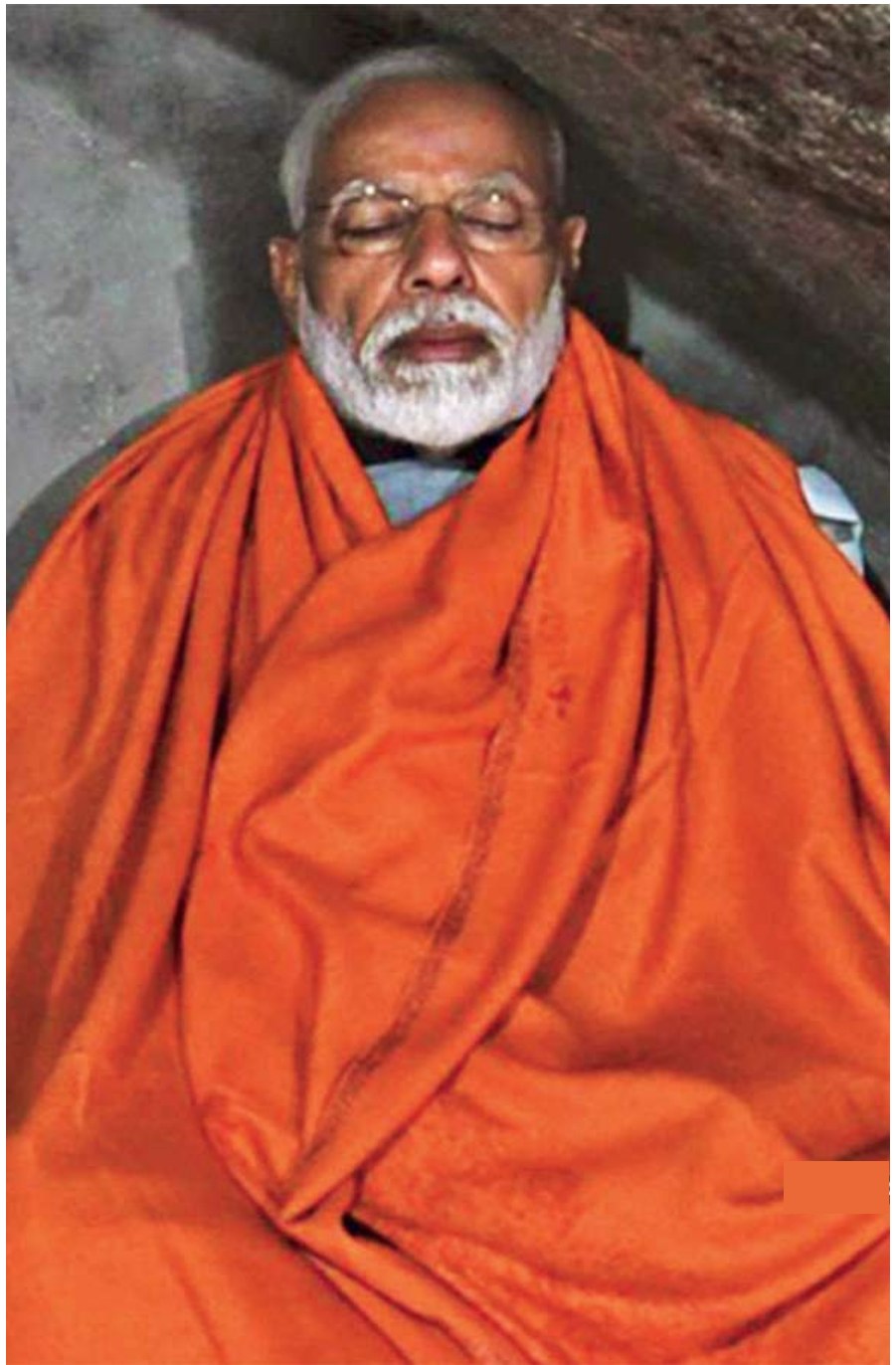
thority and officials in charge of temple affairs have been accused of significant corruption, the most recent of which is the Tirupati episode. However, it is tantamount to “taxing” Hindus for practicing their faith in their own country. “For every hundred rupees a Hindu donates at a temple in Tamil Nadu, the government receives Rs 18.” So, in fact, even after Independence, Hindus are paying a Jaziya-style religious tax,” says Deepak.

The culture of violence in the name of a caste in the Hindu religion is also still very much alive. The recent examples are the rape cases of girls from the “Dalit” community in Hathras in Uttar Pradesh. In the 21st century which is in a true sense a globalised and connected world, the discrimination in the name of caste is very much worrying as it causes the alienation of the people from the lower castes from their own fold. Also, various organisations in the northeast specially and various parts of India are at work with the same thinking and motive as same as “Macaulay’s Minute of Education” of 1835 which wanted to create a pool of Indians who would be “Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect”. Hindu religion from the colonial times has accepted reforms and gradually evolved with the help of work done by the great reformist like Raja Ram Mohan Roy who forced the Britishers to bring the legislation to ban the evil of Sati in 1829. The work done by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar who championed the cause of the downtrodden and untouchables of the country is still among one of the difficult struggles of modern history led by an individual. Thus, the ruling government and people of the country really need to understand the urgent need for reforms and change in the mindset towards the people from the lower fold so that the spirit and the very being of the constitution must remain alive.

Conclusion

The Constitution is not a mere lawyers’ document, it is a vehicle of life, and its spirit is always the spirit of age- B.R. Ambedkar

The modern form of parliamentary democracy as a form of government came to India through the Britishers who left a huge impact on the culture, cuisine, lifestyle, and mindset of the people. India is the most prized possession of the Britishers served its colonial masters for more than 200 years. The



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coming of modern parliamentary democracy was altogether a different and new experience for a country that was in the shackles of colonialism for years. The Britishers never had a written constitution as it evolved over the years from different charters like Magna Carta in 1215 and different interpretations of the court over the years. India being a vast land and being a heterogeneous society of so many different cultures, ethnicities, religions needed a supreme body according to which the legislature, executive, and judiciary will be doing

The constitution-makers under the leadership of the chairman of drafting committee B.R. Ambedkar studied different constitutions and borrowed the best features and assimilated them into the Indian constitution. It was a tough task to prepare a common constitution and according to the wishes of the people from the Himalayas up in the north to the Nilgiris in the south.

their work with complete independence and without any interference from the other. It was the wisdom and farsightedness of the constitution-makers that they realised the need for a constitution which will be essential for successful and democratic functioning. The constitution-makers under the leadership of the chairman of drafting committee B.R. Ambedkar studied different constitutions and borrowed the best features and assimilated them into the Indian constitution. It was a tough task to prepare a common constitution and according to the wishes of the people from the Himalayas up in the north to the Nilgiris in the south. The constitution-makers done it very efficiently and India became a sovereign democratic republic on 26th January 1950. It was a



difficult task to run the administration of such a vast land. The constitutional commentators and political experts all over the globe were pessimistic about the idea of India at that time. After 75 years of independence when we look back at the course of the Indian democracy, one realizes that how fascinating the idea of India was at the beginning and how optimistic our constitutional makers and the freedom fighters were for the independence and democracy for India. India is a rising economic

power with a large population of youth still lagging behind in various sectors. Also with the coming of the digital age and with the slogans of digital India and shining India, the government must need to look at strengthening the weakest links of the chain and needs to think about the development of the people standing at the end of the row. India raised a large chunk of its people from poverty but a lot is still left to be done for the underprivileged community. It was the legacy of the colonial adminis-



tration that we had rampant corruption in the government offices. The discrimination between the white race and the Indians brought the feeling of inferiority and gave birth to the division in the society. This division further intensified on the basis of caste, region, and religion after the independence. The ghost of communalism still haunts the country after so many years of independence. It's time that the people of this country need to understand what our constitution-makers envisioned

while framing the constitution. It must be realised that Indian democracy is nascent as compared to the American or to the British democracy. Indian democracy adopted a lot of features from these two democracies and it needs to improve in its journey further. The course from being a colony of British to a sovereign democratic republic, Indian people adapted the democracy very well. The universal adult franchise enabled them to choose their representatives from a pool of candidates. It is

the journey of the democracy which will decide the fate of this country and till now this country has successfully though with so many hiccups in its course moved further. It is in the womb of time that how this land which once covered a whole continent in itself will react to the experiment of democracy by the constitution-makers.

Writer is associated with department of political science, faculty of social science, university of Delhi.

SOME BONDS ARE FOREVER : BRIG LS LIDDER, SM, VSM

Lt Col JS Sodhi

On 08 December 2021 after I had finished my lunch at 1.25 pm, I opened my mobile phone to check my WhatsApp messages. As I was reading the messages, in one of the groups that I am in, I read a screenshot of a TV news channel which was posted in that group at 1.30 pm saying that the helicopter carrying India's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Gen Bipin Rawat has crashed in Coonoor.

I felt numb and restless as I knew that my childhood friend whom I had known since my childhood days of studying together in Kendriya Vidyalaya Mhow and staying in blocks opposite to each other in Golf View, Mhow, Brig Lakhbinder Singh Lidder whose nickname was Tony, was the Military Assistant (MA) to the CDS. I prayed to God asking Lakhbinder to not be in that ill-fated helicopter.

Immediately I ran towards my television and opened the news channels and started flipping through all the news channels I regularly watch, for any news of Lakhbinder.

But till evening there wasn't any confirmed news about Lakhbinder till officially it was declared that 13 persons onboard the IAF helicopter including the CDS, his wife and Brig LS Lidder had lost their lives.

The world came crashing on me and my family as we had known Brig LS Lidder and his family for over 37 years.

Some bonds are forever and these bonds are not related by blood but by associations and memories. These bonds are equally painful when someone so close to you goes away forever, as those who are related by blood, when they depart for eternity.

The coursemates of the 77 NDA Course and the 87 Regular Course too felt the same pain and grief knowing that Lakhbinder, their coursemate in National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla and the Indian Military Academy, Dehradun respectively is no more amongst them.

The first wreath to be laid on Brig





LS Lidder, SM, VSM as he lay in state in the Brar Square Crematorium, Delhi Cantonment before his final rites, was laid by Rear Admiral Kunal Singh Rajkumar who is the topper of the 77 NDA Course and Colonel Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, (Retd), who is a Member of Parliament and an ex-Union Minister, who too is from the 77 NDA Course. They both jointly laid the wreath on behalf of the 77 NDA Course.

The second wreath to be laid was by Major General Ranjit Singh Manral who is the President's Gold Medal (PGM) awardee of the 87 Regular Course. This wreath was laid on behalf of the 87 Regular course.

Brig VS Sekhon laid the third wreath which was on behalf of all Injuns, as the Cadets of India Squadron in the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla are called. Brig LS Lidder and Brig VS Sekhon both belonged to India Squadron apart from being coursemates and regimental officers too.

Air Commodore Sartaj Bedi, another coursemate of Lakhbinder laid the next wreath, thus completing the realm of the Tri-Services that the National Defence Academy epitomises.

On 25 May this year when the news came that Lakhbinder had been approved to the rank of Major General, there was a celebratory party in his house in Delhi Cantonment that evening. During the party that evening as Lakhbinder was mixing around with the guests, suddenly he excused himself from the group of well-wishers whom he was standing with, and went straight to his Mother who was seated on the

sofa in the living room. He cupped her face in his hands and kissed her on her forehead and went back to mix around with the guests. Lakhbinder was a dotting son.

And on 25 November this year which marked the Silver Jubilee Wedding Anniversary of Lakhbinder with the gracious and gentle Geetika, as the celebrations were on that evening, Tony took the mike suddenly as a song was in progress and said "In the last 25 years, Geetika has loved me more than I have loved her. Today onwards I will love her more". Tony was a loveable husband.

On 07 December 2021, a day before the ill-fated helicopter crash, Lakhbinder was speaking to an IAF Officer in Sulur Air Base from where the next day the entourage of CDS was to catch a helicopter to Wellington, tying up the final details for the move. Lakhbinder asked the IAF Officer if he could get him anything from New Delhi. To which the Officer replied "No, thank you Sir". Lakhbinder replied back "I shall get you tonnes of good wishes from New Delhi" and then Lakhbinder ended the call. Lakhbinder had never met that IAF Officer ever before in life. Lakhbinder had the unusual ability of winning every heart whom he came across even for a second. Such was Lakhbinder's charisma and aura.

To take a line from Jackie Shroff's famous movie "Yaadein", the title song had the lyrics "Yaadein bus yaadein reh jaati hai". (Memories remain, but memories)

Lakhbinder's classmates in Kendriya Vidyalaya Mhow, where Lakhbinder

studied held special prayers in honour and memory of him in the School premises on 09 May 2021.

In his entire life Lakhbinder never spoke ill about anyone and no one ever spoke ill about him. Such treasures are very rare to find. He was loved by all those who knew him. Lakhbinder shall always remain around all those who loved him, albeit in a different form.

Over 400 Course mates and Classmates of Lakhbinder attended his final rites on 10 December 2021 and his Bhog and Antim Ardas, the final Sikh rituals, in a Gurudwara in Delhi Cantonment on 12 December 2021.

To quote Colonel Atul Pratap Singh, a Veteran of the Indian Army's legendary quote "Coursemates Classmates,".

I would like to add one line more to Col Atul Pratap Singh's quote "Coursemates Classmates,".

The mortal remains of Lakhbinder who was born in Delhi Cantonment on 26 June 1969, were consigned to flames in Delhi Cantonment on 10 December 2021. The complete journey of existence of Lakhbinder on Planet Earth ended from where it had begun 52 years back. Such are the twists and turns of fate.

Rest in eternal peace Brig LS Lidder, SM, VSM. Every citizen of India is proud of you.

(The writer who retired from the Corps of Engineers is an alumnus of NDA, Khadakwasla and IIT Kanpur. He is a M.Tech in Structures has also done MBA and LLB. The views expressed are personal)

Infrastructure as a spatial imagery

Mayank Mishra

The famous amphitheatre Colosseum constructed under the Roman emperor Vespasian was regarded as a symbol of metamorphosing the much-contested legacy of Emperor Nero from the map of Rome. Construction, in general, was central to the manifestation and spatial consolidation of power in the Roman Empire. The Colosseum, built around 72 AD, was often attributed as—new dynasties need such psychological proof of power. The building presented a dichotomy wherein the Flavian Amphitheatre was accessible to all members of Roman society; however, there was rigid segregation in terms of entrances and seating arrangements that reinforced socio-economic segregation within Rome. The stated historical aspect may astonish many but are we yet again ready to get amazed by the grand Central Vista centuries after?

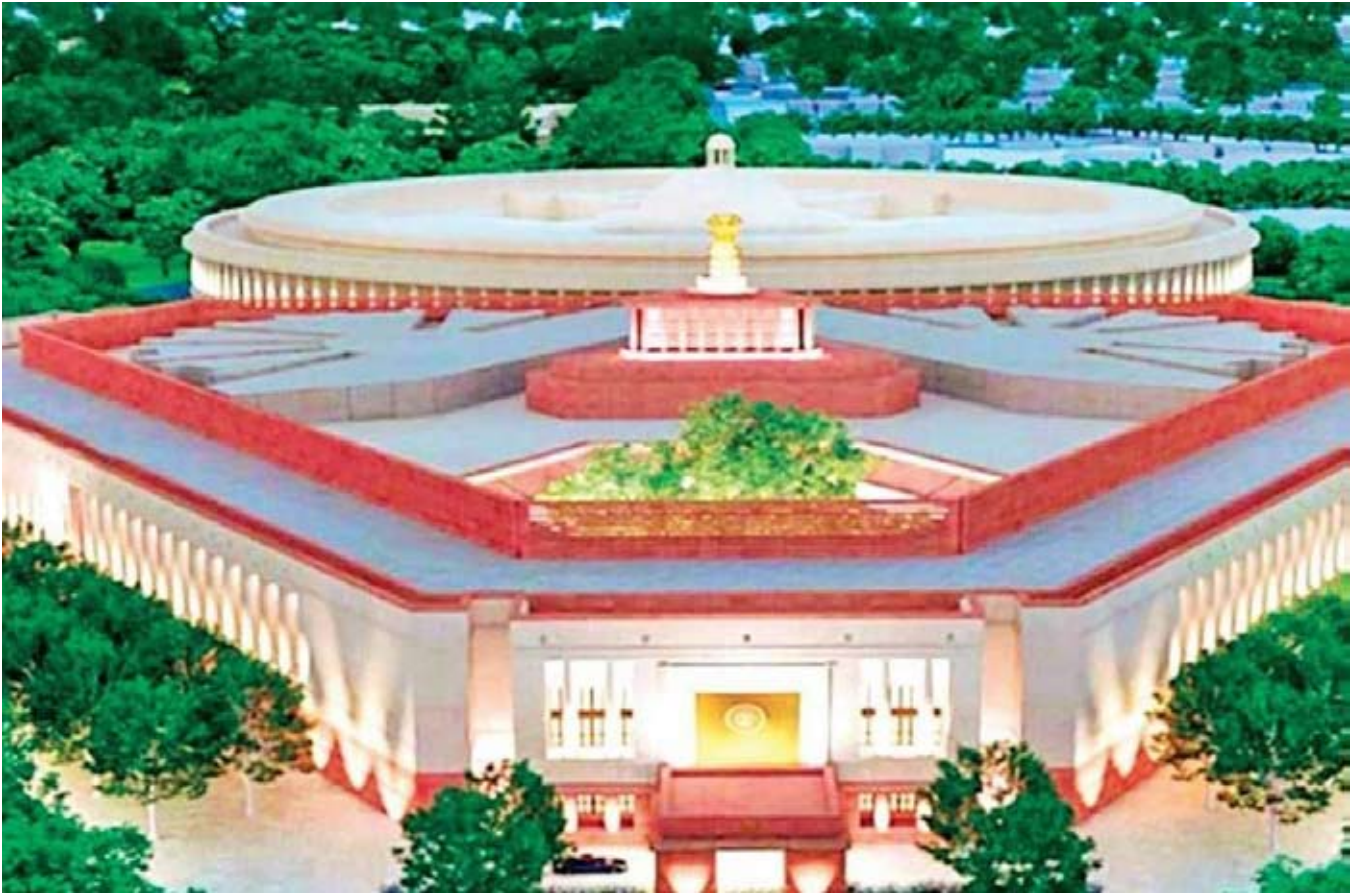
Modi government's ambitious Central Vista Project aiming to construct a common central secretariat, a new Prime Minister's residence and office, a new Vice President Enclave and India's dilapidating health infrastructure amidst the pestilential waves of coronavirus.

Many parallels are being drawn between the Modi government's ambitious Central Vista Project aiming to construct a common central secretariat, a new Prime Minister's residence and office, a new Vice President Enclave and India's dilapidating health infrastructure amidst the pestilential waves of coronavirus. Furthermore, there have been persistent sharp criticisms from the prominent academics, architects

and the opposition of undermining history, heritage, legality coupled with the timing and feasibility of the proposed projects; the government seems unabated with the construction of the project in full swing.

The parallel, though, brings in the argument of govt 'prioritising' the Vista over the 'necessity' of public health; however, the governments in the country never prioritised or necessitat-





ed substantive investments in the latter. Nevertheless, there are legitimate concerns over the dilapidating government buildings; the project announced in



September 2019 prior to the pandemic and slated to complete by 2024 amidst the catastrophic waves of coronavirus calls for more significant questions of ‘whys’ that this article intends to address through the state, space and infrastructure.

The state can be attributed as a space that manifests power. First, as a material and natural space in which a physical space transformed by myriad infrastructures such as financial and commercial establishments, air routes and the like. Second, hierarchical institutions form the social space that may include state institutions, schools, workplaces and places for worships. Each state is a social space where there is a minimum consensus for attributing or denoting certain things or activities, such as the name of a train or legislature (called Parliament). The third is the mental space that includes the representations of a state which people at the large construct.

In such spatial understanding of state, the standard marker of the growth is perceivably developing infrastructure. Infrastructure in space affects social integration, accessibility and inclusiveness. The intended objective of infrastructure may not yield the purpose or objectives of what is it to be constructed for. The central Vista in-

tends to purport that vivid visual imagination of ‘New India’ with its credit to the incumbent government of redeveloping and reimagining the power corridor of the country. These grandeur tangible visual markers give a sense of pride to an ordinary citizen who struggles to avail necessities such as health and education comfortably.

In this sense, the given infrastructure may not be necessary dysfunctional, but its whole purpose is altered by how space made to attain intended ends serves to upend a different purpose. An infrastructure helps the public form a “place-based identity” and enhances citizens’ attachment to the city, irrespective of its proposed functionality and efficacy. Mobility forms one of the critical determinants in gauging the efficiency of a given infrastructure. Mobility here can be comprehended as facilitating flows of people, capital and information in a proposed space. Central Vista’s sanitised aesthetics in democratic India goes against ‘publicness’ as the plan restricts the mobility of ordinary citizens in and around the complex. Such spatial imagery of being exclusive, distant and imposing goes against the spirit of democratisation and gives citizens an impression of hierarchical and impalpable power.

Social demand for the infrastructure



is difficult to measure. For instance, a power plant is not beneficial just because it can generate electricity or an airport from where aeroplanes can fly but the bulk of social benefits it may potentially create concerning commerce, communication, and what implications it has socially and culturally. They drive as aesthetic vehicles and culminates in forms of desire and fantasy and can take on fetish-like aspects that sometimes can be completely independent of their technical utility. Infrastructure, however, is increasingly comprehended to gain legitimacy and create an 'integrated' national space and ideology. Physical reconfiguration of our surroundings also impacts the nature of power. The Prime Minister residence has sit traditionally behind the power corridor. With this new redevelopment plan Mr Modi through spatial reconfiguration intends to rearrange institutions of government as infrastructure impacts and alters the nature of power.

David Harvey locates infrastructure like built environment, industries, production complexes, communication and transport networks within a capitalist sociospatial organisation (i.e. socially produced geographical landscapes). The socio-spatial configuration is created continuously, destroyed and reconstituted. He asserts capitalist development must negotiate a knife-edge between preserving the values of

The Prime Minister residence has sit traditionally behind the power corridor. With this new redevelopment plan Mr Modi through spatial reconfiguration intends to rearrange institutions of government as infrastructure impacts and alters the nature of power

past commitments made at a place and time or devaluing them to open up new room for accumulation. The inner contradictions of capitalism are expressed through the restless formation and reformation of geographical landscapes. The Vista can be attributed as a deflection from the core issues the country grapples with by contemporaneous modernity, giving in a perception to its citizens what it means to be modern and barometer of power and progress. Massive infrastructural projects can be used to represent state power to its citizens that also generates political effects.

A substantive amount of resources are channelled in spatial, infrastructural imagination by the state, often leading to resource mismanagement as some projects are privileged for state-funded investments. Historically, in developing countries, it has been observed that disproportionate amounts of funds have been allocated in favour of projects that entails more political and less social value. Brian Larkin asserts that such mammoth projects generate complicated emotional investments that induce a range of counterintuitive responses and distinct if ephemeral sensibilities and political affect culminate into intended electoral victories.

Historically, Vespasian legitimised and consolidated his sovereignty through a political and sculptural (infrastructural) propaganda campaign to win the legitimacy of the Roman Senate and the approval of its citizens. As infrastructure is a tangible thing, they create a social experience and manifest meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt. An ordinary citizen is thus expected to take pride in how grand one's centre of authority is and make peace with struggles to manage two square meals and perhaps gasp for oxygen.

(Doctoral candidate at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, India. His research focuses specifically on state space, political economy and South Asia)



Shriram
Properties

Homes that live in you

Money rules: East or West

Raj Kamal

When you look into the world system more closely then you find that the USA has a lot of recognition but China hasn't, but in the 21st century, China compete with the USA in every field whether in the military, Cyber security, economy or Investment in developing world. But the question is why China hasn't gained recognition of what America has? I don't know what's the answer to this question but in my point of view, China reflects much hard power to weaken or adversaries' nations in its early phase than the United States hadn't done in the early decades of the 20th Century. whether you take an example of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, then you find that China and Pakistan are good friends claimed by both sides and china also invest hugely in Pakistan infrastructure and despite all these when Pakistan faces monetary crisis then he goes in the door of United States of America of Indirectly to say IMF then why not china supports Pakistan in his crisis days that's build up the nar-

rative that China still isn't in the level of USA to deal with a complex problem and it leads to mistrust on china in the global stage and finally, it gives the strong stance to not recognise china as America enjoying since IMF and World Bank came into the world. A few days ago, America conducted a Democracy summit in which china, Russia were not invited but invitation went to Pakistan but the leadership of that country decided to not participate ...I don't know the reason behind their decision but yes Military backed puppet government shares their interest to the undemocratic nation of what china is but Summit was supported by most of Nation's all over the world, that again gives us the signal that yet developing world are not ready to accept the leadership of china apart from Belt and Road Initiative in which China invests a lot in developing nations. Another major field in which China wants recognition and that's the Soft Power because China only portrayed its image that it has a large military, forex reserve or big technology companies like Alibaba, Tancent, but what America has in Soft Power is

ahead of What china trying to match with America, US has Hollywood, McDonald, KFC, Google, Microsoft, Apple, Jeans, Web series and a lot of things but China hasn't a similar thing like the US own and through these companies, food habits, the culture they promote their version of lifestyle and governance in which there is to achieve and establish hegemon of the world and they're enjoying their hegemon since the dissolution of Soviet Union and before the disintegration of Communist bloc there was also many spaces for the United States to counter communist bloc through its soft tactics. All the way, the Capitalist world has still relevant in the current scenario either theatre is changing its nature whether it's Militarily or economically but to compete with the United States in the neck to neck competition it's not too easy for China but I'm not rejecting china it has the sphere of influence but it's too far from what the USA or So-called West has.

(Writer is pursuing Masters at School of International Studies, Central University of Gujarat)



Chronicling racial relations between Indians and foreign invaders

In July 1765, Robert Clive, in a letter to Sir Francis Sykes, compared Gornorah favourably to Calcutta, then capital of British India. He wrote: "I will pronounce Calcutta to be one of the most wicked places in the Universe."

Drawing upon the letters, memoirs and journals of traders, travellers, bureaucrats, officials, officers and the occasional bishop, M.J. Akbar's 'Doolally Sahib And The Black Zamindar -- Racism and Revenge in the British Raj' (Bloomsbury) is a chronicle of racial relations between Indians and their last foreign invaders, sometimes infuriating but always compelling.

A multitude of vignettes, combined with insight and analysis, reveal the deeply ingrained conviction of 'white superiority' that shaped this history. How deep this conviction was is best illustrated by the fact that the British abandoned a large community of their own children because they were born of Indian mothers.

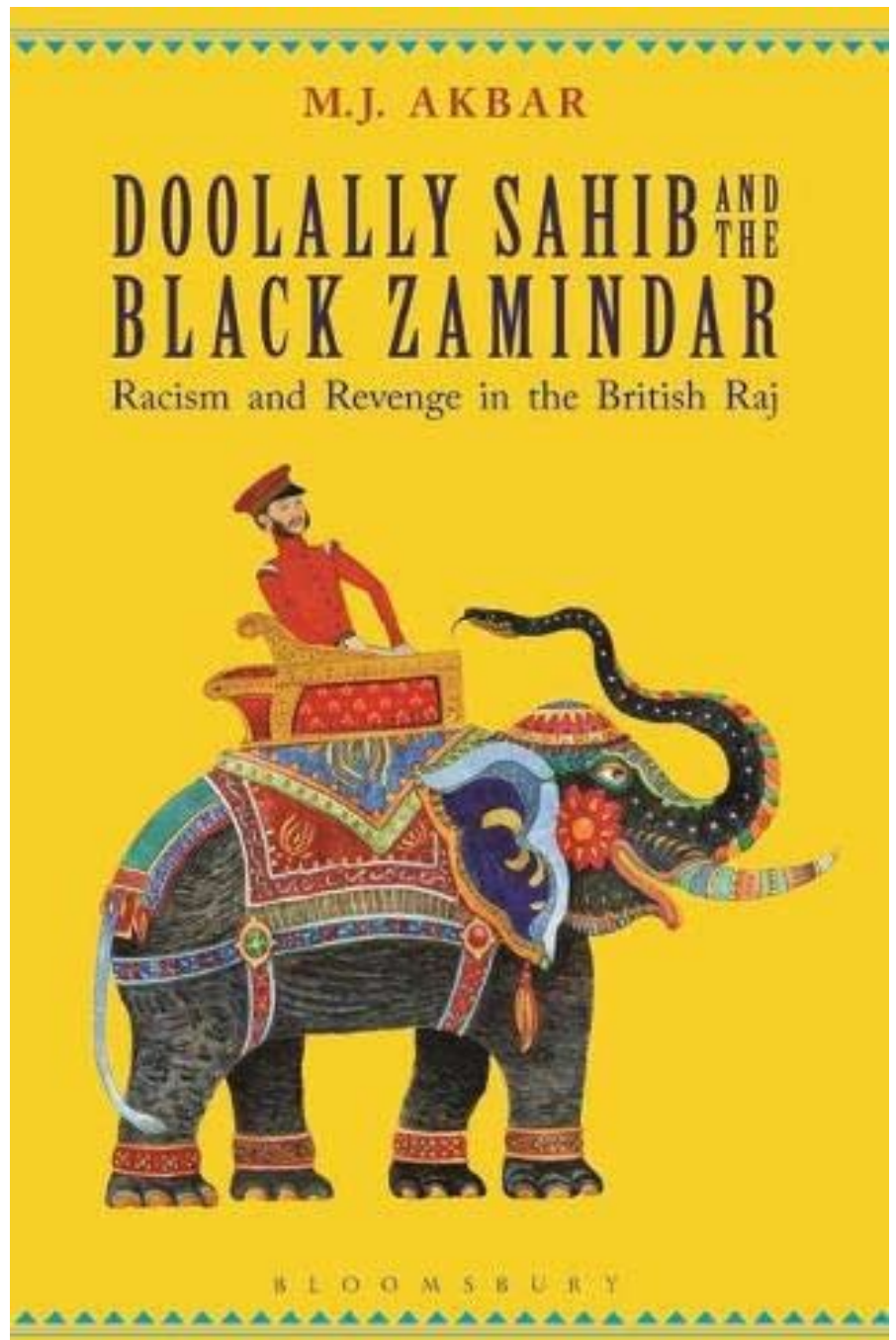
The British took pride in being outsiders, even as their exploitative revenue policy turned periodic drought and famine into horrific catastrophes, killing impoverished Indians in millions.

There were also marvellous and heart-warming exceptions in this extraordinary panorama, people who transcended racial prejudice and served as a reminder of what might have been the British made India a second home and merged with its culture instead of treating it as a fortune-hunter's turf.

The power was indisputable - the British had lost just one out of 18 wars between 1757 and 1857. Defeated repeatedly on the battlefield, Indians found innovative and amusing ways of giving expression to their resentment in household skirmishes, social mores and economic subversion.

When Indians tried to imitate the sahibs, they turned into caricatures; when they absorbed the best that the British brought with them, the confluence was positive and productive. But for the most part, subject and ruler lived parallel lives.

M.J. Akbar is a distinguished writer and Member of Parliament representing the BJP from Madhya Pradesh. During his



long career in journalism, he launched, as editor, India's first weekly political news magazine, Sunday, in 1976, and two daily newspapers, The Telegraph in 1982 and The Asian Age in 1994. He has also been editorial director of India Today and The Sunday Guardian.

He is also the author of several internationally acclaimed books, including

'India: The Siege Within'; 'Nehru: The Making of India'; 'Kashmir: Behind the Vale'; 'The Shade of Swords: Jihad and the Conflict between Islam and Christianity'; 'Tinderbox: The Past and Future of Pakistan'; and 'Blood Brothers', a novel. In addition, there have been four collections of his columns, reportage and essays.

HUMBLE STAR SHAKES UP THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

MREENAL DESHRAJ has brought smiles to her millions of fans in the Small Screen industry, she is one of the most humble, down-to-earth actors in the television industry. The reason behind this is the family and cultural values she has received from the beginning of her childhood. Mreenal was born and spent her childhood in the most famous and vibrant cities of India – Nagpur”.

Though acting was never on her mind during her childhood days, Mreenal was very active in participating in school plays, Intra School acting competitions etc. After completing her Bachelor’s Degree, Mreenal moved to New Delhi to pursue her course in one of the premium institutes for Fashion Designing – “Indian Institute of Fashion Technology (IIFT)”. After completing her course, she moved to Mumbai and entered the theatre industry. She established herself as a seasoned theatre artist and performed in seven plays.

After working in theatre for 5 years, she decided to explore unknown territories and joined the television Industry. She was offered a role in the Starplus television series with Balaji “Kahin to Hoga”. The serial “Kahin was a big hit and the audience applauded her role. She was offered a premium role in another big television serial “Ishqbaaz” and the serial became another super hit among the audience. Second part of the serial was soon announced under the name “Dil Bole Oberoi” and as expected Mreenal was an integral part of “Dil Bole Oberoi” too. Mreenal was also offered a role in a historical serial “MaharanaPratap”. She redefined the definition of looks for mothers and lead actors in Indian Television serials. She is determined to bring smiles to the faces of her fans for many more years.

Q: What and who inspired you to be in the entertainment & fashion industry?

I am in the entertainment industry by chance or perhaps by default destined to be part of this industry. During my childhood days, I used to be very curious to learn how





different people spend their lives and were very keen to enter their shoes to understand their lifestyle. I always would observe different people for hours on how they dress up, how they maintain their hairstyle, how they walk and then would try to emulate them. The entertainment and fashion industry was a natural choice for me to meet my dreams and hobbies.

Q: How do you compare the Indian fashion industry with the present global benchmark?

India has made a lot of impact in the global fashion industry in the last few years. India's middle class and its manufacturing sector have grown exponentially lately. These two forces, India's strong economic fundamentals, and India's vast technology-savvy young talents have made India very important for international brands to ignore India. Because of these dynamics, it is not a surprise that almost every international fashion brand has opened stores in India. Brands need to do their homework on Indian geography and culture to be successful. India has different fashion in north, south, east and west parts of the country. So, brands need to tweak their products a little to make their products suitable for the regional demands.

Q: What suits you in professional comfort – Theatre, small screen, or mainstream film?

I have started my journey from theatre. I believe real actors are born in the theatre industry. However, the audience is more attracted to the television and film industry. I have moved from the theatre to the television industry a few years back as I wanted to explore new fields and I am very comfortable now in the television industry. I will surely love to do a role in films if I get an opportunity to do an impactful role. These days, web series are also in demand. The only challenge is that working in films and web series needs continuous shooting dates at a particular location. So, I need to leave the television industry to do mainstream films or web series. If any opportunity comes the way that I feel will suit my profile, then I will love to do it.

Filed By Nithya Ramesh, Bureau Chief Entertainment & Fashion Desk

Sushmita Sen: For ‘Aarya’, the camera was a fly on the wall

Akshay Acharya

Sushmita Sen found the perfect way to channelise her inner strength through her work in the Ram Madhvani directorial ‘Aarya’.

The title character of ‘Aarya’, much like Sushmita, is a woman of substance. She calls the shots, is highly adaptive, plays to her strengths and is protective about her world.

As the second season of the crime thriller approaches its release, Sushmita spoke with IANS about her experience of working in Ram Madhvani’s 360 degree set up, constructing Aarya’s character and her subsequent dissociation from the character for the downtime.

For her, working in a novel 360 degree system of Ram Madhvani where filming happens in real time, is “the most enriching system” and “the one that spoils an actor”. She says, “There’s no way you can go back to the discontinued way of emotions with multiple takes of close up, over the shoulder, jimmy jib. The camera is a fly on the wall, you don’t feel the camera, it doesn’t inter-

fere with the actors in real time.”

Explaining a normal shoot day on ‘Aarya’ sets, she adds, “Even if you drop a glass and it breaks during the take, you continue with the scene and find a way around to take the broken glass off the frame. So, you adapt. His school says, ‘please make mistakes, let real life happen while filming’. It’s like theatre. All the actors are aware. This is a system of awareness. He (Ram) has done an outstanding job with this system.”

Shooting in such an immersive atmosphere, where multiple stimuli are at work both on the surface and at the subconscious level, the gravity of the emotions can drag an actor into depths. Laying down the framework of the character construction, the actress says, “We shoot ‘Aarya’ in a way where depending on the workshop, we get into a zone. We are not called by our real names but by the names of the characters that we are playing, during the schedule.”

She continues, “We don’t keep big breaks between schedules, we do it from start to finish in order to maintain that psychology of characters and the

universe.”

Alternatively, the deconstruction too was simple and effective, “After filming, we had three full nights of partying. This is where we switch from Aarya to Sushmita and Tej to Chandrachur Singh and it is done in the most organic way”, she says as her tone of voice eases explaining the process.

Theatre is considered to be an actor’s medium, films and shows are directors’ medium, ask her from whose point of view the story is being told when one marries theatre and films in a 360 degree approach, and she quips, “Real life cannot happen under a controlled atmosphere, we are allowed to make mistakes. The set is not just a set anymore, it’s an actual house with functional appliances and accessories.”

“All departments work in perfect sync sharing the same energy. So, for this medium, you can no longer say that a medium belongs to an actor, director or one technician, this actually belongs to all departments and the story takes the control of the wheel,” she signs off.

Courtesy: IANS



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India to replicate mighty West Indies and Australia of old

India is producing formidable young cricketers at an impressive rate

All right-thinking cricket opponents must have been dreading the day India got it right.

That's the day India unearthed all the talent that was available and then fully capitalised by selecting their best team. That time is well and truly upon the rest of the cricket world as India have showcased their amazing depth in the last few months. The emergence of such talents as Shubman Gill, Mohammed Siraj, Navdeep Saini, Washington Sundar, T Natarajan and Axar Patel would have been monumental if it had happened in the space of three years, let alone just three months as it did. And when you consider that Shardul Thakur excelled in just his second game and the ebullient Rishabh Pant was an international match-winner before his 20th appearance, it really is a rosy picture.

A rosy picture, that is, if you're an Indian fan; for the rest of the cricket world, it strikes a note of fear.

It's even more imposing when you consider that of those debutants, only Gill and possibly Siraj would play when every player is available for selection. The picture attains a veritable glow when you consider that Ishan Kishan, Suryakumar Yadav, Prasidh Krishna and Krunal Pandya have all made successful white-ball debuts against England.

An abundance of talent like this is reminiscent of West Indies and Australia during dominant periods when they overflowed with good players, many of whom struggled to make the first XI.

In West Indies' case it was mainly a surplus of fast bowlers during a dominant span that kept serious pacemen like Wayne Daniel, Sylvester Clarke, Winston Davis, Patrick Patterson and Ezra Moseley from having substantial Test careers. When Australia were dominating at the turn of the century, capable batsmen like Matthew Elliott, Darren Lehmann, Stuart Law, Martin Love, and in the early part of the period, even Matthew Hayden and Justin Langer, struggled to find a permanent place. Surpluses like that provide selectors with a belly ache from gorging, but it's a whole lot better than the pain



caused by searching a bare larder for morsels.

Not only are India now in the enviable position of having a surplus of young talent but the candidates are also highly competitive cricketers. Long gone are the days when some Indian players would quietly go up to an opponent and confess, "You are my idol." As one former Indian cricketer told me, "There used to be players who just wanted to own the sweater and cap." There's also no chance you'd hear in the current Indian dressing room the utterance, "Why me?" as happened when a Test team was announced during the 1977-78 Australian tour.

It was MS Dhoni, born in Ranchi, whose success provided the inspiration for young cricketers from outlying areas to suddenly believe they could play for India. The belligerent Sourav Ganguly's captaincy style encouraged all players in the Indian team to believe they were the equal of their opponents. This belief grew under the guidance of Dhoni, followed by the highly emotive leadership

of Virat Kohli.

India's recent successes in Australia - particularly the latest one - have only reinforced the players' belief in their ability to win under any circumstances. In an era where teams struggle overseas, India now have the depth of talent to alter that pattern. No longer can opponents afford to say, when India are on their doorstep, "Just pick a string of fast bowlers with long run-ups and the series will be ours."

Can India replicate the dominant periods of West Indies and Australia? It's a much more difficult proposition these days, with an extra form of the game, a frightful schedule, and the riches of the IPL, not to mention a pandemic to circumnavigate. However, India have finally got the equation right and as long as they avoid the pitfalls often associated with continuing success, they are better equipped than any team to produce an era of dominance. The rest of the cricketing world beware.

Syndicated column: Ian Chappell, writer is former Australian cricketer.



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