



A thought for today

Freedom is hammered out on the anvil of discussion, dissent, and debate

HUBERT H HUMPHREY

Pollution Of Minds

Sexual harassment of Gurmehar Kaur has nothing to do with love for country

The social media attack against Delhi University student Gurmehar Kaur for voicing her opinion against RSS affiliated students body ABVP, in the aftermath of the violence at Ramjas College, is condemnable. Gurmehar, who is the daughter of a Kargil war martyr, condemned the violence and initiated the #StudentsAgainstABVP online campaign. This not only earned her the ire of trolls who criticised her sentiments as anti-national, but even saw her receive rape threats. Meanwhile, BJP MP Pratap Simha compared Gurmehar to Dawood Ibrahim while Union minister Kiren Rijiju questioned whether someone was polluting the young woman's mind.

Threatening a woman with rape can't be justified under any circumstances. In this context, minister Rijiju should be more concerned about who's polluting the minds of those who have been subjecting Gurmehar to extreme sexual harassment online. His government should show that it is indeed against all forms of intolerance by ensuring the strictest of police action against Gurmehar's tormentors.



It has been argued that it wasn't just ABVP members that took part in violence at Ramjas College and students of leftist persuasion were equally guilty. But hooliganism by anyone anywhere needs to be condemned unequivocally. After seeing where Pakistan has ended up by distinguishing between good terrorists and bad terrorists, India must not commit the folly of playing good goons vs bad goons.

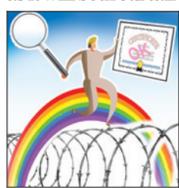
A certain section affiliated to BJP and its sister organisations believes in an aggressive definition of nationalism and imposing this on others. Anyone disagreeing with their worldview is labelled as anti-national and intimidated into silence. This intimidation can even take the form of physical violence – even against a war martyr's daughter advocating pacifism. The role of the government must be to discourage violence and ensure conditions for free debate, where nobody has exclusive claim to nationalism. In a big and diverse country such as ours, people relate to nationalism in different ways. Questioning the government of the day or refusing to mouth patriotic slogans doesn't weaken the nation. It isn't anti-national. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat himself has said that no one should be forced to chant, Bharat mata ki jai. It is hooliganism running riot and intimidating diverse voices into silence that does great damage to the nation. It is this message that Union minister of state for home affairs Rijiju should spread.

It has been argued that it wasn't just ABVP members that took part in violence at Ramjas College and students of leftist persuasion were equally guilty. But hooliganism by anyone anywhere needs to be condemned unequivocally. After seeing where Pakistan has ended up by distinguishing between good terrorists and bad terrorists, India must not commit the folly of playing good goons vs bad goons.

Trust And Verify

How simple changes in government functioning can make life easier for citizens

A group of senior bureaucrats tasked with studying urban issues has recommended governments move to a Trust and Verify approach in dealing with the most frequent needs of citizens. This initiative aims to upend the existing system of scrutiny ahead of approvals with one where approvals come first. A scrutiny is carried out subsequently. The essence is that citizens are trusted when it comes to high frequency engagements with city governments – such as building permissions, change of title in municipal records, and birth and death registrations. This proposal should be widely adopted as it will both curtail corruption and improve citizens' lives.



Governments have already begun moving towards an approach where it is assumed that an applicant is generally trustworthy. To illustrate, to ease doing business importers were allowed to self-certify, to be followed by a few random verifications. There is absolutely no reason why the same level of trust should not be extended to all citizens. More so when one of the biggest sources of petty corruption is the abuse of power by sections of lower bureaucracy.

An important strand of reform is streamlining procedures and bringing transparency in government decision making. India has taken well intentioned steps in this direction by trying out concepts such as Sevottam, a quality management system framework for some government services. NDA can further its promise of maximum governance, minimum government by persuading all city governments to adopt the Trust and Verify approach. Punitive punishments can be used to deter those who abuse the trust. In addition, advances in digital technology should be used to reduce the level of direct interface between citizens and governments. Simple changes to ways of functioning can produce far reaching results and make life easier for everyone.

Kid stuff

Thanks to 'reverse mentoring', the guru-chela roles have been turned upside down

Jug Suraiya



When my smart phone went on the blink my niece, who is much less than half my age, had it working again in a trice.

I'd just been given my first lesson in reverse mentoring. There was a time, not so long ago, when knowledge was associated with age. Conventional wisdom had it that the older you were, the more knowledgeable you were. This was based on the reasoning that the older you were, the more experience you'd had, and therefore the more knowledge you'd acquired.

By the same token, the younger you were, the less your experience, and so the less your knowledge. The digital age – of smart phones, and computers, and the Internet – changed all that.

Previously, it took ten years, or more, for a new technology – or for an improved version of an already existing technology – to be introduced into society and be assimilated by it.

When people – at least people in India – bought consumer durables like fridges, or television sets, or cars, they expected them to last if not for a lifetime, at least half a lifetime. The computer chip – with all the wonders engraved within it – put technological innovation into hyper-drive. Technology no longer took years to re-invent itself. It could do so in months. And, as the pace of technological change accelerates exponentially, pretty soon the time gap between innovations will come down to days. Or even hours.

This is where reverse mentoring comes in. The younger you are, the more clued up you're likely to be with the newest gadget, or app, or whatever, that some geek, somewhere, has come up with. And as such, it's up to you, as a younger person, to teach older people how to deal with technological change, thus turning upside down the traditional relationship of elder guru-younger chela. And there could well come a day when a toddler in Huggies will teach me how to put on my adult diapers.

secondopinion@timesgroup.com
http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/jugglebandhi

UP's Dalits: Hindutva Or Ambedkar?

There's a permanent Dalit revolution in UP, but Mayawati may not be its only beneficiary

Sagarika.Ghose@timesgroup.com



Varanasi: In his adopted village Jayapur in Varanasi district, PM Narendra Modi has erected a giant Ambedkar statue in the Harijan quarter. Yet the paint on the statue is peeling badly, the solar lamp that illuminates it is out of battery. Dalits of Jayapur say Ambedkar is being dishonoured and insulted.

The Dalit vote has been assiduously cultivated by BJP. In these assembly polls UP's 21% Dalits are generally expected to stay with Mayawati although BJP hopes to gain among non-Jatav Dalits (Mayawati being a Jatav) to whom it has given 65 tickets. The Dalit leadership from Ram Vilas Paswan to Udit Raj is already with BJP. Is Dalit aspiration and desire to escape caste shackles taking the community towards Modi? Or will the Ambedkarite legacy of the fight against Hindutva keep Dalits out of the sangh parivar's net? Has Mayawati sacrificed the movement for Dalit cultural liberation by allying with BJP in the past and is she losing the loyalty of angry young Dalits?

In villages across UP, the signs of Dalit assertion are unmistakable. In fact, the Dalit revolution is UP's permanent revolution. Jeans clad Dalit millennials say our forefathers had brooms in their hand, we have a smart phone or a laptop. The violence on Dalits at Una, the 'institutional murder' of Rohith Vemula, rising Dalit atrocities and statements against reservations by RSS leaders Bhagwat and Vaidya, have made many educated Dalits acutely conscious that the Hindutva worldview has no place for them.

Dronacharya, the Hindu guru, is for many Dalits a 'villain' and they vociferously question BJP's decision to name Gurugram after him. "Beyond tokenist gestures like the Bhim app, what concrete steps has Modi taken for Dalits," they ask.

At the same time for many Dalit communities like Khatiks and Dhobis, who have got tickets from BJP, Modi is a symbol of aspiration. The 'Hindukaran' of Dalits is proceeding at a rapid pace in



rural areas. In the Muzaffarnagar riots of 2013 Dalits participated in the attacks on Muslims, and in 2014 BJP got 24% of Dalit vote while BSP got 14%. A big chunk of the BSP vote shifted to BJP in 2014. Dalits are thus torn between the desire to declare their unique identity or to be accepted into the temples of Hinduism from where they were barred for centuries.

Mayawati too has always been torn between seizing immediate power for office and the long term strategy to which Kanshi Ram was committed. Her spectacular 206 seat victory in 2007 brought UP its first majority government in 17 years but made BSP into yet another political party, rather than the 'movement' it claimed to be.

However the forces Mayawati represents are acutely real. Observers at BSP rallies cannot miss the pumping mood of empowerment and confidence. Dalits angrily defend Ambedkar parks and having tasted political power are simply unwilling to accept secondary status. They are angry at the way Mayawati is lampooned by the 'brahmanical media'

Dalits are torn between the desire to declare their unique identity or to be accepted into the temples of Hinduism from where they were barred for centuries

and argue that Mayawati's stances are no different from leaders who click selfies and pose for Madame Tussauds. We are not a crutch for anyone is a dominant sentiment among Dalit middle class professionals who still have an inordinate sense of pride that a Dalit woman was CM. It is a matter of pride, they say that when upper castes pass by a Dalit no longer has to stand up and that his FIRs are registered.

But is Mayawati and the politics she represents more about UP's past than its future? Is Mayawati being left behind by the social emancipation movement launched by young Dalits? Mayawati plays an old style politics of caste and

community at a time when the Dalit craves a new modern vocabulary. When behenji attempts a Dalit-Muslim alliance by giving more than 100 tickets to Muslims is she attempting a social engineering that can no longer be achieved by the old style simple 1-1-2 type caste and community arithmetic?

Traditional politics is changing fast. Dalit voices on social media, notably the twitter handle @DalitRising, show the young want social justice and a modern equal opportunity agenda. Mayawati provided security but not the economic opportunities and benefits of modern education which they crave. Rural Dalits are lured by offers of sanskritisation or caste Hindu status that the sangh parivar offers them because opportunities are still so horribly lacking. Spending nights with Dalits a la Rahul or lunching with Dalits a la Amit Shah are only terribly limited tokens. The Dalit revolution is looking for emancipatory equality and a new political vocabulary that expresses their anguish at the brutally discriminatory system.

By playing traditional caste-community votebank politics Mayawati has become imitative of the same political system against which Kanshi Ram roared out his challenge. While Mayawati has been co-opted by the political system, many young Dalits are now turning towards reclaiming a Buddhist identity and many also say they are angry at the compromises Mayawati is making and at the corruption charges against her.

Thus several strands make up UP's permanent Dalit revolution: aspiration, anger, assertion of identity, rejection of Hinduism. Dalits say the flaunting of cash at weddings or on birthdays is a means of this assertion which is why demitisation has become for them a cruel joke. Caught between Ambedkar and Hindutva, the Dalit revolution is restlessly searching for a leader who will speak a modern egalitarian language and attempt to transform Ambedkar's teachings into living realities. Mayawati old style politics, the BJP DNA is brahmanical and against reservations. Thus politics is failing this Dalit revolution which even though leaderless is growing stronger and bigger every day.

'Every single stage of reform is more difficult because you use political capital ... now inaction is penalised politically'

Angel Gurria, former finance minister of Mexico and Secretary-General of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, is in India to launch the organisation's biennial economic survey of India. He talks to Sanjiv Shankaran on the survey findings and the political economy of reform.

■ A highlight of the OECD survey is that India needs reforms in markets for land, labour and in banks. Would future reforms be more challenging?

Every new phase of reform is more challenging. India started with one of the toughest ones: GST (goods and services tax). It is of enormous consequence as it makes India one market. Implementation is of greatest importance. Agreements make headlines but implementation is what changes lives.

Every single stage of reform becomes more difficult because you use political capital. Second, to the extent first stage reforms are successful it has consequences and opposition stands up. Political parties put more conditions and therefore there are more costs. Labour and land are always politically sensitive. And banks are of enormous consequence. They are the ones that always resist.

■ You suggested India change the public sector nature of banks by reducing government's stake below 51%. Please elaborate.

I don't think percentage of owner-

ship is the crucial part but the governance which comes with ownership. It does not matter if the banks are government owned except when they are, they are run in a certain way. Generally, it is not consistent with best practices and they tend to get a different treatment. Why do we say reduce the percentage? It is a way of getting new shareholders in and changing governance.

■ There is a lot of emphasis on income tax reform. India in relative terms collects more tax than richer countries such as China and Indonesia.

Your potential is what we look at. How much do you really get? A relatively modest fraction of the potential. Only 6% of the population in India pays tax.

■ Is it easy politically to reduce tax exemptions?

It is not easy which is why they are called reforms. This is why you need political capital and leadership. You also need time because if the next election is upon you, there is a constraint. Globally, the financial crisis led to a crisis of trust and political fragmentation.

If you have a fragile coalition, it is difficult to be bold. But at the same time there is an important change in the political world. Earlier, inaction used to be at a premium because it

was without risk. But now inaction is penalised politically. The electorate wants you to take a decision. Even if you don't get it right the first time they want to see that you are trying.

■ OECD has been very active in international tax reform. What's the current status?

First, there is automatic exchange of information which is for individuals. So far, we have collected \$80 billion (in G20 countries) of unplanned additional revenue because people know there is going to be automatic exchange of information. This means if you create a bank account anywhere in the world, the bank will inform the country, which will inform the country of origin (of account holder).

This is a revolution; 130 jurisdictions are going to inform each other automatically about who has created an account in banks. The exchange of

information for about 50 countries starts in September 2017 and the last country will join in 2018.

Second, there is Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (a measure to renovate international taxation). Multinationals declare country-by-country profit and pay taxes when they generate it. We are creating something called the common transmission system where all countries are going to be reporting to each other. It is a dramatic change in the situation. When as an individual you are not paying taxes it is evasion. As a corporate it is legal shrewdness or tax engineering. But it is not an offence. The natures of problems are different. In one case, we need to enforce, in the other we need to change rules which is what's happening.

We had been trying to bring changes for 12 years before the financial crisis (in 2008). We achieved about 40 bilateral agreements on exchange of information till 2008. Since then, we have taken it to about 3500 agreements. Why did it change? First, because everybody needs the money. And second it had become impossible to tolerate that the only people paying taxes were middle class and the only companies that paid taxes were small and medium enterprises. We have dismantled that system.

The difference was the crisis and G20. The crisis brought about the need but G20 brought the political muscle. With their political muscle, we could do the technical work and get it together.

dilbert



Do You Know Who Your True Friend Is?

Interaction: Osho

I have many friends, but the question 'who is a real friend?' arises in my mind.

A: You are asking from the wrong end. Never ask, 'Who is my real friend?' Ask, 'Am I a real friend to somebody?' That is the right question. The proverb is: A friend in need is a friend indeed. But deep down that is greed! That is not friendship; that is not love. You want to use the other as a means, and no man is a means, every man is an end unto himself. Why are you so worried about who is a real friend?

The real question has to be: Am I friendly to people? Friendship is the highest form of love. In love, some lust is bound to be there; in friendship, all lust disappears. In friendship nothing gross remains; it becomes absolutely subtle.

It is not a question of using the

other, it is not even a question of needing the other, it is a question of sharing. You have too much and you would like to share. And whosoever is ready to share your joy with you, your dance, your song, you will be grateful to him, you will feel obliged. Not that he is obliged to you, not that he should feel thankful to you because you have given so much to him. A friend never thinks in that way. A friend always feels grateful to those people who allow him to love them, to give them whatsoever he has got.

Making friendships with the idea of using people is taking a wrong step from the very beginning. Friendship has to be a sharing. If you have something share it – and whosoever is ready to share with you is a friend. It is not a question that when you are in

danger the friend has to come to your aid. If he comes you are grateful, but if he does not come, it's perfectly okay. It is his decision to come or not to come. You will not say to him, 'When I was in need you didn't turn up – what kind of friend are you?'

Friendship is one of those rare things that belongs to the temple and not to the shop. But you are not aware of that kind of friendship, you will have to learn it.

What we call love is more animalistic than human. Friendship is absolutely human. It has something for which there is no inbuilt mechanism in your biology; it is non-biological. Hence one rises in friendship; one does not fall in friendship. It has a spiritual dimension.

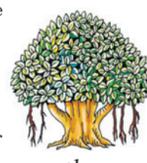
But don't ask, 'Who is a real friend?'

Sacredspace

Lent Begins

Lent is a time to renew wherever we are in that process that I call the divine therapy. It's a time to look at what our instinctual needs are, look at what the dynamics of our unconscious are.

Thomas Keating



the speaking tree

Correction: The Speaking Tree article published on February 25 was misattributed by us to Shantam Seth. The author is Thich Nhat Hanh and the community.