

Azim Premji University

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Overcoming resistance

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TEST FOR BJP

The way Prime Minister Narendra Modi is campaigning in Bihar it looks as if he is contesting for chief ministership of the state. To some extent it is true also as winning Bihar polls for Bharatiya Janata Party is a must and is a test of its future course as a political party which can guide India's destiny. And above all the survivability and impact of Modi magic which pole-vaulted party in national stream in the 2014 Parliamentary elections. Bihar will be entering in the last phase of polling on November 5 and the counting will take place on November 8 till that time party's fate is on tenterhook. There is no doubt that local factors do play a major role in deciding the fortune of political party and this was evident in the recently held municipal elections in Mumbai. Though BJP was able to improve its count but could not dethrone Shiv Sena in spite of being in power. In Bihar also the prospects of the party look somewhat foggy if the below 60 per cent polling percentage till the fourth phase is any indicator. All this is after singing development tunes; BJP has come down to the age-old play of playing caste card to garner votes. It looks for Modi the Bihar election is a battle of 'do' or 'die.' Going by Nitish Kumar's scheme of 'social engineering', the newly appointed governor falls in the category of 'Mahadalit' category. The raising of 'Mahadalit' card comes after another Dalit who was elevated to the chair of chief minister was thrown out by Nitish himself and BJP was looking forward to consolidate on this front i.e. playing the Dalit card to woo voters. The move by centre in appointing the governor in Bihar is seen by the political parties as going against the spirit of cooperative federalism and alleged that the move is against Sarkaria Commission recommendations. The DNA of politics is very different because it changes as per the situation. Today's rivals are tomorrow's friends. And it will not be a surprise tomorrow Narendra Modi and Nitish Kumar joining hands. The one factor which would play a vital game changer could be the Dalit vote bank especially in view of the treatment meted out to Manjhi. BJP could try to encash from such a situation.

ANOTHER STIR

Now with former paramilitary persons staging a nationwide stir for the elusive one-rank, one-pension (OROP), government will find it difficult to assuage the hurt feeling of these former soldiers. It is unfortunate that even the former soldiers have to stage dharnas to get what is legitimate to them, especially when they have given the best of their life to the nation while serving in difficult conditions. The veteran para-military personnel agitation would start from November 3 at Jantar Mantar demanding parity in the pension as per ranks. The proposed agitation has triggered a copy cat demand from retired paramilitary personnel. Jammu had seen such an agitation for over 16 days with handful of former paramilitary personnel alongwith their family members sitting on hunger strike under the banner of All J and K Central Para Military Forces Welfare Association. During the agitation period not even a single leader from any political party of the region visited them nor inquired about their welfare rest apart extending support. The association has members from Border Security Forces (BSF), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Central Industrial Security Forces (CISF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and Seema Shastra Bal (SSB). The former soldiers of these forces have taken the plea that they have also served the country like Army, Air Force and Navy personnel. Under the agitation plan veterans of paramilitary forces who have clamored for parity with armored forces will hit the streets and plan an indefinite dharna at New Delhi. They have argued that it is a known fact para-military are the first line of defence in every security operations and are serving on an all-India basis which is no different than other forces so have demanded parity in pension, status and equal facilities. Even the ex-Servicemen are not happy with the OROP package announced by the Union government the rising of similar agitation at national level will give BJP-led Central Government some tough time.

OFF 'D' CUFF

This is one of the most complex human problems. This is how everybody is behaving...always choosing the wrong, always choosing the sad, the depressed, the miserable. There must be profound reasons for it, and there are.

The first thing: the way human beings are brought up plays a very definite role in it. If you are unhappy, you gain something from it, you always gain. If you are happy, you always lose.

From the very beginning, an alert child starts feeling the distinction. Whenever he is unhappy, everybody is sympathetic towards him; he gains sympathy. Everybody tries to be loving towards him, he gains love. And even more than that: whenever he is unhappy, everybody is attentive towards him, he gains attention. Attention works like food for the ego, a very alcoholic stimulant. It gives you energy; you feel you are somebody. Hence, so much need, so much desire to get attention....

Hiding happiness

A second thing related to it is: whenever you are happy, whenever you are joyful, whenever you feel ecstatic and blissful, everybody is jealous of you. Jealousy means that everybody is antagonistic, nobody is friendly; at that moment, everybody is an enemy. So, you have learnt not to be so ecstatic that everybody becomes inimical towards you - not to show your bliss, not to laugh....

What type of society is this? If someone is miserable everything is okay; he fits in, because the whole society is miserable, more or less. He is a member; he belongs to us.

Choose to be happy!

If somebody becomes ecstatic, we think he has gone berserk, insane. He doesn't belong to us...and we feel jealous. Because of jealousy we condemn him. Because of jealousy we will try in every way to put him back to his old state. We call that old state normality....

Society cannot allow ecstasy. Ecstasy is the greatest revolution. I repeat it: ecstasy is the greatest revolution. If people become ecstatic, the whole society will have to change, because this society is based on misery.

If people are blissful, you cannot lead them to war - to Vietnam, or to Egypt, or to Israel. No. Someone who is blissful will just laugh and say: This is nonsense!

If people are blissful, you cannot make them obsessed with money. They will not waste their whole lives just accumulating money. It will look like madness to them that a person is destroying his whole life, just exchanging his life for dead money, dying and accumulating money. And the money will be there when he is dead. This is absolute madness! But this madness cannot be seen unless you are ecstatic.

If people are ecstatic, then the whole pattern of this society will have to change. This society exists on misery. Misery is a great investment for this society. So we bring up children...from the beginning, we create a leaning towards misery. That's why they always choose misery.... If you become one with anything, you become blissful. If you separate yourself from anything, even if it is happiness, you will become miserable.... So, this is the key.

Time to warm up to actionable promises

HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

ACCORDING to a report by Justin Gillis, datelined October 21 and published in The New York Times under the heading, "2015 Likely to Be Hottest Year Ever Recorded", global temperatures, running far above 2014's record-setting level, make it almost certain that 2015 will be the hottest year in recorded history. While the immediate cause of this has reportedly been a strong El Nino, a weather condition that releases enormous amounts of heat in the atmosphere, scientists hold that the much higher levels or temperature, compared to those during the last strong El Ninos (1997 and 1998), indicates contribution by human emission of greenhouse gases as well. The consequences of this and the last year's unprecedentedly high temperatures have included dry weather and forest fires in Indonesia, an incipient drought in Australia, a severe one in Ethiopia, a developing food crisis in parts of Africa, and drought and forest fires in California in the United States.

The US-based Council on Foreign Relations' Issue Brief, entitled, The Global Climate Change Regime, cites the American Meteorological Society as mentioning a 90 per cent probability of global temperatures rising by 3.5 to 7.4 degrees Celsius in less than a 100 years, with even greater increases over land and the poles. The consequences would include rising sea levels, extreme and volatile weather patterns, desertification, famine, water shortages and conflicts - all spelling widespread disaster.

Mentioning other consequences, Paul R Ehrlich and Anne H Ehrlich state in The Dominant Animal: Human Evolution and the Environment, "Destabilization of the climate can undermine biodiversity, exterminating populations and species that cannot adapt or move fast enough to keep up with changing habitats, including species that may play important roles in support of agriculture. Ecosystems may be torn apart as species migrate at different rates and in response to differing changes."

Conflicts can follow the migration of people, displaced by the submergence of their homelands following a rise in ocean level, thanks to global warming, into other regions where the original residents see their influx as threatening their resources and living

standards. Population shifts caused by famines, desertification and water shortages can lead to the same result.

Tensions can be worsened by cultural, religious and ethnic differences. The genocidal attack on Tutsis by Hutus which killed hundreds of thousands in Rwanda in 1994, was prompted not just by ethnic hatred but also a desire to grab the former's land. The Arab surge into Sudan's Darfur and adjoining areas, inhabited mainly by pastoral people and the consequent massive slaughter of the latter, was triggered by a drought.

Unfortunately, progress in coping with global warming has been slow. The limited Kyoto Protocol on curbing greenhouse gas emissions, remains comatose; the Copenhagen meeting of 2009 delivered little. The historic accord in Lima, Peru, on December 14, 2014, doubtless saw the representatives of the nearly 200 participating nations committing their respective countries to reducing fossil fuel emissions by March 31 this year and drawing up plans detailing how much emission each would cut by 2020, and the domestic policies it would follow to that end. Those failing to keep the deadline, it further stipulated, would have to produce their plans by June.

The Lima Accord, as the agreement is called, however, lacks legal sanction; nor does it bind countries to reducing emissions to a particular level. It depends on these honouring their commitments, which all may not do. All eyes are now on the Paris summit to be held from November 30 to December 11, 2015. While past disappointments have bred pessimism, the demand for purposeful action is growing with Pope Francis calling for a radical transformation of politics, economic activity and individual lifestyles, and a quick and united global response to the challenge. In a 184-page papal encyclical, issued on June 18, he blamed relentless exploitation and destruction of the environment, excessive faith in technology and political shortsightedness for climate change.

The Pope has clearly stated his hope that the encyclical would influence energy and economic policies and start a global movement. There have been encouraging developments, some of them predating the Pope's landmark statement. US President Barack

Plugging loopholes in the surrogacy laws

SHOBORI GANGULI

In a country which ranks lower than traditionally patriarchal societies like Qatar and Saudi Arabia in the United Nations Gender Inequality Index, the Government's intent to block commercial surrogacy for foreigners in India is reason to celebrate. Despite impressive and revolutionary breakthroughs, India's story of gender equality remains far from inspiring.

From the rural and illiterate to the urban and literate, Indian women contend with chronic gender inequities which liberating moves like education and employment opportunities have been unable to correct. Rampant instances of gender crimes and sexist biases dominate the narrative of a country, where literacy may have unfettered women, but where decadent mindsets stymie their participation in the country's growth story. The unregulated world of commercial surrogacy contains one such saga of exploitation of the economically challenged Indian woman, across rural and urban divides.

The Health Ministry's affidavit to the Supreme Court this Wednesday makes the Government's stand on the matter abundantly clear and is indeed a significant step in insuring the rights of a surrogate mother and her child. It states that, "The Government of India does not support commercial surrogacy", and that surrogacy should be available to "Indian married infertile couples only and not to foreigners". Arguably, the altruistic intent of surrogacy - to address the parental needs of a childless couple - cannot be contested. Celebrities, from Hollywood to Bollywood, have, in fact, rendered the idea of surrogacy eminently fetching. Be it Hollywood's Nicole Kidman and Sarah Jessica Parker or even Elton John with a same-sex partner, to Indian celebrities like Shah Rukh Khan and Aamir Khan, couples, heterosexual and homosexual, have successfully reinforced the idea of altruistic surrogacy.

However, there is reason to believe that

the Rs900 crore worth surrogacy trade in India, far from being an altruistic enterprise, is predominantly an appalling tale of female exploitation, a surrogate mother in India available at less than one-third the cost of a similar volunteer in more developed pockets of the world. Declared a criminal offense by civilised countries the world over (from Australia, Japan, Canada, France, and the United Kingdom to some states in the United States), commercial surrogacy in India has had sinister manifestations, ethical and legal.

Today India is a favoured destination for surrogacy tourism owing to the high-end medical science and technologies its medical fraternity has access to. This, alongside the criminally low financial costs and lack of Government regulation, has predictably led the practice into ethical and legal abuse, earning India the avoidable distinction of being an international hub of surrogacy services.

As per existing Indian laws, same sex couples with foreign nationality or single foreigners cannot commission surrogacy here even as single Indians can. Also, foreigners seeking surrogacy here must be a man and woman "duly married" and the marriage should have sustained for at least two years. Lest this descend into a regressive debate on Indian lawmakers' apathy to homosexuality, or even their xenophobia, there is need to understand the rationale behind such a provision. Innumerable instances have been reported where a child from a surrogate Indian mother has been abandoned by its intended foreign parents without a thought to the fate of the mother or the child's imperiled future.

Legal since 2002, commercial surrogacy in India has been open to grave misuse. The shocking case of an Australian couple forsaking one of the twin babies born to an Indian surrogate only because the two already had a child of the same sex, highlighted the need to urgently streamline this unregulated sector. In 2008, the Supreme Court had to intervene in a case

Obama's Clean Power Plan, announced on August 3, proposes a 32 per cent cut (from 2005 levels) in carbon emissions from power plants in the US by 2030. This is higher than the initial proposal of 30 per cent, though states will only have to comply by 2022 rather than 2020 as originally proposed, and will be able to submit their plans on meeting the targets by 2018 instead of 2017. The new plan, which will significantly boost wind and solar power generation and force a switch away from coal power, is a landmark development; nothing on this scale of reduction had been announced earlier.

In September, Brazil announced a plan for an absolute cut in emission levels over the next decade - and not merely for restraints on continued increase as well as its commitment to end illegal deforestation and restore millions acres of degraded forests. In a joint statement in Washington, DC, on September 25, China's President Xi Jinping and Mr Obama outlined how they intended to give shape to their joint statement on climate change issued in Beijing on November 12, 2014.

The steps included an agreement to strictly control public investment, both at home and abroad, in highly-polluting and carbon-intensive projects, implement new fuel efficiency standards for heavy duty vehicles in 2019, and to develop efficiency standards for buildings and equipment. President Obama said on the occasion that next year, the US would be finalising standards which would, by 2025, reduce methane emissions in the oil, gas and landfill sectors by 40 per cent to 45 per cent from 2012 levels. It will also press ahead with proposals to phase out hydrofluorocarbons.

In July, the US Environmental Protection Agency outlawed the use of some of the most harmful HFCs in aerosols, refrigeration and air conditioning sectors.

On September 25, President Xi also announced China's decision to implement, in 2017, a national emissions trading scheme involving a cap-and-trade programme that would annually provide a limit to the permissible national level of pollution, issue to industries permits to pollute, and allow the less polluting industries to sell their permits to the more polluting ones.

where the commissioning parents were divorced during the pregnancy and the intended mother refused to accept the child. As per current Indian laws, foreign couples seeking surrogacy have to provide a written undertaking from the country of their origin that a child born through surrogacy would be taken to their country. However, this provision alone has not been able to prevent misuse.

A more comprehensive answer is available in the 2010 draft, Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Bill pending in Parliament. Admittedly, surrogacy forms only a part of the proposed Bill which intends to be a legal umbrella providing respite to childless couples while protecting surrogate mothers. Surrogacy, however, has been specifically vulnerable to abuse, claiming hundreds of economically disadvantaged women as its unsuspecting victims.

Therefore, there is urgent need for a fail-safe legal mechanism that guards the interests of the intended parents and the surrogate mother and child through a monitoring system rigorously implemented. Israel has led in this matter, becoming the first country in the world to approve of a state-ordered surrogacy policy wherein every case is scrutinised and sanctioned by the Government. Even Russia, where commercial surrogacy is legal, the industry is subject to rigid scrutiny by Governmental agencies.

In India, for factors not altogether surprising, thousands of private clinics offering surrogate parenthood have mushroomed across the length and breadth of the country, the extent of the operation making the task of Governmental scrutiny extremely daunting. In fact, today India stands in the dubious company of Thailand, Georgia, and Ukraine in providing foreigners attractively low financial, ethical, and legal, costs of surrogacy. Admittedly, for a Government committed to enhancing India's stature in the global arena, its qualification as a low-cost rent-a-womb destination can hardly be appealing.

Secretariat is also opening in Jammu in few days which may lead to further congestions. Hence it is of utmost important that traffic police should start a drive of awareness in immediate future to aware people of this problem.

Satwant Singh Rissam
Nanak Nagar,
Jammu

Apology for Iraq war

Dear Editor,

No words would be too harsh to condemn role of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair's role in Iraq invasion and fabricating evidence against Saddam Hussein that showed the latter harbouring weapons of mass destruction. Blair's apology is not even worth the paper it is written on as it is yet another attempt to gloss over his deceit. If the war was all about neutralising the weapons, why was it allowed to rage on even after it became clear that the reports were false? Hundreds of thousands of people were killed and ancient Islamic religious, cultural and architectural sites destroyed because of the war. Those responsible for the crimes remain safe,

Overcoming resistance

■ VIKAS KUMAR

The RSS has been relatively successful among people with a background in sciences and engineering. None of its chiefs were trained in humanities/social sciences, for instance. Not coincidentally, the humanities and social sciences institutions, which the RSS has found difficult to penetrate, are being attacked for being intellectually subservient to the West.

Economics, a social science that avoids political and social controversies, has been spared though. The right wing propaganda is, however, only one of the many factors behind the growing unease with western intellectual frameworks.

The West has long advised others to adopt its institutions and modes of thinking that are presumably uniquely conducive to material and social progress. Since the 1980s, a number of developing countries have made significant economic progress without adhering to western advice. The turning of the economic tide has given greater legitimacy to non-Western institutional alternatives.

Moreover, economic success has meant that developing countries can afford to deviate from western institutional norms. Even the countries that have not done well are increasingly able to resist pressure to adopt western norms due to the growing south-south trade and investment ties that have reduced the dependence upon the West.

In a parallel development, a number of developing countries, including India and Turkey, have seen the rise of socially conservative political parties. These parties draw support from upwardly mobile groups that have benefited from the recent economic progress and are demanding entry into spaces dominated by westernised elites.

In Dynamics Among Nations, Hilton Root suggests that these political and economic developments have created the demand and space for non-western institutional alternatives. We can add that the conservative political revolution has also generated demand for new/indigenous knowledge to counter the westernised academia that denies it intellectual legitimacy.

In India, the rise of a Hindu nationalist party, regional parties, and backward classes, who are neither well-versed with western modes of thinking nor emotionally attached to the West, has diluted the support for the "Nehrurian" model that has come under concerted attack for lacking indigenous roots. This has forced the model's defenders to bolster it using "indigenous" justifications.

On the other hand, there has been a growing recognition within the academia of the need to relax pre-commitment to western intellectual frameworks whose conceptual inadequacy vis-à-vis non-Western thought and experience is increasingly evident. The fact that the right wing groups also appear to be raising this issue should not dissuade academics from trying to develop intellectual frameworks better suited to our social and political realities (the costs of abandoning this task to the right wing are enormous).

If we neglect this task, we will forever remain a pale imitation of the West and judge ourselves in terms of their Nobels and Oscars. The Amir Khans will exhort us to maintain cleanliness to please western tourists and Arun Jaitleys will advise us to avoid communal violence to protect our image in the West.

Our teachers will have to spend much of their lectures explaining why Western categories such as religion that may not necessarily have direct correlates in our context have to be used for want of better alternatives (in Western languages and social sciences!).

Our scholars will have to display their mastery over western classics before they discuss India. Our students will have to learn about India from scratch because indigenous self-knowledge (and conceptual vocabulary) unmediated by western social sciences has no place in our classrooms. It is time we learnt to live without caring for how the West will judge us and to talk to each other within India (and even elsewhere in the world) without the intermediation of norm-ative standards and intellectual frameworks borrowed from the West.

The humanities and social sciences curriculum is the place to build this new, freer India. The task of recovering intellectual autonomy is easier said than done, though. Since the dominance of the modern West in the field of knowledge survived its physical retreat after decolonisation, we need to better understand the factors, which sustain that dominance.

beyond the reach of any law or justice system.

P. Krishnan,
Delhi

Net penetration

Dear Editor,

Mark Zuckerberg's repackaging of a differential access to Internet traffic as 'zero rating', and his portrayal of himself as a 'messiah' of the Internet-deprived, looks ingenious . However, Free Basics will not be a charitable initiative. The data made accessible will neither be exhaustive nor representative - this in itself will violate Net neutrality. This, coupled with the possibility of the initiative turning monopolistic, will prove to be more a threat to the future of the Net than a solution. Can the nation imagine a generation that has been educated and 'empowered' by a company running solely with commercial interests? The government should take to completing the National Optical Fibre Network on a war footing to avoid the future of our collective intellect being mortgaged to what looks like just another tool of 'Capitalism 2.0'.

Devinder Kumar
Akhnoor

