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# OPINION EXPRESS

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A MONTHLY NEWS MAGAZINE



Cover Story

# POLL POSITION

Midway through India's electoral Mahabharat,  
the battle is evenly poised



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## Modi factor holds the key for NDA II to make a comeback?

**L**ove him, hate him but people will keep his name on the board. Narendra Modi is the focal point of discussion either ways for the ongoing general elections in India. There is an extreme sharp division in the voters in favour or against Narendra Modi in the entire country. News channels, news papers, social media reflects vertical division in the society. India was never more divided on ideological ground than it is today for the GE 2019. Rahul Gandhi led Congress is



slightly better placed than in 2014, with state governments in M.P., Rajasthan and Chattisgarh under his belt – Congress is poised for substantive gains. But with the reverses in the recently concluded state elections, BJP has tighten its belt in going ahead to the planning of the GE 2019. Narendra Modi has rebranded himself round the garb of nationalism post Pulwama attack and subsequent Balakot Air strike.

After four phases, Modi's change in campaign tactic to say the BJP win is certain will give the BJP the winner's momentum. Again losing an opportunity, Rahul Gandhi has not given a convincing feel that the job of dethroning Modi has been almost achieved. So what is 2019 all about? Till May 23 proves us all right, or wrong – I would argue there is a mild Modi wave in the country. It is an under- current to give him another chance, all things considered. It does not sound as strong as 2014 but BJP has a distinguish advantage over its rivals in running a well oiled campaign. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP is flush with cash, giving his bloc a massive advantage over the main opposition Congress party as he seeks to win a second term in India's general election. But current and former BJP supporters, opposition politicians, businessmen and activists interviewed say Modi has an unprecedented advantage, thanks to its financial muscle and structure party cadre. The regional power house in Telengana, AP, WB and TN are likely to play a decisive role in the formation of the next government. We may revert to the GE 2004 & 2009 like situation where in the southern parties played dominant role in the formation of the government at the centre.

The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance at the Centre may cross the magic threshold of 272 mark in the 543-seat Lok Sabha. According to the OPINION EXPRESS survey, the NDA may win 280-290 seats, the Congress-led UPA - 111, Others - 144. The BJP, according to the poll, will come down from the 282 seats it had won in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections but will increase its vote share from 31.34 percent to 36 per cent. The Congress will increase its seats tally from the 44 it won in 2014 to 85-90 seats; its vote share will go from 19.52% to near 27% in the national elections. The others are predicted to get 125 seats with a 31% vote share in the Lok Sabha.

Second most important factor is the popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the run up of General Elections. He is scoring over 51% approval rating in their various surveys conducted by several domestic and overseas agencies. Modi is perceived as the strong leader capable of defending the country from external and internal aggression. Modi's pro poor schemes are likely to yield results in the rural area where BJP is traditionally weak.

Third, BJP is in fierce fight in the areas where it has no stakes prior to 2014. Today it is a force in West Bengal, North East, Odisha and it is desperately trying to open account in Kerala, Telengana. It is largely the hard work of Amit Shah to create a fighting base in the states where BJP is likely to gain substantial seats.

The last five years, RSS has expanded its cadre across India with a friendly government in centre. The disciplined RSS cadre is likely to play a pivotal role in securing an edge for BJP in the general elections.

We are keeping our figure crossed till 23 May 2019 and the entire globe is looking to India for settling down with the next government in the month of May 2019. May the best man win?

—Prashant Tewari, Editor-in-Chief

MAY 2019

COVER STORY

## PITCHED BATTLE

FROM CAKEWALK TO A  
REAL TIME CONTEST:  
INDIA'S 2019 GENERAL  
ELECTION

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# PITCHED BATTLE

FROM CAKEWALK TO A REAL TIME CONTEST: INDIA'S  
2019 GENERAL ELECTION

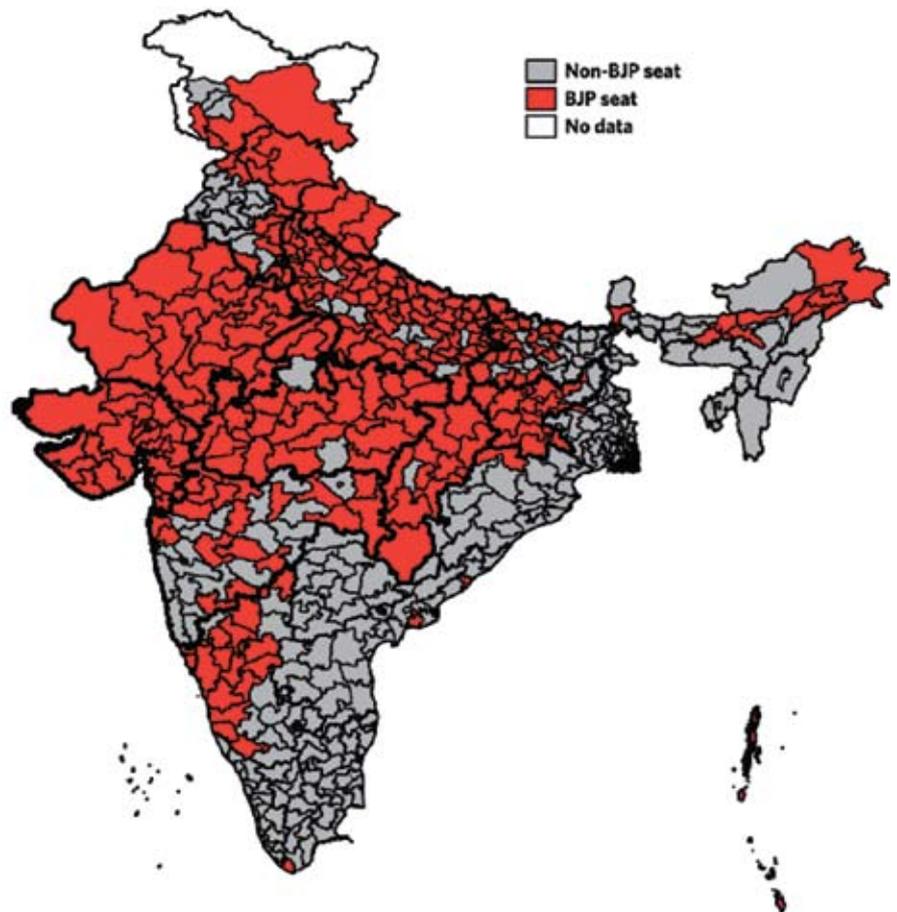
Milan Vaishnav

**E**lectoral outcomes are notoriously difficult to predict in India's fragmented, hyper-competitive democracy. But one need not go out on a limb to declare that the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of Prime Minister Narendra Modi would be the clear favorite if the election were held today. Following the BJP's decisive 2014 mandate, many analysts confidently proclaimed that Modi would remain in power for at least two, if not three, terms.

Opinion polls reveal that Modi remains highly popular after five years in office, and the BJP has managed to methodically expand its national footprint in numerous state elections since 2014. The opposition, comprised of the once-dominant Indian National Congress and a plethora of regional parties, has struggled to counter the BJP onslaught. Yet the election's clear front-runner is far from invulnerable, despite anticipation of a BJP cakewalk in 2019.

Although the intricacies of the upcoming race—such as the selection of candidates and the rhetoric of campaigns—remain unknown one year out, underlying structural conditions suggest far rockier terrain may lie ahead. In particular, four crucial objectives keep BJP strategists up at night: expanding beyond regional strongholds, recruiting new—and retaining old—coalition partners, withstanding a disappointing economic performance, and contending with fluctuations in voter mobilization.

The party's performance in the 2019



election will hinge largely on its ability to address these potential vulnerabilities and the opposition's ability to exploit them. To understand the BJP's position today, one must recall how unusual India's 2014 election results were. Between 2004 and 2014, the Congress Party and its allies (known collectively as the United Progressive Alliance, or UPA) ran the central government in

New Delhi. Although the UPA oversaw record economic growth during its first term, its second term was markedly less positive, as a slowing economy, doubts about its leadership, and an endless parade of corruption scandals badly dented the Congress-led alliance's credibility.

**INDIA ELECTS 2019:** In an era of fractured political mandates in New

Delhi, the Modi-led BJP achieved what many analysts believed was unthinkable: it won a clear, single-party majority in the lower house of the Indian parliament (the Lok Sabha) by capturing 282 of 543 seats (see figure 1). Its political allies—members of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA)—netted another fifty-three seats.

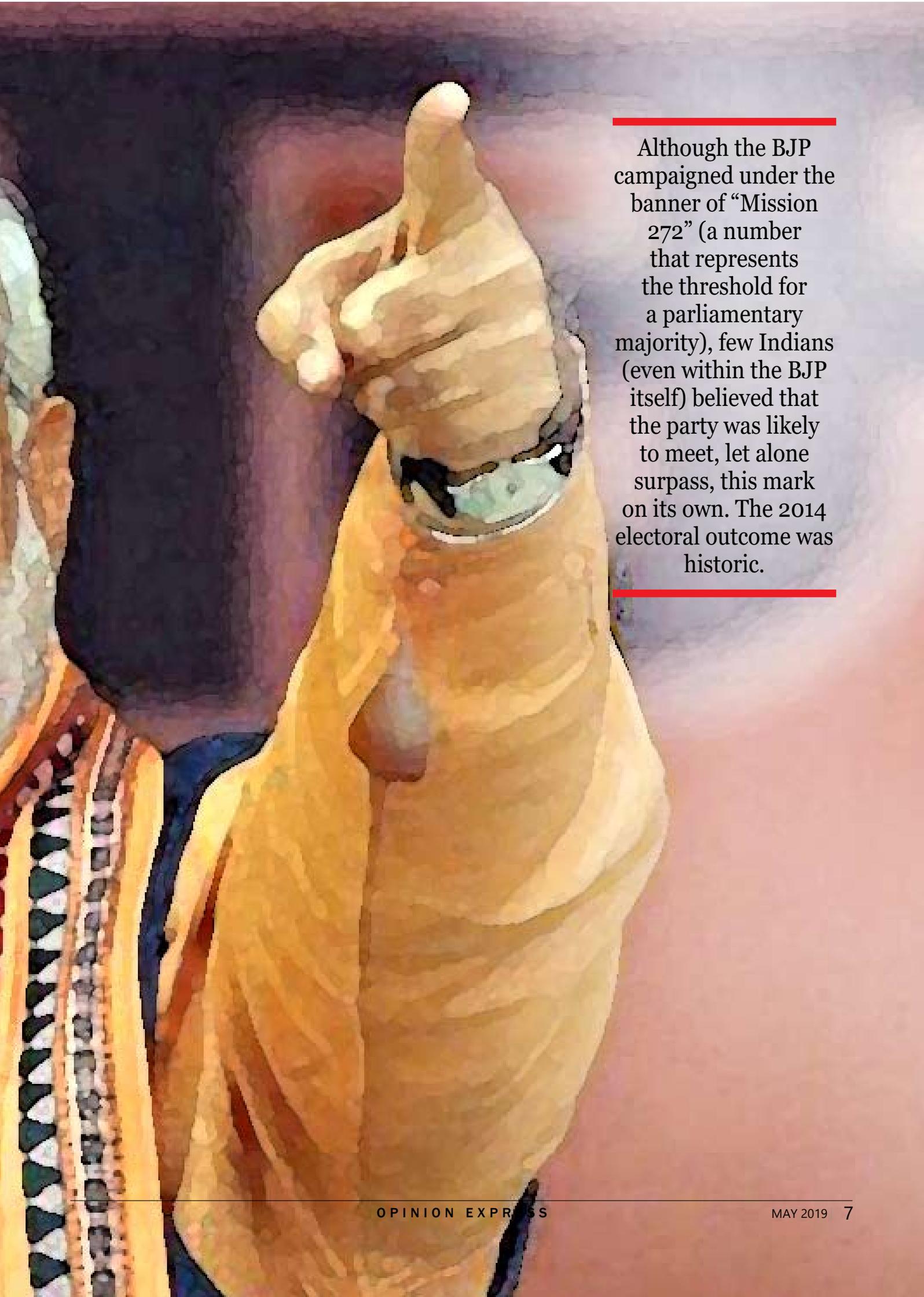
Although the BJP campaigned under the banner of “Mission 272” (a number that represents the threshold for a parliamentary majority), few Indians (even within the BJP itself) believed that the party was likely to meet, let alone surpass, this mark on its own. The 2014 electoral outcome was historic.

No party had obtained a clear majority of Lok Sabha seats on its own since 1984 when the Congress did so after the assassination of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. 2014 was the first time a non-Congress party had achieved an outright majority by itself without the need for a large, unwieldy coalition. Meanwhile, the Congress sank to its lowest total in history— a paltry forty-four seats. Prior to 2014, the fewest seats the Congress had won in a general election were 114 in 1999.

In addition, the 2014 election saw record voter turnout: 66.4 percent of eligible voters (or roughly 554 million voters) cast ballots, a sharp uptick from the 58 percent recorded in the two previous elections. With each passing year, the national reach of the BJP has grown while the reach of the Congress has shrunk. The BJP and its allies now run twenty-one of India’s twenty-nine states—home to over 70 percent of the Indian population (see figure 2).

Prior to Modi’s election, the NDA controlled just eight states. The BJP’s gains have largely come at the expense of the Congress; whereas the latter ran thirteen states prior to the last general election, today it governs in just four. Furthermore, only two of these (Karnataka and Punjab) have substantial populations (with roughly 90 million residents between them).





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Although Modi's rating might sound low from a comparative perspective, it is remarkably high for India's fragmented political system in which 464 parties contested the 2014 general election. While Gandhi's rating had risen to 20 percent by January 2018, Modi's popularity has remained extremely stable throughout his four years in office (hovering around 37 percent). Historically, Gandhi's rating has proven erratic, in part due to his twin struggles with consistency and effectiveness. Pulling off an encore performance of the BJP's sweeping 2014 victory will be a tall order; to compensate for potential losses in its core areas, the party must venture into new territory.

1. In 2014, the BJP virtually swept areas where it traditionally enjoys strong support in northern and western India. Just eight states—Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh—accounted for over 75 percent of the BJP's

2. BJP's 2014 Performance in Core States Non-BJP seat BJP seat No data Note: The maps indicate the partisan control of states in 2014 and 2018, respectively. 4 tally in parliament. Collectively, these states account for 273 seats, of which the BJP won 216 (nearly 80 percent). Running the table in two consecutive elections will be an uphill battle.

Indian voters are legendary for their tendency to harbor anti-incumbency sentiments; research suggests that individual members of parliament (MPs) are just as likely to get thrown out of office at the end of their term as to get voted back in. There are also state-level anti-incumbency effects that have negative spillovers on national politics. Parliamentary candidates representing a given state's ruling party enjoy an electoral advantage in national elections, but only when national elections are held early in the state government's term.

Once this honeymoon period is over, holding power in India's states becomes a liability in general elections. This poses a problem for the BJP, which serves as the ruling party in all eight of these core states; in five of them, its governments are nearing the ends of their terms. Because Modi and BJP President Amit Shah—a longtime Modi aide and a savvy campaign strategist—know engineering another sweep of these eight core states will be difficult, they have placed great importance on expanding the BJP's footprint into parts of the country where it traditionally has been weak.

Hence, the BJP's painstaking devotion to breaking into India's northeast—long considered being a bastion of the Congress and smaller regional parties. The northeast is often seen as inconsequential to the overall electoral picture given that it accounts for just 3.7 percent of India's population. Yet the region boasts twenty-five parliamentary seats, a tempting prize for a party that covets new territory to com-





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pensate for losses likely to be sustained elsewhere.

Thanks to a series of recent state-level victories, the BJP now sits in government in seven of these eight states and is building up organizational and alliance networks across the region; as a relatively new player in northeastern India, the BJP is less likely to fall prey to Indian voters' antipathy for incumbents there than in the party's traditional strongholds.

Whereas the Congress retains the capacity to put up a good fight in the Hindi heartland, its stature in the northeast has rapidly diminished. Having established a foothold in northeastern India, the BJP now aims to increase its strength along India's eastern seaboard in major states such as Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and West Bengal. In a fifth state, Andhra Pradesh, the BJP has worked primarily through a key alliance partner—the Telugu Desam Party (TDP).

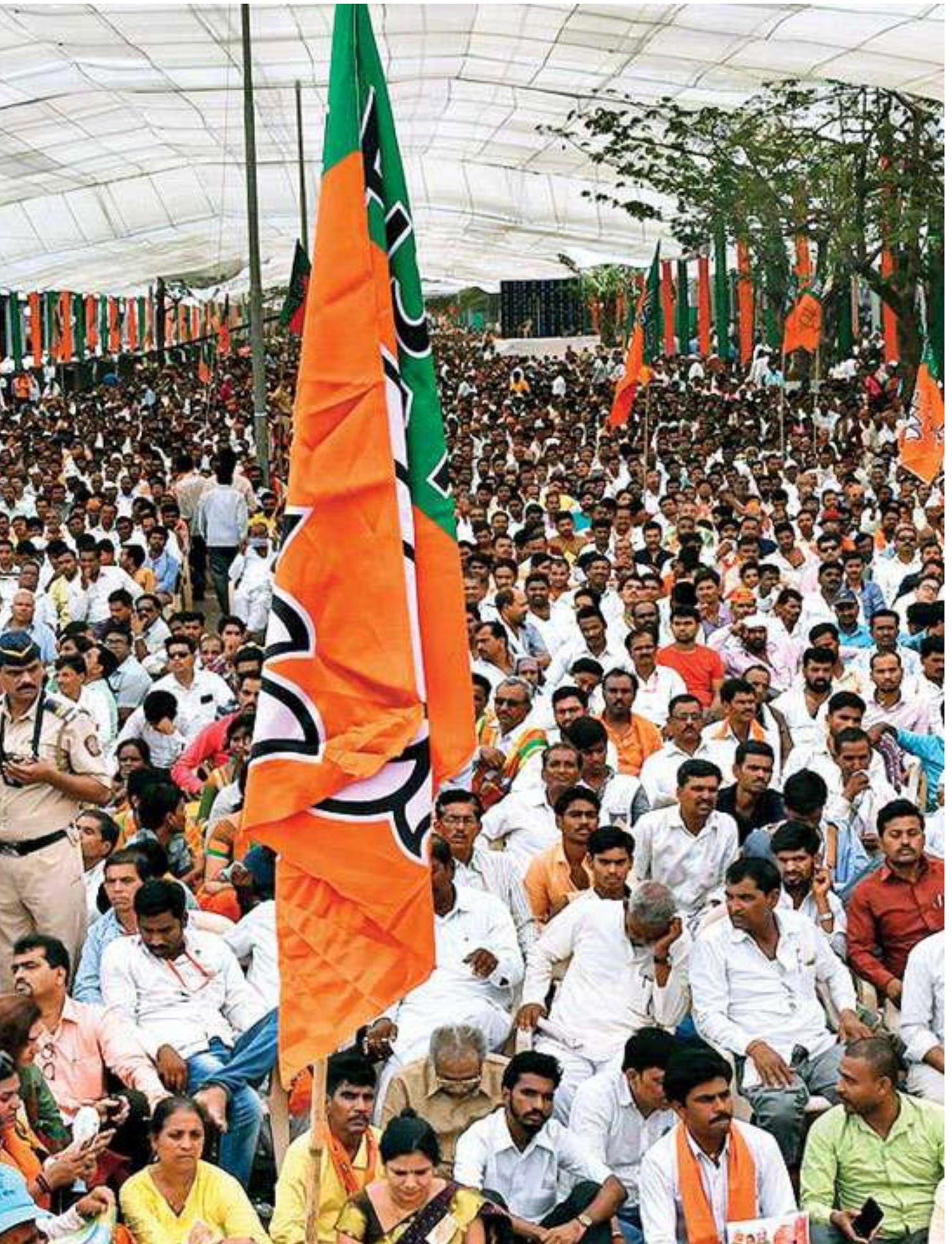
The four aforementioned states serve as a sort of firewall the BJP has struggled to penetrate in national elections. All told, these five states collectively account for 144 seats in the parliament. Each is home to one (or more) powerful parties with strong ties to linguistic, regional, and cultural identities the BJP currently lacks. However, this firewall may be fracturing.

In West Bengal, the BJP trails the ruling Trinamool Congress Party in terms of statewide appeal. But it views the demise of the two principal opposition forces—the Left (a coalition of left-leaning parties) and the Congress—as providing a crucial opening for it to emerge as the second-largest party. The ruling Biju Janata Dal of Odisha won twenty of twenty-one parliamentary seats in 2014, ceding just one to the BJP.

But the latter won one-quarter of the vote and has subsequently performed well in municipal elections. In Tamil Nadu, the BJP is a bit player on its own but sees the potential to make inroads through alliances. Fissures within the state's ruling party, the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, have given the BJP hope that the party system might be ripe for realignment. Coalition dynamics sustaining previous hard-won gains and breaking new ground in pockets of the country outside BJP strongholds, however, will require partners.

On this score, the BJP's prognosis is mixed. On the one hand, thanks to the widespread sense that the BJP has the







Two of the BJP's biggest allies, the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra and the TDP in Andhra Pradesh, have recently put the BJP on notice that they are unhappy with its "arrogant" leadership style. The Shiv Sena announced in January 2018 that it would contest the 2019 elections alone, rather than with the BJP.

wind at its back, the party has become the central pole around which politics in India revolves. This distinguished position once belonged to the Congress, but its recent electoral stumbles and the BJP's abundant successes have decisively changed the equation. In three recent state elections—in Goa, Manipur, and Meghalaya—the BJP failed to emerge as the single largest party. Nonetheless, thanks to its allure as an alliance partner, the BJP formed governments in all

3. Decided to join a party gaining momentum rather than one appearing to lose it. Across states, the BJP, not the Congress, seems to be the default governing party. Yet recent events suggest that the BJP's electoral coalition is showing signs of strain. Existing BJP allies are voicing concerns about the party's methods, raising the possibility that its electoral coalition could fracture.

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In March, the TDP pulled its ministers from the central cabinet in New Delhi to express disappointment with the Modi government's failure to help Andhra Pradesh tap additional central government funds. When the BJP refused to budge, the TDP announced its decision to formally exit the alliance. These ruptures, while not fatal or irreversible, potentially complicate the BJP's electoral arithmetic in 2019. If the BJP is successfully tarred as anti-Andhra, it would be difficult for the party to notch a pre-poll alliance with any of the major regional parties there, increasing the likelihood that a sizeable chunk of the state's twenty-five seats would be out of the BJP's reach. In Maharashtra, provided the opposition coalition remains intact, the split with the Shiv Sena could create a three way race. Luckily for the BJP, the opposition remains in disarray. The Congress has been slow to rectify the organizational and leadership deficiencies laid bare in 2014. As one senior party leader has mused, the Congress has faced electoral crises before, but what it faces today is an existential crisis.

While it will likely gain seats in 2019, one Congress leader privately admitted that a triple-digit figure would be a stretch at present.<sup>1</sup> Left parties

have seen a precipitous decline nearly everywhere save for the state of Kerala, its last remaining stronghold. The upstart Aam Aadmi Party, which came to power in the Delhi state assembly by way of an assertive, agitation brand of politics, has struggled to extend its reach beyond the national capital.

Moreover, parties opposed to the BJP have failed to coordinate and pool their votes so as to keep the BJP out of power. There have been two notable exceptions where opposition parties have set aside their differences and forged a degree of bonhomie. The first was the 2015 state election in Bihar, where a so-called grand alliance of opposition parties joined hands to keep the BJP from winning power. The opposition alliance won a resounding victory, but this short-lived marriage of convenience ultimately ended when one party defected.

More recently, in March 2018, two rival regional parties in Uttar Pradesh buried their long-standing differences to jointly defeat the BJP in a special election. Regional players could give the BJP a run for its money in their respective states, but doing so will require them to work cooperatively—something that does not come naturally to rivals who bitterly jostle for political space. The effects of the BJP's own alliance drama will be mitigated if the opposition proves unable or unwilling to do business together in 2019.

**ECONOMIC ANXIETY** But it is not only allies the BJP must worry about retaining; many voters who were swayed by Modi's promise to usher in *acche din* (good times) by reenergizing the Indian economy have also grown restive. In 2014, India was plagued by slumping growth, ballooning deficits, stalled investments, and soaring inflation—offering the BJP untold opportunities to critique the Congress Party's mismanagement of bread-and-butter issues.

Although invocations of Hindu majoritarianism also populated the BJP's entreaties, it was the BJP's insistence that it would rectify the declining economy that resonated across the country. Yet as economic progress under Modi has fallen short of expectations, anxieties about the lack of job creation have led to massive popular protests in state after state. While the intensity and scope of voter disaffection with India's economy is not certain, there are signs that disquiet is rising among rural voters who decisively backed the BJP four years ago. Given that farmers ac-



count for roughly half of India's labor force, rural economic woes raise alarm bells for every incumbent politician. BJP strategists once believed that economic revival would be the hallmark of the 2019 campaign. Unfortunately for them, the economy has not experienced a uniform revival

4. Growth, while high by international standards, remains well below the country's potential. A failure to deal quickly with a systemic banking crisis has bogged down the domestic investment cycle. Inflation, which has fallen from the double-digit levels of the tenure of the Congress, remains a risk in

an election year when the pressure to spend will be elevated.

Furthermore, the Modi government's decisions to abruptly remove high-value currency notes from circulation ("demonetize") and enact the sweeping Goods and Services Tax reform have hurt short-term growth, irrespective of their longer-term merits. More importantly, for the average Indian, job growth has been anemic. According to the Reserve Bank of India, total employment actually shrank between 2014 and 2016. While it appears that nonfarm jobs grew over this period, farming jobs declined—perhaps as a

result of successive droughts.

The BJP is betting that its flagship welfare schemes might inoculate it against its patchy economic record. Criticized for having cozy links to corporate capital, Modi's administration has doggedly tried to burnish its pro-poor credentials by doubling down on major welfare schemes—such as granting every household a bank account, initiating free cooking gas connections to families below the poverty line, and ensuring universal affordable housing.

These efforts notwithstanding, economic travails are especially apparent in rural India. Although once the bai-



liwick of the Congress, many rural voters in 2014 switched their allegiance to the BJP, party that has historically performed better with city-dwellers. The rural shift toward the BJP could easily swing back to the Congress; for instance, available data suggests that support for the BJP alliance among farmers has declined over the past year. Indeed, recent distress in the farming sector is likely sending chills down the spines of BJP leaders. Despite Modi's promises to double agrarian incomes by 2022, agriculture remains in a state of disrepair. While the causes of this distress are largely structural, proximate factors such a

5. Encountered serious rural opposition—especially in the key region of Saurashtra—where the Congress prevailed by capitalizing on caste politics and the waning fortunes of farmers. In March 2018, as many as 50,000 farmers in Maharashtra descended on the state capital of Mumbai to demand the BJP state government move swiftly to aid them.

How wide this disaffection has spread is unclear. All eyes will be on upcoming state elections in Karnataka (in May 2018) and Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, and Rajasthan (in December 2018) to discern whether this alleged drop-off in rural locales is sustained. A final concern for the BJP in 2019 is voter mobilization. In 2014, the party successfully channeled popular disaffection with the incumbent Congress Party into record voter turnout (66.4 percent).

Voter turnout had previously peaked at 64 percent in 1984 and fell to between 56 and 62 percent in subsequent election cycles. As Neelanjan Sircar has pointed out, there was a strong association between the growth in voter turnout and the improved fortunes of the BJP in the 2014 election. A key source of strength came from young voters. Research has demonstrated that states with the largest increases in the share of young, first-time voters in 2014 also experienced the biggest gains in BJP vote share.

With the novelty of Modi and BJP rule in New Delhi wearing thin, there is a risk that voter turnout will return to ordinary levels, reducing the BJP's enthusiasm advantage. One key demographic the BJP believes it can energize in 2019 is women. Although they do not vote as a bloc per se, the party believes several of its welfare schemes have special resonance with women and can influence their votes. This is significant because Indian females are voting in greater numbers than ever before.

In 2014, women voted at higher rates than men in sixteen of India's thirty-five states and union territories. At the state level, female turnout now regularly surpasses male turnout. The BJP's Mobilization Advantage in 2014 Source: Author's calculations based on data from the Election Commission of India (ECI).

**CONCLUSION** One year in advance, many details of the 2019 race remain unknown, but its structural drivers are quickly coming into view. Modi

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and Shah are wasting no time in recalibrating their approach to mitigate the BJP's unexpected challenges. For instance, the government's most recent budget was packed with pro-poor rhetoric and numerous sops meant to allay rural anger. As existing allies are growing wary of the BJP's modus operandi, the party's high command has stepped up its outreach to smooth frayed relations. And, concerned about waning voter enthusiasm, Modi has directed the party's elected representatives to redouble efforts to connect with constituents. In one instance, Modi is reported to have warned sitting BJP MPs that they must amass at least 300,000 followers on social media or risk losing their party tickets. The opposition is making adjustments as well. Gandhi and the once-dithering Congress appear more focused and consistent. The opposition, at least rhetorically, is embracing the need to forge a common anti-BJP front in 2019. Twelve months is an eternity in politics, but one thing has become evident: once thought to be a cakewalk for the BJP is now a real battle to return back to power.

*Writer is the director and a senior fellow in the South Asia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He is co-editor (with Devesh Kapur) of the forthcoming book, Costs of Democracy: Political Finance in India (Oxford University Press, 2018).*

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# CLOSE SHAVE !

## Opinion Express Opinion Poll

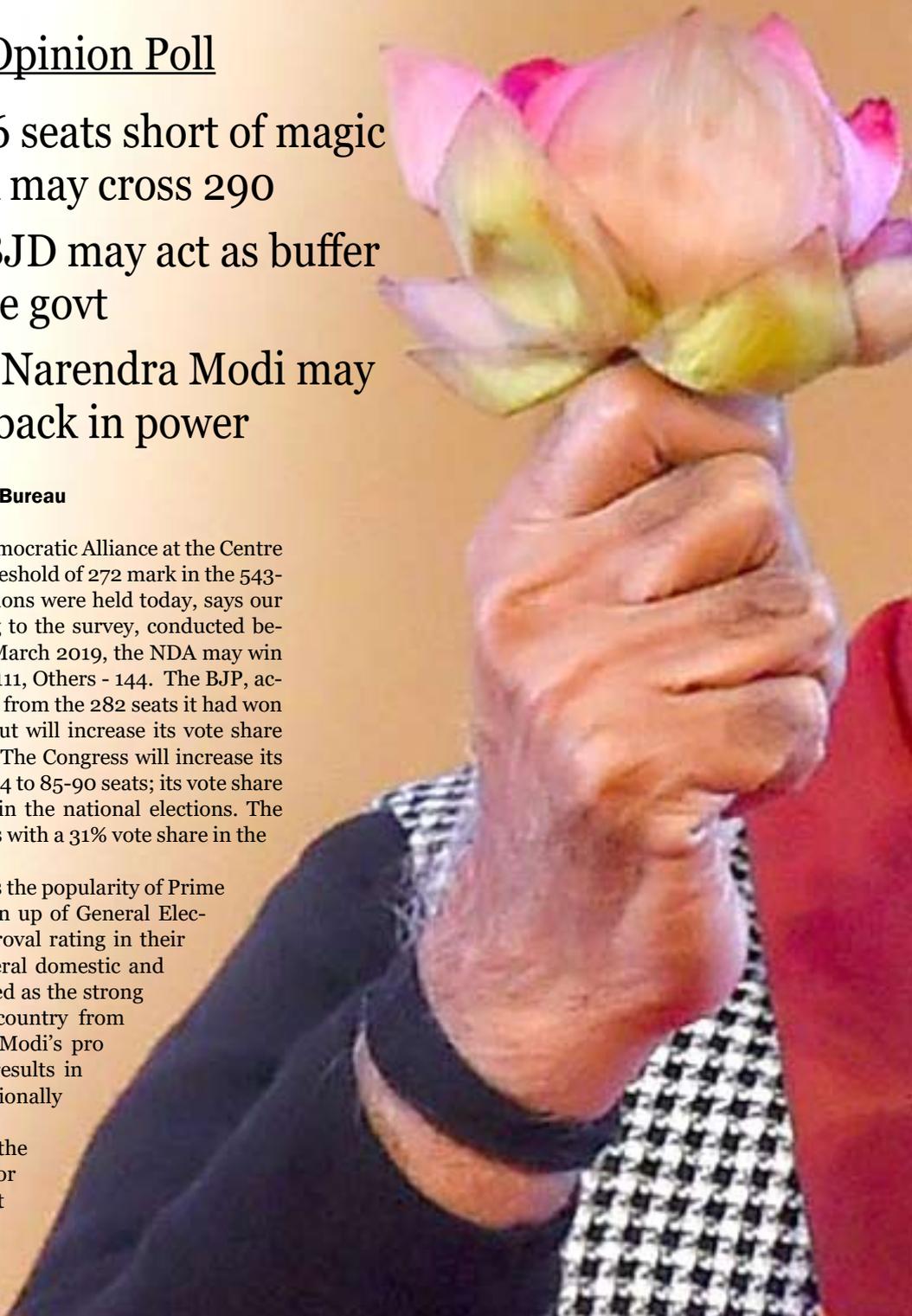
- BJP may fall 46 seats short of magic mark of 272, NDA may cross 290
- YSRC, TRS & BJD may act as buffer for BJP to form the govt
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi may just make it to be back in power

### OE Political Bureau

**T**he BJP-led National Democratic Alliance at the Centre may cross the magic threshold of 272 mark in the 543-seat Lok Sabha, if elections were held today, says our opinion poll. According to the survey, conducted between 1 March and 31 March 2019, the NDA may win 290 seats, the Congress-led UPA - 111, Others - 144. The BJP, according to the poll, will come down from the 282 seats it had won in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections but will increase its vote share from 31.34 percent to 36 per cent. The Congress will increase its seats tally from the 44 it won in 2014 to 85-90 seats; its vote share will go from 19.52% to near 27% in the national elections. The others are predicted to get 125 seats with a 31% vote share in the Lok Sabha.

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Shah to create a fighting base in the states where BJP is likely to gain substantial seats.

The last five years, RSS has expanded its cadre across India with a friendly government in centre. The disciplined RSS cadre is likely to play a pivotal role in securing an edge for BJP in the general elections.

## **2019 Lok Sabha Elections Times Opinion Express Opinion Poll: State-wise results**

**Uttar Pradesh (80/80):** The Opinion Express Opinion Poll survey predicts three corner fight between BJP, SP-BSP ALLAINCE, CONGRESS may act as a boon to the NDA though

it is in for a minor jolt in the country's most crucial state of Uttar Pradesh. The NDA tally is likely to slump to 40 out of the total 80 seats, compared to 73 seats it won in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. The BJP's vote share is likely to be down by 2.8 per cent. The SP-BSP alliance is expected to reap benefits for the opposition and the alliance could bag as many



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The SP-BSP alliance is expected to reap benefits for the opposition and the alliance could bag as many as 35-38 seats, compared to the just five seats it won in 2014. The Congress will stay flat with expected wins in two-three seats. The poll will witness heavy weights PM Modi, Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Rajnath Singh, Meneka and Varun Gandhi, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Akhilesh Yadav in fray.

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**Maharashtra (48/48):** In 2019 Lok Sabha Elections, the NDA is likely to win 35-38 seats, five less than it did in 2014. The Congress+NCP, however, are likely to win 8 seats, 4 more than it did in 2014. As per the survey, the UPA is likely to win 8-10 seats in 2019. The performance of the Fernavis government will be put to litmus test in the Lok Sabha elections.

**West Bengal (42/42):** Mamata Banerjee-led All India Trinamool Congress is likely to win the maximum number of seats (30) in West Bengal.

The BJP, however, is likely to make a jump from 2 seats in 2014 to 9-10 in 2019. The Congress, however, is expected to win just 1-2 seats, while Left Front is likely to win one seat. The TMC had won 34 of the total 42 seats in 2014 Lok Sabha Elections. The Congress had bagged four, the BJP 2 and the Left Front two. WB elections are likely to witness huge turmoil and violence due to the extreme divide of left and right cadre.

**Bihar (40/40):** The number of seats won by the BJP+JD (U) in Bihar in 2019 Lok Sabha Elections is likely to go down from 32 to 28. The Congress+RJD, however, are likely to increase its tally from 8 in 2014 to 12 in 2019. Modi Nitish Kumar can attract voters better than Lalu Congress alliance simply because Lalu is in jail and Congress party has no cadre to support

RJD base to clinch the elections

**Tamil Nadu (39/39):** As far as seat share projections are concerned, Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) is expected to make huge gains and win 30 out of 39 seats. The All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam with NDA alliance is likely to win nine seats. In the 2014 Lok Sabha Elections, the Congress and its allies had failed to win even a single seat, while the AIADMK won 37 of the total 39 seats. The BJP+ and others had won one each. Surely, Modi led government has mishandled the state government post Jayalathihia death and DMK is likely to cash in the sympathy votes due to Kalaighnar death.

**Madhya Pradesh (29/29):** The Modi factor will ensure BJP to win the maximum number of seats in Madhya Pradesh in 2019 Lok Sabha Elections.

Congress seems to be failing in capitalising on gains in Assembly Elections in the state. As per the survey, the BJP is likely to win 21-23 seats and Congress 5-6. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP led the tally with 27 seats while the Congress had won just two out of the total 29 seats. MP state is likely to vote differently in the state and national elections.

**Karnataka (28/28):** The BJP and Congress-JD(s) are contesting pitched battle. BJP is likely to win 16 seats each in Karnataka in 2019 Lok Sabha Elections. In 2014 Lok Sabha Elections, the BJP had won 17, while Congress had bagged 11 seats. Although BJP state leader Yaddurappa is seen as a liability and Ananth Kumar death has further jolted the BJP, but it may ride on the Modi under current. However,

Congress and JD(S) remains a divided house on the ground, it may lead to BJP advantage.

**Gujarat (26/26):** Despite anti-incumbency, the BJP is likely to win 23-24 seats in 2019 Lok Sabha polls. The BJP had made a clean sweep in 2014. From zero in 2014, Congress is likely to gain 2-3 seats this time. Gujrat is the home state of PM Narendra Modi so it is likely to vote heavily in favour of son of soil. Congress party is lacking in local leadership, the recent import Hardik Patel and rest may have a little impact on the broader general elections.

**Rajasthan (25/25):** Rajasthan losses could halt the BJP's march to a majority as the NDA loses 8-10 seats and comes down to 15-17 in the state, as per Opinion Express Poll survey. The Congress is expected to grab the

remaining 8 seats. The BJP had done a clean sweep in Rajasthan in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, winning all 25 seats. The chemistry between the state leader Vasundhara and national leadership is going to impact the outcome of the elections.

**Andhra Pradesh (25/25):** YSR Congress Party chief Jagan Mohan Reddy may end up as the kingmaker as the YSRCP is expected to bag 17-18 seats. While the Telugu Desam Party is expected to win only 6-7 seats, the BJP and Congress are not likely to open their accounts. In 2014, it was the ruling TDP that had bagged maximum seats (15). The YSR Congress Party had won eight while the BJP had bagged two out of the total 25.

**Odisha (21/21):** Odisha state will vote two ways in the Lok Sabha AND





Vidhan Sabha. Modi is likely to be preferred as PM and Naveen Babu remains the favorite as CM for the state of Odisha. The BJP is likely to make a huge gain in Odisha in 2019 Lok Sabha Elections. From just one seat in 2014, the BJP is expected to bag 13 seats this time. The tally of the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) is likely to take a dip from 20 seats in 2014 to 8 seats in 2019. Notably, 19 per cent vote share gain in Odisha helps BJP offset losses elsewhere.

**Kerala (20/20):** The BJP is likely to open its account. While Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) is expected to bag 16 seats, the Left Democratic Front is expected to win three. The UDF had won 12 seats in 2014 General Elections while the LDF had bagged 8 seats.

**Telangana (17/17):** The Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) is likely to grab 10 seats, Congress – 5, BJP+ - 1, Others – 1. In 2014, the TRS was the leading party with 12 seats while the Congress had won two. The BJP-led alliance could bag only one seat. Others had got two seats.

**Assam (14/14):** It seems the Citizenship Bill is consolidating votes for the BJP. The survey reveals that the BJP is likely to win eight seats, one more than it won in 2014 Lok Sabha Elections. Congress is likely to retain three seats, All India United Democratic Front - 2, Others -1.

**Jharkhand (14/14):** In 2019 Lok Sabha Elections, the Congress+JMM are likely to win 8-9 seats and BJP 5-6. The BJP had won the maximum 12 seats in 2014 Lok Sabha elections in Jharkhand. The Congress had won the remaining two.

**Punjab (13/13):** Setback in store for the NDA? As per the survey, the NDA is likely to retain two of the six seats it won in 2014. The Congress could gain big by bagging 10-11 seats; AAP party is likely to suffer heavy losses in the Lok Sabha elections.

**Chhattisgarh (11/11):** The UPA is likely to win six seats in Chhattisgarh in 2019 as compared to just one in 2014. The BJP's seats are expected to be down from 10 in 2014 to mere 5 in 2019.

**North East (11/11):** The BJP retains supremacy in the North East with 9 seats while the UPA only manages 1 seat. The big role played by the Congress turncoat Hementa Sarma Biswas has completely shifted the paradigm in favour of BJP and Congress off lately is struggling to find the grip on its previous strong hold.

**Haryana (10/10):** BJP+- 6, Congress - 4, says Opinion Express Opinion Poll 2019 Lok Sabha Elections survey. In 2014, the NDA had won seven seats while the Congress had won one seat. A faction of INLD is likely to join hand with BJP in the elections. The last minute alliance between the BJP and INLD will push the tally of NDA to its earlier mark.

**Delhi (7/7):** Congress party and Aam Aadmi Party are expected to open its account this time by winning one seat each. The BJP is likely to retain remaining five seats.

**Jammu and Kashmir (6/6):** The BJP is likely to win two seats, Congress National Conference alliance will win 4 seats.

**Uttarakhand (5/5):** Upper caste votes seem to be still with the BJP in Uttarakhand as the NDA is likely to retain

all the five seats in the state in 2019 Lok Sabha Elections.

**Himachal Pradesh (4/4):** The BJP is expected to win 3 and Congress 1 seat in Himachal Pradesh in 2019 Lok Sabha Elections.

**Goa (2/2):** The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party riding on the Manohar Parrikar sympathy wave may win two seats in Goa, as per the Opinion Express Opinion Poll. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP had won both the seats.

**Puducherry (1/1):** The BJP+ is likely to lose the lone seat it won in 2014 Lok Sabha Elections in Puducherry. The UPA is expected to grab the seat from the BJP+.

**Andaman and Nicobar Islands (1/1):** The BJP is likely to retain its seat.

**Daman and Diu (1/1):** The Union Territory of Daman and Diu has one parliamentary seat and the Bharatiya Janata Party is projected to retain that in this year's Lok Sabha elections.

**Dadra and Nagar Haveli (1/1):** The BJP is expected to retain the seat it had won in the Union Territory in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, this year as well.

**Chandigarh (1/1):** The Congress is expected to snatch the lone seat from the BJP, as per the survey.

**Lakshwadeep (1/1):** The survey gives the lone seat to the NCP.

In 2014, the BJP-led NDA won 336 of the total 543 seats in Lok Sabha, with the BJP alone winning 282 seats. This elections are likely to reduce the BJP led NDA tally by 40-45 seats. Thus Narendra Modi is likely to just touch the power cord in May 2019.



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A view of the foreign press

# India's 2019 elections: What you need to know

By Joanna Slater and Niha Masih

## When is the election?

India's national elections will take place in seven phases between April 11 and May 19, with results announced on May 23. Voters will elect representatives to 543 seats in Parliament, and the party with 272 or more seats will select the prime minister. If no one party or alliance wins the necessary amount of seats, parties can come together to form a coalition government.

## Just how big is this exercise?

It is very, very big. Held every five years, the elections are the largest democratic exercise in the world. With about 900 million eligible voters, the size of the electorate has swelled by more than 80 million compared to 2014. In that election, 550 million people ultimately cast votes. While over 450 political parties contested the last election, only six are national parties that can claim a base of supporters across different states. The voting process will unfold at more than a million polling stations, each one overseen by a handful of election officials.

## What is at stake?

This election will be pivotal to the future of India, soon to become the world's most populous nation. India is attempting to catch up in economic terms with China, its neighbor to the east, a pursuit that requires massive investment in infrastructure and significant policy change. At the same time, the country is also deciding what kind of democracy it wants to be, having embraced a Hindu chauvinist leader by a landslide in the last national polls in 2014.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power promising "achhe din" — good times — and development for all. While economic output has grown rapidly during his tenure, employment has not kept pace, leading to increasing numbers of jobless youth. Meanwhile, India faces a growing battle with air pollution and

water shortages. Modi's ascent has also empowered right-wing Hindu groups. Since 2014, dozens of people have been

lynched in the name of "cow protection." Modi eventually condemned such killings.



### Who are the contenders?

Modi remains the favorite to win. A native of the state of Gujarat, Modi spent much of his life within the ranks of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a group that seeks to make India a "Hindu nation." In 2002, when he was chief minister of Gujarat, riots broke out that left more than 1,000 people, mostly Muslims, dead. Modi pioneered what became known as the "Gujarat model," modernizing the state's infrastructure and making it a favorite destination for investment.

Modi's principal opponent is Rahul Gandhi, who heads the Indian National Congress. He is the latest member of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty to seek to lead the country. (The family is not related to independence leader Mahatma Gandhi.) Rahul Gandhi's great-grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru, was India's first prime minister. Both his grandmother, Indira Gandhi, and his father, Rajiv Gandhi, also led the country and were later assassinated. Rahul Gandhi faces an uphill battle to persuade voters to give the dynasty another try, espe-

cially after corruption scandals plagued the last Congress government.

### What are the main issues?

Until recently, it appeared that employment and rural distress would be some of the main themes of the election. In January, a leaked official report showed that India's unemployment rate had increased under the Modi government to a 45-year high. Farmers, meanwhile, have held several large marches in recent months to protest the difficult conditions they face, including rising



input costs and high amounts of debt. Those issues likely contributed to defeats for the BJP in three key state elections late last year.

Modi is highlighting his government's achievements, including programs to improve the lives of poor women, a national cleanliness drive and the introduction of a new bankruptcy code. He is also seeking to turn national security into a key issue in the campaign after a Feb. 14 suicide bombing in Indian-controlled Kashmir killed 40 paramilitary officers. In response, Modi launched an airstrike on an alleged terrorist training camp in Pakistan, setting off the most serious military confrontation between the two countries in decades.

### Who pays for all this?

India's 2019 election could be the most expensive the world has ever seen. In the last national elections in 2014, parties spent over \$5 billion, according to Milan Vaishnav, director of the South Asia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. That figure is expected to grow significantly this year. By comparison, in the 2016 presidential and congressional elections in the United States, the price tag was \$6.5 billion.

In theory, there is a cap — nearly \$1 million — on how much parliamentary candidates can spend on their campaign. In practice, large amounts of undeclared funds flow into candidates' coffers. The current government introduced two important — and controversial — changes to how campaigns are funded. Parties can now receive funds from Indians living abroad and from some foreign firms that have Indian holding companies. They can also raise money from anonymous individual or corporate donors through the use of "electoral bonds."

### What is a "mahagathbandhan"?

A "mahagathbandhan" is a Hindi word meaning "mega-coalition" or "grand alliance." Leaders of a variety of India's opposition parties — among them the Congress party, the Trinamool Congress, the Aam Aadmi Party and the Samajwadi Party — have appeared together at events in recent months, raising the prospect that if they gain enough seats, they could join forces to unseat Modi and the BJP.

## India's Fight With Pakistan Seen Lifting Modi's Election Chances

**Narendra Modi, India's prime minister. If his ruling coalition can hold onto Congress, he will be prime minister again. Elections are in April and May.**

Kenneth Rapoza

Russia has the election meddlers. Brazil is jailing former beloved presidents and is now led by a "tropical Trump," and China has a trade war. What does quiet India have that's worth watching? Of the big four emerging markets, India looks boring. Once drama-free, India has now drawn attention to itself with an Indian Air Force strike against a Pakistani terrorist camp this week. The crisis, if it lasts, is seen helping incumbent Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is trying to keep the Gandhis away from power. The general election begins in April. Modi will run against Rahul Gandhi.

"I always rated Modi's prospects in the forthcoming elections as 50:50," economist Swaminathan Aiyar was quoted saying in *The Economic Times*. "This may now boost Modi's prospects," he said, adding that a lot will depend on how Pakistan responds to this week's airstrike inside its borders.

The Wisdom Tree India (EPI) exchange-traded fund remains one of the biggest drags in a passive emerging market portfolio. The ETF is down 3.3% this year, while the MSCI Emerging Markets are up over 11%. Over the last 12 months, the India ETF is down by 11%. Modi has been good for the Indian economy and for investor sentiment. The market is up over 40% since he was elected in May 2014. A poll last week by the *Times of India* said that 83% of over 2,000 respondents said Modi coalition parties in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) would keep the lower house of Congress, known as the Lok Sabha, or House of the People. The prime minister is chosen by the majority coalition of the lower house.

The poll also suggested that Modi has a high approval rating, with an equal number of respondents saying they would want the NDA to pick Modi as prime minister assuming they keep the majority of the 545 seats. They have 341. Gandhi's United Progressive Alliance has 68 seats. Gandhi needs an alliance of roughly 230 seats to pick him over Modi. He is considered to be the other possibility if Team Modi loses.

On Monday, Modi got a lift from nationalists after his Air Force carried out surgical strikes against militia training sites in neighboring Pakistan. Although the government did not say this, it is believed that India targeted sites affiliated with the Muslim jihadi group Jaish-e-Muhammad following an attack on a Central Reserve Police Force convoy in Pulwama less than two weeks ago. Pulwama is in the disputed Kashmir district on the border between the two countries.

This is said to be the first cross-border air strike India has carried out in nearly 50 years. In an official statement by the Foreign Affairs Ministry on Tuesday, the government blamed the death of 40 reserve police officers on Pakistan-based terrorist group Jaish-e-Mohammad. The U.S. and United Nations labeled JeM an international terrorist group back in 2001.

Information regarding the location of training camps in Pakistan has been provided to Pakistan by India from time to time, but Pakistan denies their existence, the Foreign Affairs Ministry said yesterday.

Modi ended the year weaker than he was a year earlier. Last year, BJP party was seen dominating the Lok Sabha again in 2019. But once December rolled around, some poor showings by Modi-backed candidates worried investors. It's one of the reasons why India has been an underperformer. That and slightly higher interest rates while other big emerging markets, like Brazil and China, are cutting interest rates instead.

Monday's show of strength against a common national foe may have given Modi a shot in the arm. Not that he needs it all that much against the United Progressive Alliance's main man Rahul.

(Writer is a Senior Contributor) © 2019 BLOOMBERG FINANCE LP

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# Why the 2019 election may be the most crucial in India's history

The BJP will try to convince the Hindu majority to vote along sectarian lines in the upcoming parliamentary elections.



**Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay**

Supporters of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) wearing masks of Narendra Modi celebrate their party's election victory, in Mumbai May 26, 2014 [File:Danish Siddiqui/Reuters]

In April-May next year an estimated 900 million Indians will be heading to the polls to elect their next parliament. In the 70-odd years since India's independence, this will likely be the first election that seriously challenges the country's inclusive political culture.

If the current government led by the Hindu Nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Prime Minister Narendra Modi secures another emphatic mandate, the country will move dangerously close to becoming a majoritarian state.

A decisive victory would give the BJP hegemonic control over all state institutions, as well as the media and public discourse. This would further undermine the integrity and autonomy of different arms of the state, including the judiciary, public watchdogs and, more importantly, state-run educational institutions. Moreover, another BJP victory would put the freedoms and security of approximately 175 million Indian Muslims in jeopardy.

Amid waning public support for the government caused by economic failures, the BJP recently took a series of steps to accentuate India's growing religious polarisation. It appears the far-right party is trying to secure an electoral victory not by convincing Indians that it will implement a strong social, economic and political agenda, but by fomenting the Hindu majority's prejudices against Muslims and convincing them to vote along religious lines.

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## Fuelling religious polarisation

In 2014, Modi was voted into office for two reasons. First, anti-incumbent sentiment against the Congress-led coalition government was rampant, mainly as a result of corruption accusations and a downward drift in governance. Second, Modi managed to raise Indians' hopes about their country's future by making several ambitious promises.

Despite his controversial past - he was accused of initiating and condoning the 2002 Gujarat riots that resulted in the death of almost 1,000 people, many of them Muslims - Modi succeeded in presenting himself as a messiah of development throughout the election campaign.

Sabarimala temple: A rallying point for the Hindu far right?

Once in power, however, he moved away from the reformist image he created for himself.

He did follow through some of his campaign promises, such as starting pro-poor economic schemes and innovative programmes but mostly used sectarian, Hindu-nationalist dog whistles to consolidate his power. As a result, Muslims became open targets for discrimination and abuse.

The Modi government's tacit promotion of sectarian politics resulted in disquiet in what is identified as "Middle India" - a burgeoning demographic block of urban middle-classes who are socially liberal and economically conservative.

They backed Modi in the 2014 election, mostly because they believed he had left divisive politics behind and was committed to economic policies that would help everyone prosper. They expected him to act as a neo-Thatcherite reformer and save the struggling Indian economy. However, only a couple of months into his reign, Middle India realised that he is no unifying reformer.

Over the past four years, the BJP government has repeatedly turned a blind eye on attacks by fringe groups on religious minorities. According to data from IndiaSpend, which tracks news about violence in English-language media, reports of religious-based hate-crimes - mainly targeting Muslims - have spiked significantly since 2014.

Modi himself did little more than deliver periodical tepid words of caution in the face of growing religious polarisation. He likely believes that firing up Hindu-nationalist sentiments would give him an electoral advantage. In the end, he was right. Sectarian politics did partially cost the BJP the support of Middle India but simultaneously made it more popular among wider Hindu masses across the country (As seen in the party's landslide victory in India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, in March 2017).

However, such divisive politics stopped yielding sufficient political dividends for the BJP from the autumn of 2017 and Modi's personal popularity started to decline.





## BJP's loss of electoral momentum

Modi's loss of popularity was mainly caused by two controversial economic decisions: the demonetisation of high-value currency notes in November 2016 and the rollout of a Goods and Service Tax in July 2017. These decisions hurt small and medium-sized businesses and held the Indian economy back. Both decisions were criticised harshly by prominent economists and were not popular among ordinary citizens.

These economic moves diminished the government and the PM's political clout significantly, and are likely to negatively impact the BJP's prospects in the 2019 general election.

The start of the BJP's electoral slide became clear last December when the party limped to a majority in Modi's home state, Gujarat. The party's electoral decline continued into 2018: it won only three of the 13 parliamentary by-polls, and 5 of the 22 state legislature elections.

Beside demonetisation and the Goods and Service Tax, rising unemployment and spiralling distress in the farming industry are also expected to cause Modi some electoral headaches in 2019. Opinion polls consistently demonstrate that the BJP's popularity across India is on the decline. The BJP, well aware that it is facing strong anti-incumbent sentiments, is looking to find ways to widen its support base before the general election.

In the past, the party has tried to achieve this by stirring up nationalist sentiments and it is likely that it will continue to do so in the near future. For example, in 2016, Modi used the Indian military's so-called "surgical strikes" against "terrorist units" in troubled Jammu and Kashmir for ultra-nationalist propaganda.

Just months after the strikes, he rode the wave of jingoistic fervour he created through these propaganda efforts and swept the elections in Uttar Pradesh. Earlier this year, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced that the anniversary of the operation would be celebrated every year as "National Strike Day" - further demonstrating that the BJP plans to continue using past military operations to stoke nationalist sentiment and garner support for the government.

## Convincing Hindus to 'vote Hindu'

The BJP's ideological siblings have been campaigning for a nation-wide Hindu resurrection since the 1920s - the era in which the party's core Hindutva ideology was first born. But, for a very long time,

these efforts had limited success due to India's syncretism and the caste-based divisions within Hindu society.

Hindu nationalists emerged as a major political force only in the late 1980s, on the back of the demands for a 16th-century mosque in Ayodhya to be replaced with a Ram (an avatar of Vishnu, a major Hindu god) temple.

The demolition of the mosque in December 1992 led to several months of inter-communal rioting in which Hindus and Muslims attacked one another. A decade later, the issue led to the Gujarat riots, which helped Modi transition from a satrap to a popular political leader. Anti-Muslim riots in the Uttar Pradesh town of Muzaffarnagar in 2013, which were fanned by members and sympathisers of the BJP, also contributed to Modi's 2014 electoral victory.

Such past efforts were indeed the main force behind the BJP and Modi's rise to power, yet the governing party knows that it needs to do more to overcome the incumbent's political handicap and is now actively working towards constructing a wider Hindu-nationalist voter block.

Thanks to the BJP's efforts, the Ayodhya temple dispute is once again roaring and Hindu nationalists are agitating for the demolition of other historical mosques allegedly built over temples, including one in Modi's political constituency, Varanasi. There are fears that these issues may be raked up further before the elections.

In recent weeks, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath renamed one major city and another district, alleging that previous names were "Islamic blemishes". Coming on the back of other renaming controversies, this raised fears that a Hindu-nationalist "renaming spree" is about to begin.

Coupled with ongoing campaigns against eating beef and so-called "Love Jihad" and conspiracy theories about Muslims illegally entering India from Bangladesh and altering the demographic balance of the country, the government's current attempts to fuel Hindu nationalist and anti-Muslim sentiments aim at shifting the voters' focus away from daily grievances.

The BJP's ultimate goal is to make the 80 percent of Indians who are Hindus vote according to their religious identity, driven by animosity towards minorities, mainly Muslims. If the BJP succeeds, this would turn India's political character on its head.

*Courtesy: Al Jazeera*

*The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera's editorial stance.*





# WHY Varun Gandhi?

The other Gandhi who has carved a niche for himself beyond his haloed family

Prashant Tewari

**B**JP leader and youth icon Varun Gandhi is an Indian politician of some repute. He is a sitting Member of Parliament for Lok Sabha from the Sultanpur constituency. He is also member of Bharatiya Janata Party and was inducted into Rajnath Singh's team in March 2012 as General Secretary. Though Varun Gandhi is a member of the Nehru-Gandhi family but he has carved out an independent identity in the national politics with tremendous hard work and strategic vision. Varun attended Rishi Valley School and Modern School C.P. New Delhi and the British School, New Delhi where he ran for a position on the student council. Varun earned Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Economics from University of London. Varun Gandhi was first introduced to the Pilibhit constituency by his mother during the 1999 election campaigning. Maneka had been a part of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) since earlier but she and Varun formally joined BJP in 2004. Varun Gandhi campaigned for the party in the 2004 elections, covering over 40 constituencies. In an interview to Stephen Sackur in BBC's HARDTALK in October 2005, Gandhi answered questions about the reasons behind his political affiliation and defended his father as someone who had helped revive the industrialisation of India by starting Maruti Udyog and whose strategy helped the Congress party's comeback after the first ever non-Congress Janata Party government following an electoral routing

for the Indira Gandhi-government after Emergency, among many other things.

In the 2009 general election, the BJP decided to field Varun Gandhi as its candidate from the Pilibhit constituency instead of his mother Maneka Gandhi. He won the seat by receiving 419,539 votes and defeated his nearest contending candidate, V.M. Singh, by a margin of 281,501 votes. The victory was the strongest of any of the four Gandhi family candidates in the election: his mother Maneka Gandhi, aunt Sonia Gandhi and first cousin Rahul Gandhi. The security deposits of all other candidates, including those of V.M. Singh of the Indian National Congress and the Bahujan Samaj Party candidate Ganga Charan Rajput were forfeited. A case was filed against Gandhi for allegedly making a provocative speech about Muslims, at a meeting at Dalchand Mohalla area of Pilibhit, however he was acquitted by in court in the matter. On 5 March 2013, a Pilibhit court acquitted Gandhi in the second hate speech case registered against him during the 2009 Lok Sabha election campaign. In March 2013, Rajnath Singh appointed Varun Gandhi as the national general secretary of the BJP. He became the youngest ever general secretary of the party. In May 2013, Varun Gandhi was made in-charge of the BJP's affairs in West Bengal. In June 2013, Gandhi requested Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar to call an emergency all party meeting in view of the calamity in Uttarakhand in which thousands of

people had died. He suggested a number of steps like contribution from MP-LADs fund, forgoing of three months' salary by MPs and tax incentives for corporate and individuals for help. He has said that he spoke to many MPs and all of them were ready to contribute. He said that the Speaker should act as a catalyst and coordinate the action plan. In July 2013, Gandhi handed over a cheque of Rs 1 lakh from his salary account to family members of former Jan Sangh Member of Legislative Assembly late Bhagwati Prasad, who died at a government hospital after prolonged illness and age-related complications. The former MLA had to spend over an hour on the floor of an emergency ward before doctors at the hospital realised he was an ex-MLA and was subsequently given medical attention. His family didn't even have money to perform the last rites after his death. Varun said he came to know about Prasad only after his death. Describing the late MLA as a model of honesty, he





said it was hard to find an honest leader like him. In August 2013, newspapers reported that Gandhi was the only MP in the country who had spent cent per cent of his MP Local Area Development Fund (MPLAD) before stipulated time. According to official sources, Varun Gandhi used his funds for the development in education, health and infrastructure activities. His proposals were worth more than the entire MPLAD fund thus ensuring the entire amount of 25 crore was spent during his tenure as a Member of Parliament. His political aides stated that he submitted the proposals on time and also employed his personal team to monitor the use of money.

In September 2013, Varun Gandhi accused the Samajwadi Party-led Uttar Pradesh government of pursuing the politics of appeasement, and said that its mistakes would lead to its collapse, after it denied permission to Varun Gandhi's rally in Agra just two days before it was scheduled to take place. He

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**Varun Gandhi accused the Samajwadi Party-led Uttar Pradesh government of pursuing the politics of appeasement, and said that its mistakes would lead to its collapse, after it denied permission to Varun Gandhi's rally in Agra just two days before it was scheduled to take place.**

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denounced Rahul Gandhi's infamous outburst against the controversial ordi-

nance against convicted lawmakers, and said that it was an insult to the Prime Minister, who was abroad at the time, and therefore also disgraceful to the nation. He also said that if the Prime Minister had any dignity left, he should resign immediately upon his return to the country, on the day of Rahul Gandhi's outburst. In March 2014, he said that he holds no ill-will against Rahul Gandhi and won't campaign against him during Lok Sabha Election. In February 2014, Gandhi kickstarted his campaign for election 2014 in Sultanpur. He gave an emotional speech to an enthusiastic crowd in Kadipur, and said that he had come to Sultanpur to fulfill his father's dreams. In May 2014, Gandhi defeated Amita Singh from Sultanpur in Lok Sabha 2014 elections. In March 2016, he introduced the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill, 2016 in Lok Sabha.

In August 2011, Varun Gandhi strongly pitched for the Jan Lokpal Bill. Gandhi offered his official residence to

Hazare to hold his fast, after Hazare was denied permission by the government. When Hazare was jailed, Gandhi offered to table the Jan Lokpal Bill in Parliament. On 24 August, he went to Ramlila Maidan as a common man to support the cause of Anna Hazare, becoming the first politician to openly support the anti-corruption cause. Writes articles and policy papers for several national dailies and magazines in India, such as The Times of India, The Hindustan Times, The Economic Times, The Indian Express, The Asian Age, The Hindu, Outlook, The Pioneer among others. Writes the largest syndicated column in the country covering 21 newspapers – including Malayala Manorama, Lokmat, Hindustan Times, Rajasthan Patrika, Punjab Kesari, Amar Ujala, Sandesh, Bartaman, Sakshi – reaching more than 200 million readers. Gandhi wrote his first volume of poems, titled *The Otherness of Self*, at the age of 20, in 2000. His second volume of poems, titled *Stillness* was published by HarperCollins in April 2015. The book became the bestselling non-fiction book, selling over 10,000 copies in the first two days of its release. In 2018, he released his book on the Indian rural economy titled *The Rural Manifesto: Realising India's Future through her Villages*. The book sold over 30,000 copies in ten days of its release.

BJP MP Varun Gandhi has called for change in India's political system, including the right to recall elected representatives and more representation for women, saying people should have a greater say in democracy. He said people are less aware about the selection of their elected representatives, and choose them based on caste, religion and region, which is not the way to take the country forward.

Varun Gandhi highlighted varied issues faced by the Indian farmers: Agrarian issues have always been at the forefront the Indian electorate, as a majority of our rural population is still largely dependent on agriculture. However, decreasing landholdings (average landholding size is 1.13 hectares, decreased marginally from 1.41 hectares in 2000, a far cry from the global average of 3.7 hectares), rising input prices, unsustainable water usage, inadequate energy access and failure to take any advantage of economies of scale make farming an increasingly difficult proposition with time. Post 1991, agriculture has grown at 1% on average, while industry has grown at 8% - we have built



our economy on the backs of distraught peasants. Policy apathy and policy inefficiency have adversely impacted farmer condition over a long term. Perhaps it's time for a relook at our national priorities.

Inadequate marketing reforms are an important reason for dwindling farm incomes. The challenge is that the farmer loses out in both good and bad times. In bad times, crop failures lead to rural debt and in good times, it leads to drop in prices.

Our increased focus on groundwater extraction, essentially a symptom of inadequate irrigation, has led India to top the list of countries with maximum freshwater withdrawals, with water availability declining by 70% since independence. Free or cheap electricity for running pumps have led to reduced investments in our agricultural mechanization, whilst contributing to the financial burden of State Electricity Boards, which in turn remain ill-equipped financially to undertake transformative initiatives in our energy transmission and distribution. Our agri-procurement policies have incentivized farming of water-intensive crops in regions with limited groundwater availability and facing risk of aridity.

Farm loan waiver is essentially an emergency measure. It remains a short term, stop-gap arrangement till credit culture improves alongside rising farmer incomes. Let us consider few figures – indebted farm households have increased from 25 percent in 1992 to 52 per cent in 2016. The average debt of an agricultural household stands at Rs 1.04 lakh, whereas the average monthly income stands at Rs 8,900 – thus, average debt is roughly their annual in-

come. Nearly 70% of India's estimated 90 million agricultural households end up spending more than their earnings, thereby being caught in a spiral of ever-increasing debt. In such times of economic desperation, a farm loan waiver is needed to provide immediate relief.

Non-farm diversification is typically an important pathway for empowering especially landless labourers and marginal farmers, helping them overcome the land constraint for growth while offering sustainable income that can provide capacity to absorb external farm shocks and provide capital for agricultural investment. Most of rural non-farm income is associated with urban migration, with most village youth working as labourers in nearby towns and cities. Among non-farm income sources, livestock and construction incomes are a broad-based critical component. The recommendations of the Swaminathan Committee pertaining to distribution of ceiling surplus and wasteland shall help our landless and small/marginal farmers.

Varun Gandhi is likely to be elected in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections and he will definitely play extremely vital role in the next government. BJP is building up gen next leadership and with his passion for the public life; Varun is the front runner for handling the command from the present leadership. Surely with his experience of parliamentary life, young leader will be the key to the macro level planning of BJP RSS think-tank.

*Prashant Tewari Editor-in-Chief in conversation with Varun Gandhi M.P.: Inputs from Prakhar Misra Political Editor Opinion Express.*

# BREXIT BLUES

Uk politicians bless the queen a broken kingdom so now the sun never rises on the british empire again Uk brexit alert!! Stop all your investments/ trade sales deals with uk/british companies who are already sinking in debts so that you do not lose anymore of your assets or lives!

**Joginder (Jo) Singh Birring**

**P** rime Minister Theresa May and Many UK/British Politicians have betrayed the Queen as well as the good people of the UK and committed treason with lie after lie. Now 31st October 2019 is the extended final European deadline. They introduced the UN Migration Compact and lied about it not being legally binding. Even on smart countries that refused to sign it. Then they will try and rig the EU elections in May 2019. In the meantime they will concoct another anti-Trump hoax AND another fake Russia poisoning/ war threat so that the rest of the world (hopefully NOW...more sane) supports their little Island. They have recently arrested Julian Assange of Wkileaks who with his team only shared the truths and real facts with the rest of the World so that more understanding and more peace can prevail without anymore illegal wars! Julian Assange was forcibly arrested from the Ecuadorian embassy and now the UK Government are preparing to extradite him to the USA so that they can get in the good books of how great they are when they, the UK government and their “un-intelligent” services Christopher David Steele, plotted to destroy President Trump and his election campaign support by creating absolute lies, false Russia links dossier tarnishing Mr. Trump’s character. It is the UK british interferring in the usa







elections “not” russia and stopping good american democracy which nearly triggered world war 3 with a peaceful russia and china! The USA government under Donald Trump should also extradite Christopher David Steele and ALL the UK Government ministers/people involved! If USA government wants Julian Assange they should also get Christopher David Steele and his British brainless involved!

The present UK Government has fuelled terrorism not just in the UK/Europe but across the World with arms sales, regime change soldiers, terrorism funding of groups in Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, Iraq and in India.

The present UK government/many British politicians have fuelled corruption, bribery scams and offshore banking structures for tax evasion benefits for themselves while destroying the lives of good people in the UK and throughout the World. They (The Bank of England) continue to hold (stolen) Venezuela’s Gold reserves of \$1.2 Billion that the democratically elected President Nicolas Maduro needs to feed his people and billions of pounds of Indian/Pakistani black money accounts which would help the governments collect legitimate taxes which would increase the building of rural/urban infrastructures/ education and law systems of both countries.

As Their Brexit unfolds in the coming months and European Countries further boot them out of all businesses/trade deals stop all your investments/ trade sales deals with UK/British companies who are already sinking in debts so that you do not lose anymore of your assets or lives!

Europe will be safer without UK/British lies, false flag terrorism acts, fake news and war mongering, in fact... the World will be safer if it paid less attention to this little Island which now, they themselves, have made it a “Broken Kingdom”. The many millions of people of the Broken Kingdom are also to blame in many ways starting with whom and what they voted for and elected to be slaves of. They put the British politicians in power to represent them fairly and peacefully BUT they themselves have been betrayed. A lesson for ALL good innocent people across the World and especially now in India Elections...please be very careful when casting your votes at the next elections as you are not just voting for yourselves, you are voting for the future of your children.

The peaceful leaders of the World who wish for more sane lawful ways of life while protecting their own Countries people and their cultures/customs are President Putin of Russia and President Xi Jinping. They continue to unite good peaceful countries, people in R.I.C.A./SCO with their magnificent vision of OBOR and with unbiased true education with job creations for the people/youth.

The NRIs/PIOs, living the UK after Brexit should take their assets/financial savings out

of Broken Kingdom/British companies/British financial banks and re-invest back into India, Pakistan, R.I.C.A./SCO. It is time to give back more to your motherland and to create more job opportunities and business trade sales so that your Countries people can prosper more peacefully while your children always remember the true history culture and traditions of you and your ancestors who fought to free the Countries lands from the British Raj/British Empire. In the 21st Century with all its technology advancements the Western Mainstream media cannot white wash the real truths with anymore fake news to brainwash or mislead the innocent good true people of this world.

India and Pakistan must peacefully unite on several fronts without having any western political games, western fake news, western false flag terrorism acts or western politicians/businesses

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## It is the UK british interfering in the usa elections “not” russia and stopping good american democracy which nearly triggered world war 3 with a peaceful russia and china!

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infecting their countries/peoples true values of what is right in this world.

After the India elections of 2019, the new leading party of India must strengthen closer ties with its neighbours of China, Russia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, South East Asia and Middle East. Closer ties should also be made with African Countries and some South American Countries who are not swayed or puppets of western Imperialism. The new USA Companies and Native American businesses should be included once they have been fully verified and licensed by us at the World Homeland Security/Smartechno Group Of Companies with our C8IND Meta Modules software/ Humint hit squad units so that the risks are completely eliminated while the trade and sales deals/projects are successfully as concluded without any losses. We are there increasing peaceful justice and true education for all good peaceful people irrespective of one’s Country, Culture or Religious Beliefs so that more peace prevails so that our children can grow and blossom being more human caring towards each other. It is not hard to make a decision when you know what your “True” Values are!

*(Writer is Global Chairman and Group President of The World Homelandsecurity/Smartechno Group of Companies) [www.worldhomelandsecurity.one](http://www.worldhomelandsecurity.one)*

# EQ Factor

## STATE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

M N Tiwari

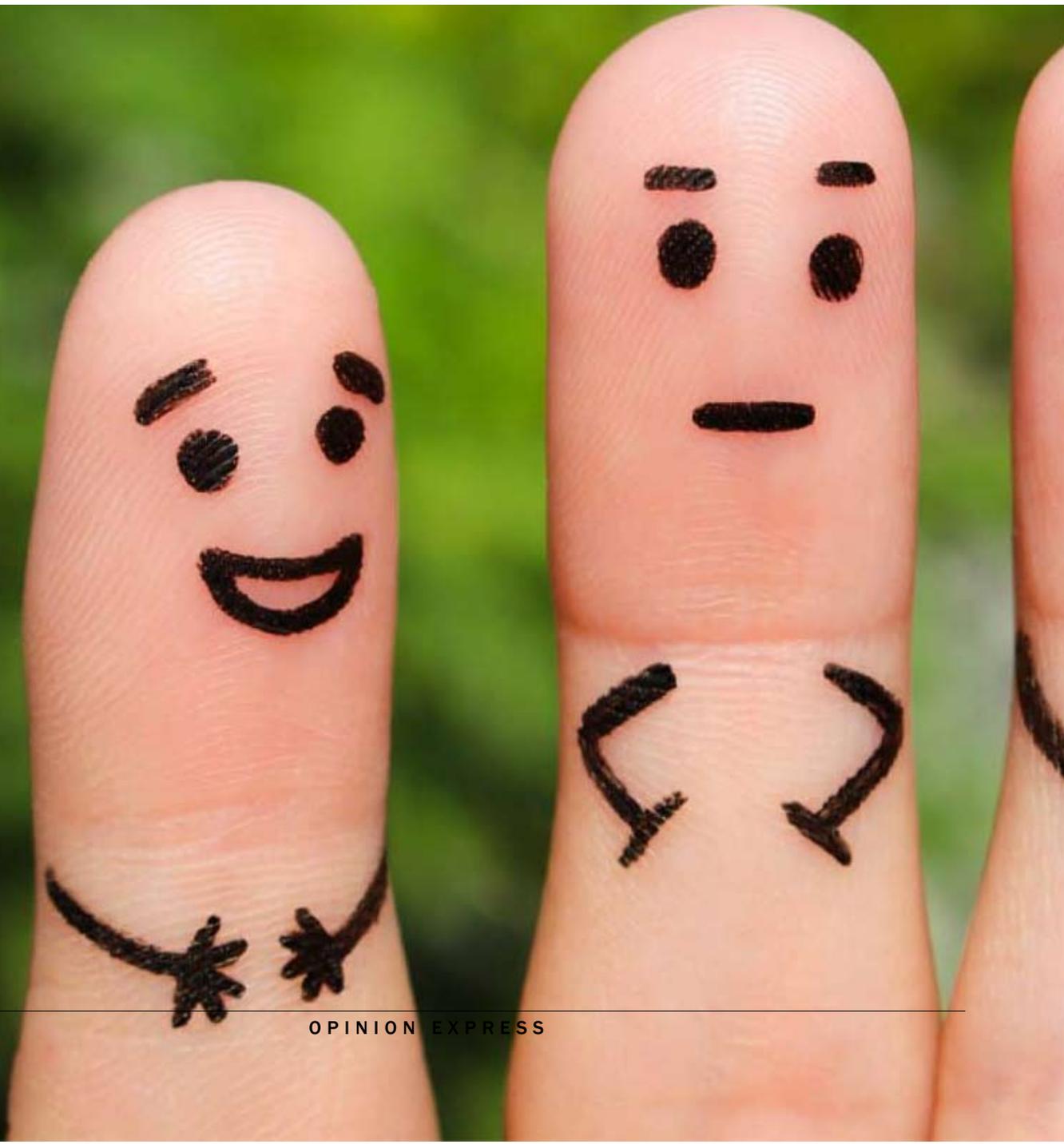
**T**oday there are so many discussions regarding deficits and requirements of use of emotional intelligence in various domains of life starting from family, society and organizations where we live, work or want

to improve the harmonious ecosystem with enhanced outcomes.

The focus of American Psychologists and sociologists regarding application of Emotional Intelligence as a vital tool of improving interpersonal relations among human beings and organizations, has brought this issue on centre stage. Daniel Goleman's book

"Emotional Intelligence" became the best seller as it explained the width and depth of idea of emotional intelligence to the class of people fixated with only IQ centric approaches of improving efficiency coordinates of organizations.

I too read this book and was very much impressed by the algorithm of I.Q and E.Q. When it is said that 80%



successes of life are decided by E.Q ( Emotional Quotient Or Emotional Intelligence) than the I.Q, it becomes imperative to understand the dynamics of emotional intelligence under wider context of Indian philosophy as well. By IQ we can achieve a position but we can sustain that position only with optimal application of EQ .

In fact, my purpose of writing this article is to discover the huge importance of emotional intelligence in the ethos of Indian life. Before going in to details I would like to explain the idea of emotional intelligence. The emotional intelligence is an approach where we express , act and empathize with people around us, with us or under us to establish an emotional connect at human levels .

This approach makes the connected people comfortable and closer emotionally and thereby encouraging or nudg-

ing them to collaborate and cooperate in the desired directions for pursuing common or specific goals. It prefers compassion and cooperation instead of domination and commands .

It nudges people to bond and appeals the hearts without being felt as dominated . In Indian philosophy, the value of emotional intelligence has always been given huge importance and elaborate descriptions have been given about positive virtues of emotional intelligence and it's destroyers have also been identified. Unlike the western philosophy, the Indian perspective is focused on inculcation of selective virtues of emotional intelligence as positive process of personality development after removing the enemies of emotional intelligence from our lives. In fact our philosophy starts with narratives to point out the enemies of emotional

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intelligence. It has been beautifully narrated that KAMA (Sex) KRODHA (Anger) LOBH (Greed) MOH (Attachment), IRSHYA ( jealousy), AHANKAR ( arrogantly proud) are the biggest aberrations or negatives of human minds and it's Emotional Intelligence . These aberrations and vices lead to our own destructions and all kind of character degenerations, consequently .

If we want to grow internally and externally, we have to develop self control to eliminate these things . Those people who become successful in eliminating them are called "SIDDHA PURUSH". These instincts kill our interpersonal relationships horizontally and vertically .

This is why there is great admiration of people in Indian philosophy and those who mastered the control of these instincts were conferred as "JITENDRIYA". He who has complete control on his negative instincts and thereby all reactions , masters his life .Our God Shri Ram Chandra ji was also called MARYADA PURUSHOTTAM because he conquered his mind . Conquering mind means conquering over all negative emotions . We also call Hanuman ji as JITENDRIYA who had the same mastery on his mind .

Now coming back to the idea of emotional intelligence, it becomes imperative to mention existing narratives in Indian philosophy. In Indian Philosophy it has been emphasized that emotional connect pays more than contractual relations. See Lord Rama when he





was in exile and his wife was kidnapped by RAVANA . He was son of a great king and could have taken the help of his kingdom to build a huge army etc .

He did not do so . Still he was able to build a huge army by using his superb emotional intelligence. He started from scratch and then through his EQ and IQ built an undefeatable army and traced his wife being kept so far . He developed a sort of personal rapport with deprived people like SUGRIVA etc by adhering to higher moral pedestal .

He could have taken the help of his elder brother Bali who could defeat RAVANA easily but he choose not to associate with perpetrator of injustice and empathized with Sugriva. See the leadership development model in RAM CHARIT MANAS. As we see today, senior people of the organizations

do indulge in excessive micro managements and thereby creating a feeling of distrust in the mind of lower formations as if they are not capable and thus killing the grooming process of leaderships in organizations. But in Ramayana Lord Shri Ram ji while tasking Shri Hanumanji, just said, “go and

find Sita and tell her that we will take her back soon”. Remaining tasks were left to the capabilities of Hanumanji, how to cross ocean what to do in Lanka etc etc. That shows the trust and loyalties reciprocated at both levels . In fact many organizations are suffering from the vices of micromanagement and top down narratives . Bottoms are alienated and then they indulge in all kind of activities antithetical to the common goals of organizations

I mean that in the ancient Indian

ethos there was huge importance of emotional intelligence in daily life activities as well. The emotional intelligence is the cement which holds the bricks of our relations . Akin to ancient Indian ethos , gravitating to emotional intelligence, is perhaps Japan where employees love and live in their organizations for their whole life because of continuous emotional connect.

It is the typical colonial or western model where actors of organizations are tutored to be formal, mechanical and emotionally alienated. The western colonial model of administration started totally on the paradigm of IQ and introduced that in India across all institutions .

The concept of ruler and keeping a distance with ruled was further introduced with the steel frame where ad-



ministrators were to maintain pomp and show to remain away from masses and rule them by command and force rather than through emotional empathy .

Resultantly the institutions were modeled on the principles of absence of emotional connect among all participants . I am sure that such organizations, driven by sheer formalism and contractual value systems, do fail in comparison to those who are emotionally bound by all employees and have a reciprocal connect with all them. If any organization wants to prosper and succeed, it can not ignore vitals of emotional intelligence.

In fact emotional intelligence is the most important learning outcome , we imbibe from our families since birth. Entire Indian family system was based

on the edifice of emotional intelligence, prudence and pragmatism. That's why our family system has started crippling down with the arrival of westernism and now we have started taking family as a contractual obligation or institution while it was actually contactual and emotional bond according to the ethos of India. The sense of older and younger, the sense of protocol respects, care , cooperation and control systems, designed in Indian family ethos were fabulous and most sustainable .

Unfortunately, with the inception of values of market society and treating human beings in formalistic hierarchical orders have distorted lot of things which any society or organization could hardly afford to sustain in view of it's internal harmony and outcome productivities.

Therefore, the extreme formalism being the legacy of British colonial model of administration and then dealing with them as entities and not as emotional human beings have faded the essence of emotional intelligence in our organizations. I.Q. promotes complacency while emotional intelligence promotes socialization and better acceptabilities of each other in the ecosystem.

Therefore, organizations should not grow in terms of hierarchies but in terms of emotional bonds and influences. We can make layers of hierarchies but the outcome and internal harmony of organization may not be present in it's optimalities. Those organizations where extreme formalism and dominant kind of culture is kept, they may appear to be more polished and fine looking externally but internally they may be imploding or exploding like anything.

Therefore, my point is that organizations, states, society and families can only be sustained through lubricants of emotional intelligence. Further, the required emotional intelligence should be the fuel and lubricator of all relations. If someone does not perform then he should be given the similar opportunities as we give to our sons and daughters. Why not this model of relations in institutions. We play quite double standards when we do not extend the ethos and values of families in the organizations we work or so called command.

We are very forgiving, kind, accommodative, grooming as parents but the same attitude we miss in our organizations and then the alienations start. Each and every member of the organization should be connected emotionally not in optics or fashioned way but in real terms and then we will find miracles happening. Therefore, inculcations and basing of emotional intelligence values in our organizations are true answers for improving outcomes.

We are creating organizations without infusing life in them. They become dead cells without having continuous process of making building blocks to sustain the outcomes . Emotional intelligence makes us empathetic, sensitive and wins the hearts of people or member without fear. Fear remains only for a while but affection and care are the most sustainable instruments of holding institutions and furthering their goals. Our virtues are our best strategies .

*(Writer is and IPS officer and is posted as DIG, Mizoram Police)  
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# The 'Art' man rolls on

Suresh Selvarajan never had a career path. He made it up as he went along to make his mark across the spectrum

**S**uresh has been championing the creativity since he has been studying school. He holds a fine arts degree in painting from the University of Pondicherry. He was recognised with a state award at the age of nineteen for painting. With 15 years of experience in the film industry as art director and production designer he has honed his eye to give life to the sets with his outright talent. Some of his notable projects as art director in 'Krrish 3', 'Robot'; as special property designer in 'Kick', 'Baby', 'Housefull 3'; as production designer in 'Brothers', 'Iru Mugan' & 'Bharath One Nenu'. He is presently working for 'Petta' film starring Rajinikanth in the lead role and Nawazuddin Siddiqui in ensemble cast.

**What were your interests when you were growing up? How did you graduate to art directing and set decorating?**

I was born and brought up in Chidambaram. While I was in school I had a passion for paintings and I used to draw and paint a lot. Everyone around would appreciate me for it. Chidambaram is a temple town and is nothing alike Chennai or Mumbai cities. I remember all my way from school to home I used to find numerous sign board shops and temples. I admired the painters job who used to draw and design the boards, walls and paint the ornate (monumental tower at the entrance of a Hindu temple). I would stand there watching them do their work and think that I too wanted the same job when I grew up. They were my first connection for what I am today. I wanted to be a painter. Back then I never had facilities like internet where I could use google to research or know what I can do with my talent to go to the next level. I was not aware if there



isa college to teach subjects related to arts and cinema industry.

I didn't have a path mapped out. That's when I watched an interview of the Indian art director and production designer Thota Tharani on TV and learnt if someone is good at subjects like painting and drawing then there is a career for them in the film industry. So I joined the University of Pondicherry and graduated to Bachelor of Fine Arts and got into assisting the renowned art

director Sabu Cyril for films. To be honest I created my first email id and learnt about google and wikipedia only when I was studying in college (laughs).

**Who do you consider as your mentors for your career growth?**

I had different people as mentors in my life. My school teacher, Gurunathan was my first mentor. He recognised my talent, encouraged me to take part in competitions and guided me through

out. When I joined college I had my professors guide me at a different level. My role model who I always admired was Thota Tharani sir. I would read and watch all his interviews. At college, I would go through all the cassettes of his teaching and making of art direction for study purpose. I wanted to be like him and work under him if given a chance after college but unfortunately I couldn't get to join his team.

It was then I met Sabu Cyril sir and joined him. He is my biggest mentor of all as I got an opportunity to get into film industry through him and he also helped me get my debut film as an art director. He taught me how to live with the set. I would observe him and imitate him. I gradually cultivated his style of talking.

### **What were some of the early lessons you learned when you started off in art direction?**

We have time restrictions in films as art directors or production designers, so adapting to change and learning quickly is necessary. I learned a tremendous amount about the craft and talent that went into production. As a beginner, I was very into the circus of it all. I have always wanted people to see, feel and walk through my paintings. An artist creates a relationship between a canvas (a cloth artist paint on) and a brush which is an outcome of an art. Art direction is something that I found where lies a canvas and doing the same artwork as an artist but involving more than 200 to 400 people to make the film sets, a life sized three-dimensional painting. It involves carpenters, painters, welders and moulders to make the sets look alive where people can walk through and it needs a lot of team effort.

Our efforts are validated and we get to see a great deal of work covered in the films, but there could be times where none of it makes in at all. So I have learned the first and foremost important thing in art direction is to keep the camera frames in mind. That way I know to convert my sets into the frame and when we have the luxury to work for more time on sets and embrace it they become much richer.

### **Do you always travel a lot for your work? How is it? And tell us your experience about it?**

I am a globetrotter. Normally when I'm working in base locations like Chennai or Mumbai, things are easier to handle. Shooting abroad is never easy

mainly with problems flowing in from all angles, especially the weather conditions and that mostly concerns rains and winds. It feels like an adventure from the beginning till end as I get to experience different people, food, language and location. While I travel I have my eyes open to new and fascinating things and at the same time it is challenging when it comes to work.

### **Are there any common misconceptions that you think people have about what the art department does?**

According to my experience and the people I have come across, I would like to categorise them into three groups based on their knowledge about art direction. The first category of the people is the majority ones who already have a knowledge about what exists in nature and easily able to figure the sets made when they are watching the film. They also use sources like newspaper and online research to know more about the movies and how they function. The second category of people would watch the film and would take guesses maybe the scenes were shot in an actual market or a police station or a theatre. To these people when they are told it is all a set and not the actual place, it is easy for them to understand. The third category of people will never know anything about the sets. They wouldn't understand even if we tell them that it was not real. For example if there is a fight scene to be shot in a train, we have to make 10 different types of sets so that every detail like the seatings, passengers, windows, doors and walls of the train have to be captured in the camera in different angles. These people will understand only when they watch the making of the film.

The same way there are three types of films; realistic, futuristic and periodic films involving art direction for people to understand how much level of set making is required to make them. It is very difficult to figure out the sets in realistic film as they are made based on the scenes to be shot with respect to what the script demands. Futuristic films are fictional and 75% of people will know the sets were made for those films. In periodic films, everyone knows that the places and things existed once and they don't exist now. And in order to make such films, the sets are built.

### **How does your typical day or a typical week look like when shoot starts? Do you get a moment to**

## QUICK BYTES

### **Best career advice you have got?**

Work with all your heart and mind and everything else will fall in place.

### **What's your work mantra?**

Do what you believe in and believe in what you do.

### **Three qualities that got you to where you are today?**

Imagine, dream and hard work.

### **Two things you cannot stand?**

One is Dishonesty and the other is not being punctual.

### **A superhero you always dreamt to be?**

Superman.

### **Last book you read?**

I don't read (smiles)... but Alchemist was the last book that was read out to me.

### **The craziest thing that you have ever done?**

Landing in Mumbai without any knowledge of the city, language or even a person (laughs).

### **How do you clear your mind after a bad day?**

By sleeping because I feel it is a temporary death where all your problems, mistakes and anger suddenly has very little value.

### **take a break in the middle of it?**

I always have the first day fear but it has always helped me grow in life and it makes me confident. Once the shoot begins, I do get breaks in the first week until I hand over the set and sometimes it extends for 15 days or a month. In the first week, after opening sets we check in on build / install progress and check if things are into the frame and projected into the camera. While I get time to relax and think for the next in-line my team would be there to take care of each department.

### **How do you feel when it's a wrap and you watch your sets being torn down?**

That's a good question! Sometimes

it could be heartbreaking as there is a lot of hard work put in it. We would be prepared when we are making the sets that we will be breaking it, being aware that all the hard work is captured on camera. When you are not prepared for certain situations like an accident where the car is completely damaged then you would feel the loss of it and it's a true loss. We move on as we would be focussed on the next set.

**Apart from the major recurring sets, you would have quite a few sets that only appear once or twice. What's your approach to maintain the visual consistency throughout the whole production to those sets as far as the level of detail and the amount of time spent?**

Every scene in the movie is important. We often collaborate on what shots are needed, and focus our time and resources on servicing those needs in a smarter way by keeping the script in mind. In a movie there would be grand scenes and small scenes. Sometime when there are scenes with small budget and requires to be completed within short time, I make sure the overall look and feel of the scene is the same by changing the colour palette as we cannot show the audiences if it had a small budget in the film. It is challenging to do the same kind of work for all the sets irrespective of it appearing once or twice or being small in the film.

**What do you do between your productions?**

Laughs... I try to relax and focus on my family and travel. I always carry a piece of paper in my pocket. My day doesn't go without it. I write all my present work as checklist and I have one for my personal use too. I write planning on holidays and anything that I have missed to do with my family while I was at work. I do not skew work-life balance so they don't miss me and I don't miss them.

**Do you have any final words for the readers of OPINION EXPRESS magazine?**

I have a thought to share, there is a saying that god exists in everyone likewise I say that art exists in everyone and nobody can deny it. For example the vegetable vendor arranging vegetables which would look very attractive or an old lady with no knowledge of art would have arranged the fishes so beautiful in a fish market. We get to observe these outside on the streets, offices and at homes too. All these people follow a pattern to attract some kind of audience. You don't have to know how to draw or paint like a professional to be an expert at art but it exists in everyone in some or the other way irrespective of their profession.

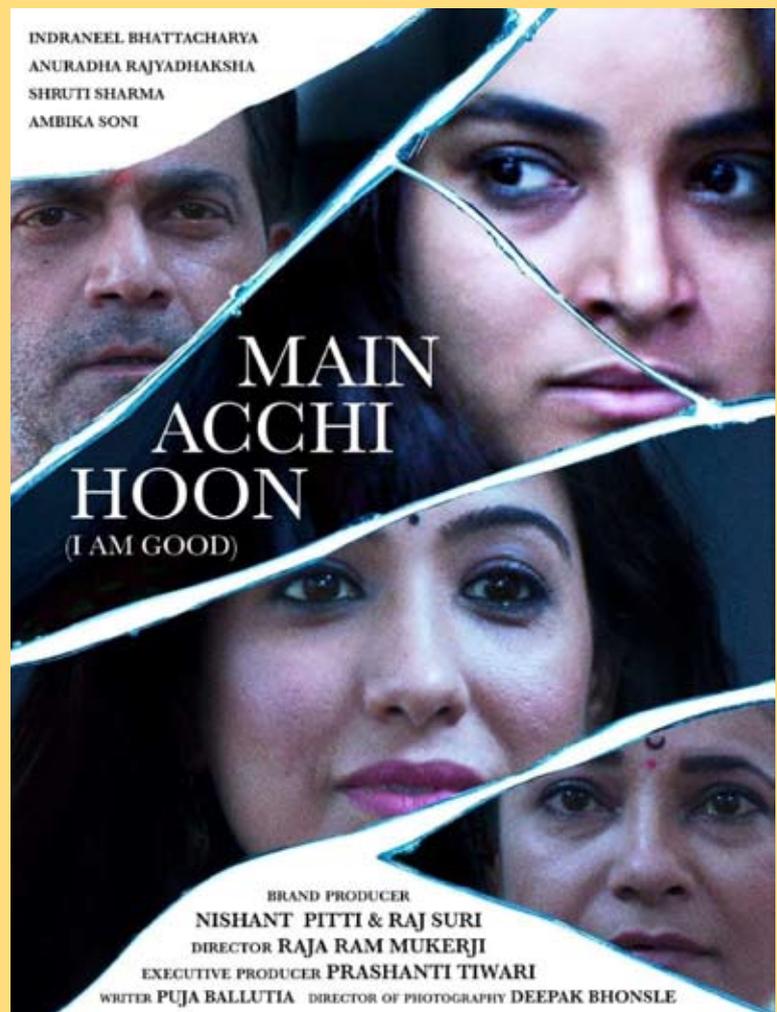
# Saga of Human Spirit

OE Entertainment Desk

**I**t's about a struggle of a woman. How she fights her mental trauma and finally succeeds. Her only reason is to give happiness to her parents as she knows the pain, agony and struggle her parents are going through. The moral of the story is...never give up in life and never think that you are incompetent.

The short film 'Main Achchi Hoon' was officially released on April 15 on YouTube. It's film on How a girl struggles with bipolar disorder, fights it and emerges as a winner. Prashanti Tiwari, a young talent from Jabalpur has contributed as an executive producer while the film has been directed by Raaja Ram Mukherjee, the brother of Rani Mukherjee.

Do watch it and realise this journey and be a part of it.



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*The Pioneer* thanks all its readers and patrons for their support.  
The journey of passion continues with your blessings as we enter our 20s

# Woman of Substance

## How an aspirations woman is inspiring the city of Varanasi

MM Upadhyay

She has over 15 yrs of experience in Law enforcement and Organizational operation management. She believes that the well being of mankind its peace and security are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established & her philosophy is GOD has not called me to be successful, he has called me to be Faithful ; Quality is the essence, Chase the quality, Quantity will chase you.

“Build the Future with Action & Vision” is her tag line, to attain success in any endeavor it is imperative to have complete belief and faith in self & associates as well. She draws inspiration from the words of Winston Churchill who maintained that - “Winners are not those who always win, losers are not those who always lose, winners are those who believe they are born to win.”

She was born in BANARAS the Cultural Capital of INDIA. Being blessed with a esteemed family in the field of learning. After many years of sincere service to the society; finally she has created a legal platform -NGO- “AARAV DISHA FOUNDATION”- which registered under the Indian Trust/Society Act, with an aim to construct a capacity building in diversified realms.

The inspiring journey of “ADF”(AARAV DISHA FOUNDATION)- began in 2018 at VARANASI. “ADF” has a clear vision about its objectives since its inception. A working philosophy is to deliver world class Cultural-Skill & hospitality Quality. It’s an organisation where Quality meets excellence, Technology meets aesthetics and passion meets perfection; stands as a testimony of right dream, focused efforts, Gridlock team work, commitment to ideology and Dynamic leadership.

Ms RITU TRIPATHY-President of renowned “ADF” of UP - through this platform she is engaged in promoting the well being of people who are serving nation and doing their duties sincerely; enhancing co-operation and communication between civil society

### RITU RIPATHY

MBA,LLB(from BHU) is a senior Advocate, Life member of BANARAS BAR and CENTRAL BAR ASSOCIATION, Stalwart Social Activist, Journalist, Philanthropist, Renowned Management guru, Spirited Orator & Legal Advisor/Director of many MNCs, President of AARAV DISHA FOUNDATION )

and the government institutions. Believing in “Vasudhav kutumbakam”. Also believed that bit of fragrance always clings to the hand that gives you roses. She always used to say that co operation is spelled with two letters - “WE”. Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much is the mantra of her foundation bides with.

Ms RITU TRIPATHY’s philosophy that the activist is not the man who says the river is dirty - The activist is the man who cleans up the river. Her foundation promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunities. In accordance of “Bhagavad Gita” her strong stands that -for a warrior nothing is nobler than a war against evil.

If you do not participate in this war against evil, you will incur sin, violating your dharma and your honour; best leaders lead by demonstrating how it is done. Her often known to quote-” the happiest people I know are those who lose themselves in the service of others and I am one of them.

Ms RITU TRIPATHY had been appointed as CONVENER of “GOPIO”(Global organization of people of Indian origin) and she played a major role in the historic event 15th PRAVASI BHARTIYA DIVAS , which had been occurred at VARANASI in January 2019, Organized by INDIAN govt.& UP state jointly. During this mega International event she had been conferred with most Prestigious AWARD”KASHI RATNA” by

International Chairman & Int’l Pre-sedent Dr.THOMAS ABRAHAM & Dr.SUNNY KULATHKAL of “GOPIO” respectively.

Very soon Ms Ritu tripathy will take charge as president of GOPIO of “VARANASI CHAPTER” which is proposed to be inaugurated in coming month in the gracious presence of Hon’ble Governor of UP.

Apart of these she is planning to change entire eastern up economical scenario through establishing a mega fully equipped “FILM CITY” & world class “NRI CITY” in VARANASI. It’s 1200crore projects; she is seriously working on with her overseas prestigious organisations and companies. Through completion of these two projects not only eastern UP or UP but other adjacent states also will flourish. It will be everlasting beneficial projects; when more than thousand Top most NRIs Giants will take their Bungalows in NRI CITY then they certainly set up other profitable projects to develop northern India.

So, it’s just the beginning of RITU and her NGO to establish peace, harmony, support, better understanding in society. Coordination with government officials to generate employment, skill development through innovative ideas, free legal advices to poor citizens, aware them with govt. welfare schemes, Eradicate social evils & spread radiant rays of knowledge, Eliminate extreme hunger and poverty; malnutrition, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality and improving menstruation health through sanitation and hygienic awareness, ensuring environment sustainability, raise funds for socio-economic development and relief the welfare for the deprived citizens.

RITU TRIPATHY popular saying that- Talent does what it can; genius does what it must be fear less, hope more; whine less, breathe more; Talk less,say more; Hate less, love more; And all good things are yours. To keep a lamp burning, we have to keep putting oil in it.

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