

Azim Premji University

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The fall of BSP after 2007 win

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DECCAN HERALD

ESTABLISHED 1948

Centre’s GDP data selective, unreal

By now, it is generally realised, even within the Union government and the ruling BJP, that the ill-advised demonetisation of currency to the extent of 86% of its value played havoc with the economy. Every citizen and every sector of the economy — industry, trade, agriculture, transport, ports, airports, hospitals, cinema halls, hotels, restaurants — was hit by a lack of cash. For about two months, beginning November 9, the entire nation was visibly battling either the bank queues or suffering some other consequences of note ban. The impact was too obvious and the disruption was almost complete. The markets had very few customers, inventories with the producers or the dealers were building up while casual labourers in cities had gone back to their villages where farmers were left with rotting potatoes and other crops disposed in distress sales. Those arguing about the impact being limited to informal sectors should illustratively take a look at the falling sales of two-wheelers, large advertising campaigns being put on hold and investment plans being pushed to the backburner with the result that instead of creating new jobs, the industry and trade were finding it difficult to retain the existing strength.

But the Union government and the Central Statistical Organisation would like us to believe that all the impact being loudly talked about was “anecdotal.” According to them, 7% growth for the October-December quarter was more authentic, based on “empirical” data. For the entire fiscal 2016-17, the Indian economy is supposed to be growing at 7.1%, still the fastest among the major economies. Though the GDP had grown by 7.9% in 2015-16, 7-7.1% growth is pretty good in the face of disruptive demonetisation. But more than disruptive, Prime Minister Narendra Modi downward to Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and other ministers would rather like the nation to believe about its “long-term” positive impact. They even taunted internationally acclaimed economists, pitching “Harvard-wallahs” against “hard working” Indians, especially within the government after the CSO released the GDP data on February 28.

It is nobody’s case to treat the CSO data as “fudged,” but certainly the data is too broad-based yet selective and omits a large section of the economy. Technicalities do not interest the common citizen whose legitimate question is: how come manufacturing remained robust when industrial growth was a meagre 0.2% in Q3 of 2016-17. Agriculture stands out with 6% growth in Q3, but the paradox is that the rural stress is too evident to be buried under the data which is of least interest to distressed farmers.

Sports in school, a game-changer

The central government’s proposal to integrate sports in the school curriculum is a welcome move as it will help give a more serious role for sports and games in students’ education. At present, physical education and sports are a part of students’ activities in most schools but they are mostly optional. The facilities are also not available in many, and perhaps most, schools. The proposal is to make sports a subject which students have to pass like the others in the curriculum. The plan is to introduce the new policy in phases, starting with Class I in the next academic year. The system will move up the higher classes every year, and will be implemented in the higher secondary stage also in due course. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) will take the lead in the implementation and involve the state education boards in it. It is felt that there is no need for a law on the matter, and it can be implemented through executive guidelines. It is unlikely that there will be any objection to the proposal in principle.

The proposal has come to be considered after continuous failure of the country at international sports events, including the Rio Olympics. There is hardly any event in which Indian sportspersons perform up to world standards. Cricket, chess and a couple of other games are the only exceptions. It is unnatural that India, with the world’s second largest population, should fare so badly in sports. Interests and talents have to be spotted early and nurtured so that children grow into good sportspersons. Students are encouraged to participate in sports and games in many states and schools, and incentives are offered to those who achieve distinction and win honours. But this may not be enough. Making sports an integral part of education will lead to participation of all children from the beginning in some sport or the other. This can help in early discovery of talent. Students will also develop an active interest in sports.

While the proposal has merit, its implementation will pose great challenges. The necessary infrastructure and facilities have to be put in place in all schools. Coaches and instructors will have to be appointed. Many schools do not have even playgrounds. Adequate funds will have to be allocated. Clear rules and guidelines will have to be evolved for participation and evaluation of students so that there will be no scope for complaints about any aspect of the working of the system. This is important because the performance in sports will be a factor in the students’ overall merit.



“Govt wants nation to think that the impact is ‘anecdotal.’”

Comment

AROUND KANSAS SHOOTING

Bias against non-whites

Racial hatred is not new in the US. But the debate over globalism versus nationalism started by Trump has accentuated racial divide.

By Sudhanshu Ranjan

After a long eerie silence over the brutal murder of Indian techie Srinivas Kuchibhotla, US President Donald Trump finally emerged on Capitol Hill on March 1 condemning as “evil” and “hate” the fatal Kansas shooting: “Recent threats targeting Jewish Community Centres and vandalism of Jewish cemeteries as well as last week’s shooting in Kansas City, remind us that while we may be a nation divided on policies, we are a country that stands united in condemning hate and evil in all its forms.”

A day earlier, the White House condemned the killing as “racially motivated hatred”. However, Indian American law-makers expressed disappointment over the president’s statement saying it lacked specificity. Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal alleged without pulling punches that Trump uses “repeated falsehoods” about immigrants to justify the rationale behind his “inhumane and barbaric” executive orders.

Kansas shooting has left not only the entire Indian community but also immigrants from other countries shell shocked. A fear psychosis has gripped them. The killer, Adam P Purinton, a navy veteran, hurled racial abuses before firing shots which left another Indian, Alok Madasani, grievously injured. However, the hope is not dead: a white American, Ian Grillot, endangered his life to save the Indians and got injured.

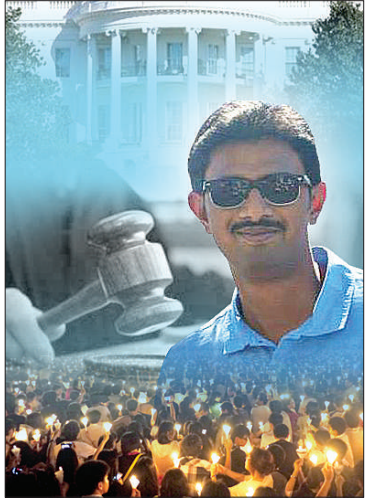
The rancour of racial hatred is not new in the USA. But the debate over globalism versus nationalism started by Trump may have accentuated the racial divide. Some figures reveal shocking pictures. In 2015, black men aged 15-34 were nine times more likely than other Americans to be gunned down by police according to data collected for *The Count*.

The Kansas shooting was carried out by a private individual. But even the police are not free from the bias and there have been several instances of blacks being killed in cold blood by the police. The assault on Sureshbhai Patel by the police in the northern Alabama city of Madison in February 2015 which left him partially

paralysed, led to widespread outrage and raised questions about the safety of blacks who are suspected because of their colour.

The incident reminded of the horrific killing of an 18-year-old unarmed black Michael Brown in August 2014 by white police officer Darren Wilson after an altercation. Wilson was subsequently acquitted by a grand jury.

In the USA, the guideline of “objective reasonableness” before using deadly force laid down by the US Supreme Court in *Tennessee v Garner* (1985) has failed to chasten the trigger-happy policemen. The acquittal of Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson in March 2015 kicked up a storm in the whole world. Brown’s death in the St Louis suburb of Ferguson became a national flash point on race, justice and policing.



Violence flared in St Louis suburb after the grand jury declined to indict Wilson. The 12-member panel did not find probable cause for five possible charges that ranged from first-degree murder to involuntary manslaughter.

‘Objective reasonableness’

What is deeply disturbing, however, is that even courts pronounce these killings, many of them of unarmed victims, as perfectly legal. Chapter 563 of the Missouri Revised Statutes authorises deadly force “in effecting an arrest or in preventing an escape from custody” if the officer “reasonably believes” it is necessary in order to “effect the arrest and also reasonably believes that the person to be arrested has committed or attempted to commit a felony...or may otherwise endanger life or inflict serious physical

injury unless arrested without delay”.

The Supreme Court’s decision in *Tennessee v Garner* about “objective reasonableness” enthused human rights lovers as it kindled hope that it would rein in barbaric policemen. But subsequent experiences belied this hope.

In this case, a Memphis cop Elton Hymen shot dead one Edward Garner, a 15-year-old black and unarmed boy who had burgled into a house and grabbed a ring and \$10. A Tennessee statute provides that, if, after a police officer has given notice of intent to arrest a criminal suspect, the suspect flees or forcibly resists, “the officer may use all the necessary means to effect the arrest”.

Hymen shot and killed him after he asked him to halt, but the boy fled over the backyard fence of a house at night he was suspected of having burgled. The officer used deadly force despite being “reasonably sure” the suspect was unarmed and thinking that he was 17 or 18 years old, and of slight build. The deceased’s father brought an action in federal district court seeking damage for asserted violations of his son’s constitutional rights. The court held that the statute and the officer’s actions were constitutional.

However, reversing it, the Court of Appeals held that the statute is unconstitutional insofar as it authorises the use of deadly force against, in this case, an apparently unarmed, non-dangerous fleeing suspect, such force may not be used unless necessary to prevent the escape and the officer has probable cause to believe that the suspect poses a significant threat of death or serious physical injury to the officer or others.

The Supreme Court ruled that deadly force could be used in case of real threat to the officer or others but required that it should be “objectively reasonable”. But how was it to be determined? It was established by the US Supreme Court in *Graham v Connor* (1989) that an objective reasonableness should apply to a free citizen’s claim that law enforcement’s officials used excessive force in the case of making an arrest, investigator stop, or other “seizure” of his person.

Notwithstanding these directions, policemen behave qua barbarians as if always on square-bashing and innocent citizens hardly get square deal even from courts which often chime in with the police. It is evident that guidelines given by the court are observed more in breach but there is hardly any action. Trump must act quickly to ensure that justice is done.

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

Many faces of life

I felt a tinge of sadness for the young girl who had transformed into a weary woman.

By Sahana Prasad

I looked at her picture long and hard, as I had done many times earlier. Born with the proverbial silver spoon in her mouth, she looked elegant. Why wouldn’t she? She had money, the most important thing in life to many. Money to buy designer clothes, to splurge in parlours, to shop for the latest and expensive cosmetics and to hire an army of assistants and PRs to ensure that she looked her best every minute. No wonder, she was the darling of paparazzi and appeared regularly on media, print and visual.

Most of her colleagues in the entertainment industry praised her sense of fashion and fashionistas called her an icon. Her movies portrayed her in the best of light, focusing on her apparel and enhanced her not-so-beautiful features through professional make-up artistes.

That’s the new term, “make-up” artistes, not makeup men/women. These people can give a complete makeover to anyone and make them look glamorous and ravishing, of course at a price.

I looked into the mirror shortly afterwards. All I could see was a time-ravaged face, lines formed from fighting life’s vicissitudes, struggling to maintain balance at work and family, crow’s feet and tanned skin as there was no time for beauty treatments. I felt a tinge of sadness for the young girl who had transformed into a weary woman over the years.

I resented the burdens and responsibilities which bogged me down. I grudged the time workplace demanded from me. I could have been free, taking care of myself and looking at least as good as, if not better than the fashion icon. If only I had time to apply foundation, blush and mascara and style my hair in a number of ways, rather than hurriedly running a comb through my tassets and dabbing a bit of moisturiser in a hurry! If only I could arrange my wardrobe neatly and get a suitable attire for the day without stressing rather than grabbing the

first dress I could lay my hands on!

It was getting late; I had a large number of things to be done and couldn’t afford to wallow in self-pity. As I manoeuvred the vehicle through heavy traffic, I saw her and abruptly applied brakes. “Hey, Reena, how are you and what are you doing here? Where do you stay?” I shot off a volley of questions unmindful of the angry honks behind me. She was, after all, an old acquaintance whom I hadn’t seen for nearly five years.

She gently guided me to the side of the road and explained how she had lost her father in a tragic accident and had to take care of her two siblings and mother, who was still in deep shock, and about how she had abandoned her training for a beauty pageant and a modelling career. She looked at least 10 years older than her real age. “I feel sad for you!” I blurted. “Please don’t. I am very happy caring for the people who matter,” she replied before disappearing into the traffic.

I looked at the huge poster on the road side, featuring the icon, the women in the mirror and started my vehicle, my mind chastened and clear.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Froth and flames: solution eludes Bellandur lake

Sir, Apropos “Bellandur can wait no more” (DH, Mar 5), the Bellandur lake is a sorry tale of indifference and a high degree of callousness of the state government and its agencies, which have allowed matters to reach a point from where saving the lake has become a tough proposition. The knee-jerk actions initiated whenever the lake spews out froth or catches fire are of no avail. They are purely temporary solutions that yield short-term results at the most.

What is needed is a permanent solution to a perennial

problem that has been inconveniencing the local residents a great deal. Apparently, the state government machinery lacks the expertise to combat the situation and this makes it expedient for it to scout for experts who can chart out a plan for the lake and also take the lead in implementing the course of action. Waiting for problems to sort themselves out is a meaningless exercise and being content with ad hoc measures, too, falls into the same category.

C V ARAVIND, Bengaluru

Bold move

Sir, The Education Department deserves a pat on the back for taking the extreme measure of shutting down the Bellandur school where a preschooler was sexually abused recently. The move should make other schools be on guard and clamp down on students and staff who indulge in sexual excesses. The rising crime graph in our city schools, especially those involving tiny tots, paints an appalling picture of the apathy of the authorities towards such shameful episodes. Adequate checks must be put in place to prevent any recurrence.

N J RAVI CHANDER, Bengaluru

Myopic policies

Sir, “Whose country is it anyway?” by Vatsala Vedantam (DH Mar 4), offers an incisive analysis of the hypocrisy of US President Donald Trump targeting

immigrants. He has forgotten that America is a land of immigrants. The original native Indian inhabitants of the land have been wiped out. According to official estimates, 32 million adults in the US do not read or write and 15% are unemployable. When that is the case, how can he think of barring immigrants, and especially making the issuing of H1B visas more stringent?

H R BAPU SATYANARAYANA, Mysuru

Check hate crimes

Sir, The latest incidents in the US, where members of the Indian community have been targeted in apparent hate crimes, have shocked the whole world. Last month, an Indian techie was shot dead in Kansas, and his friend was left injured. Now, a 39-year old Sikh man has been injured outside his home. Before such incidents reach an unmanageable scale, it would be best if leaders

from across political, social and religious spectrums step up to denounce the rise in violence and hate-filled rhetoric.

GAURI MULLERPATTEEN, Via email

Uncouth culture

Sir, President Pranab Mukherjee made a timely appeal to students to promote a culture of dialogue than unrest. However, he forgot to advise political leaders, whom the students follow faithfully, to display similar sanity in Parliament and legislative assemblies, which have long lost the culture of healthy debate.

BALVINDER, Chandigarh

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SPEAK OUT



Mulayam Singh Yadav, SP patriarch

In politics, not all lies are all lies. And not all truths are complete.

Mark McKinnon

IN PERSPECTIVE

The fall of BSP after 2007 win

The party failed to rework its ideology to hold together the support base it had built ahead of polls.

By Vikas Kumar

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) failed to win a single seat in the last parliamentary election despite being the country’s third largest party by vote share. The party had, in fact, begun to wobble after its historic win in the 2007 Uttar Pradesh Assembly election.

It failed to rework its ideology to hold together the support base it had built ahead of that election. This was reflected in the inability to coin new slogans that would appeal to increasingly diverse supporters. The party’s vote share and geographical footprint shrunk in the following decade.

The BSP was launched in 1984 and recognised as a national party in 1997. As its support base grew over the years, the party shifted from narrow to more inclusive slogans. While older slogans did not disappear, their use in propaganda decreased. The changes in slogans can help identify four stages in the BSP history.

Initially, when the Dalits were struggling to secure minimal rights, the party’s slogans focused on access to public offices and resources: Vote hamara, raj tumhara, nahin chalega, nahin chalega (our vote, your rule, this won’t do), and Vote se laenge PM/CM, aarakshan se laenge SP/DM (we will capture politics through vote, bureaucracy through reservation).

These were complemented by slogans that shamed the upper castes and extended the party’s appeal to kindred communities: Tilak, karjua aur talwar, inko maaro joote char (Thrash brahmins, baniyas and thakurs with shoes), and Thakur, brahmin, bania chhod, baki sab hain DS4 (except the three upper castes, the rest are oppressed and exploited).

After establishing itself as an audacious champion of the Dalit cause, the party engaged upper castes from a position of strength in two steps. It first came up with a slogan welcoming sections of the upper castes: Baniya maaf, thakur half, aur brahmin saaf (baniyas are pardoned, kshatriyas could be forgiven, brahmins will be finished-off).

Then around 2007, bahujan (majority) gave way to sarvajan (everyone) and the party opened its gates for all including brahmins. Haathi nahin Ganesh hai, Brahma-Vishnu-Mahesh hai (BSP’s symbol is not a mere elephant, it is Ganesh, it is the trinity of Brahma-Vishnu-Mahesh) replaced older slogans such as Jab mile Mulayam-Kanshiram, hawa mein ud gaye Jai Shri Ram (When Mulayam-Kanshiram came together, the BJP/Jai Shri Ram was blown away).

The BSP called for reservation for the poor among the upper castes, while the latter began touching Mayawati’s feet. The party’s brahmin supporters

greeted Mayawati with the slogan, Brahmano ki yahi pukar, Mayawati chauthi baar (Brahmins hope Mayawati will become the CM for the fourth time).

Another slogan of this period, Chad gundon ki chhati par, mohar lagegi haathi par (do not fear goons, vote for the elephant), appealed to voters on the basis of Mayawati’s record as an able administrator, who alone could curb the SP’s goondaraj.

In 2007, the BSP became the first party in 16 years to secure an outright majority in UP. The party’s traditional Dalit voters responded in two different ways to the growing bonhomie with the upper castes, especially, brahmins. A section welcomed the BSP’s ascendance with slogans such as Brahman shankh baja yega, haathi dilli jayega (conch-blowing brahmins will herald the elephant’s march to Delhi).

However, another section viewed the party’s reorientation as a means of selling Dalit votes to upper caste bidders. This was echoed in slogans such as Sau-sau joote khayeingein, lekin Behenji ko pradhanmantri banayegein (we are ready to bear opposition to fulfil Mayawati’s prime ministerial ambitions).

Reverse social engineering

By 2012, the sceptics had reined in the reverse social engineering of the BSP, which now feared losing its core supporters. Moreover, the upper castes didn’t appreciate the BSP government’s attempts to empower Dalits. The sarvajan alliance fell apart and the party lost the 2012 election. Since then the party has been groping for new slogans.

Sarva samaj ke samman mein, Behenji maidan mein (Behenji is here to protect the interests of all sections), was one of the slogans tried during this period. In 2014, the BSP tried to reinvigorate the sarvajan alliance. However, in the middle of the election, Mayawati had to go out of her way to claim that Dalit’s were not Hindus.

In the ongoing UP election, the BSP is using a variety of slogans. Slogans such as Gaongaon ko shahar banane do, Behenji ko aane do (Let Behenji come, transform villages into cities) proclaim the party’s developmental commitments. Another slogan, Betiyon ko muskurane do, Behenji ko aane do (let Behenji come, allow daughters to smile), targets UP’s poor law and order condition.

Sabhi dharmon ka hath, Behenji ke saath (all religious communities are behind Mayawati), positions the BSP as a secular party. While the party is signalling its tilt toward the Dalit-Muslim-Bahujan with the slogan, Dalit-Muslim bhai-bhai, dono bole Baspa aai-ai (Dalit-Muslim brothers say BSP is coming). Brahmins are highly overrepresented among the party’s candidates.

Will the new slogans, which lack the edge of earlier slogans, convey a clear message to voters in multi-cornered elections? Will the ‘elephant’ succeed in reinventing itself for the fifth time? We will have to wait until March 11 for answers.

(The writer teaches at Azim Premji University, Bengaluru)

OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 years ago: March 6, 1997

Jaipur procession tear-gassed; 5 leaders held

Jaipur, March 5. Five Opposition leaders were taken into custody here for defying the order under section 144, CrPC which is in force in certain parts of the city.

25 years ago: March 6, 1992

Corporation takes over unauthorised flats

Bangalore, March 5. The Bangalore City Corporation has taken possession of 39 unauthorised flats in two multi-storey apartment buildings.

The top three floors of the Palace Orchards apartments and the Raj Mahal apartments were held unauthorised by the Supreme Court. The HC had directed the BCC Commissioner to take vacant possession of the flats by March 5.