

Vol: 32 | No. 4 | April 2024 | ₹ 20

OPINION EXPRESS

www.opinionexpress.in

A MONTHLY NEWS MAGAZINE



"Vibrant Democracy Dances into Action: Lok Sabha 2024 Comes Alive"

The 2024 Lok Sabha elections hold immense significance for India's democratic fabric, political trajectory, and global positioning.

PAANI KA DOCTOR®
Aquaguard

Shuddh se zyaada, Sehat ka waada.

PAANI KA DOCTOR CLINIC



EUREKA FORBES 
Your friend for life

FOR DETAILS CALL: 093 3988 3333

www.eurekaforbes.com



Eureka Forbes 'Paani Ka Doctor' clinic ad with brand ambassadors Madhuri Dixit and Dr Shiram Nene
Click here to enlarge

EDITOR

Prashant Tewari

Associate Editor

Dr Rahul Misra

BUREAU CHIEF

Anshuman Dogra (DELHI), Diwakar Shetty (MUMBAI), Sidhartha Sharma (KOLKATA), Lakshmi Devi (BANGALORE) Divyash Bajpai (USA), KAPIL DUDAKIA (UNITED KINGDOM)

Rajiv Agnihotri (MAURITIUS), Romil Raj Bhagat (DUBAI), Herman Silochan (CANADA), Dr Shiv Kumar (AUS/NZ), Nithya Ramesh

(Fashion & Entertainment)

Principle Correspondent

Shakila Makandar

Content partner

The Pioneer

Pratham Pravakta

Legal Advisors

Vishnu Sharma Adv

Vijai Krishna Adv

Advertisement / Marketing Director

Diwakar Shetty

Gopal Chopra

Administrative Director

Amit Pandey

Bal Mukund Gaur

Corporate Communication / PR

Sanjay Mendiratta

M M Upadhaya

Graphics & Design

Writeword Communications (Studio 8)

Photographer

Ratan Shukla

Overseas Marketing

OEMCL Ltd (Mauritius), OEHL Ltd (DUBAI)

Advertisement / Circulation:

Delhi / NCR - Hemant Sharma: D 239

Defence Colony New Delhi 110024 INDIA

Tel - 011 49060350

Mumbai - Vijay Kalantri - Advisor: New Excelsior BUILDING, 6th Floor, A.K. NAYAK MARG, Fort, MUMBAI - 400001 (INDIA).

Phone: 91 - 22 - 22019265 / 22019160

FAX: 91-22- 22019764 / 22019760

The magazine is published and printed by Rajiv Agnihotri for Opinion Express Communications & Entertainments Pvt Ltd, from Kumpu Graphic Press 2 Ashok Nagar, Lucknow & printed at Kumpu

Graphic Press 2 Ashok Nagar, Lucknow - 226001

Tele : 91-522-4060880 &

Nikhil Offset An ISO 9001 : 2008 Certified Company

223, DSIDC Complex, Okhla Industrial Area Phase- I, New Delhi - 110020 Tele : 91-26812316,

26810097, 26810458, FAX:91 45792362

E-Mail : nikhil223@yahoo.com,

nikhilg91@gmail.com

Registered Office: OPINION EXPRESS HOUSE

24-A Clyde Road, Lucknow-226001 (India)

Phone: 91-522-4060880 Fax: 91-522-2208242

24x7 mobility +91 9984437000

email: info@opinionexpress.in

All disputes are subject to be under jurisdiction of courts in Delhi.

All content published may be subject to copyright, seek written permission to re-produce. Opinion Express is trade mark brand of Opinion Express Communications & Entertainment Private Limited.

Analyzing the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections: Domestic and Global Significance



As 1.4 billion Indians gear up for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, anticipation and speculation are at an all-time high regarding the potential outcomes and the broad impacts that these elections might have, both nationally and globally.

The dynamics of alliances and coalitions are also poised for a shift in the upcoming elections. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party led National Democratic Alliance is seeking to consolidate its position and secure a renewed mandate, highlighting its achievements in governance, economic reforms, and national security. On the other hand, the opposition parties, including the Indian National Congress and various regional outfits, are aiming to forge alliances and present a united front against the incumbent government.

Key issues such as economic recovery post-pandemic, job creation, agrarian reforms, healthcare infrastructure, and national security are expected to feature prominently in the electoral discourse. The outcome of the elections will likely hinge on how effectively political parties address these pressing concerns and connect with the aspirations of the electorate, particularly the youth and marginalized communities.

The role of technology and social media in shaping political narratives and mobilizing voters cannot be overlooked. Digital campaigning, data analytics, and social media outreach have become integral components of modern-day electioneering, allowing parties to reach a wider audience and engage with voters on a personalized level. The 2024 elections are likely to witness an even greater reliance on digital platforms, with parties vying for digital supremacy and leveraging technology for targeted messaging and voter outreach strategies.

From a national perspective, the outcome of the Lok Sabha elections will have far-reaching implications for India's governance, policy direction, and socio-economic development. A decisive mandate in favor of any political formation could provide the stability and mandate needed to pursue bold reforms and transformative initiatives. Conversely, a fragmented mandate or a closely contested election could lead to coalition politics and the need for consensus-building among diverse political forces.

Internationally, the 2024 Lok Sabha elections will be closely watched, given India's growing influence on the global stage. India's foreign policy priorities, strategic partnerships, and engagements with major powers and international organizations are expected to continue evolving, regardless of the election outcome. However, the diplomatic landscape may witness subtle shifts based on the priorities and approaches of the new government.

In conclusion, the 2024 Lok Sabha elections hold immense significance for India's democratic fabric, political trajectory, and global positioning. Surely, another term for the Narendra Modi government will dramatically change the social fabric of the country. The anticipated outcome and broad impacts of these elections underscore the critical role of informed voting, robust democratic institutions, and active citizen participation in shaping the country's future trajectory.

Prashant Tewari Editor-in-Chief

COVERSTORY

Vibrant Democracy
Dances into Action: Lok
Sabha 2024 Comes Alive

5



The Divine Verdict: Ram
Mandir's Legal Triumph
and

8

14

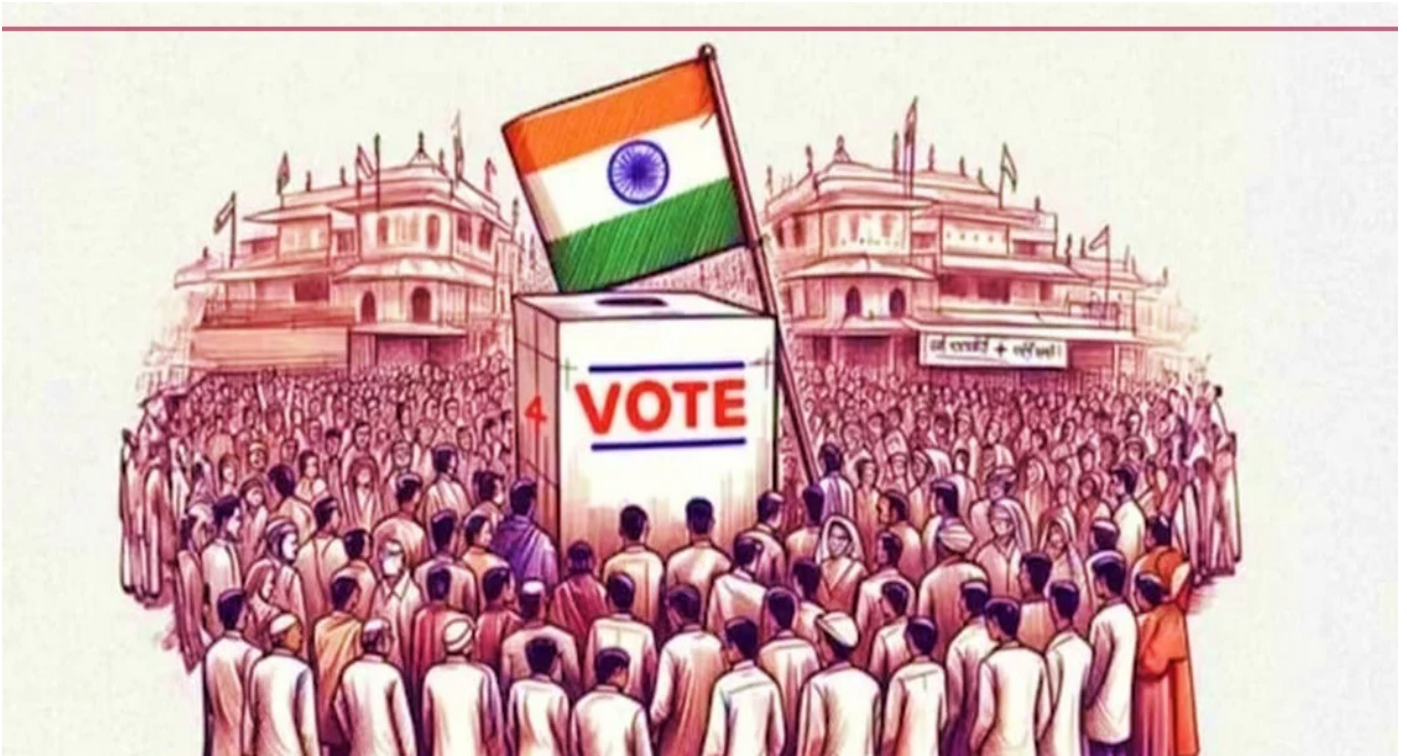
What is the
ultimate objective
of BNP's political
endeavors?



Canada is not the country
of opportunity any more
under the Trudeau Liberal
government

20

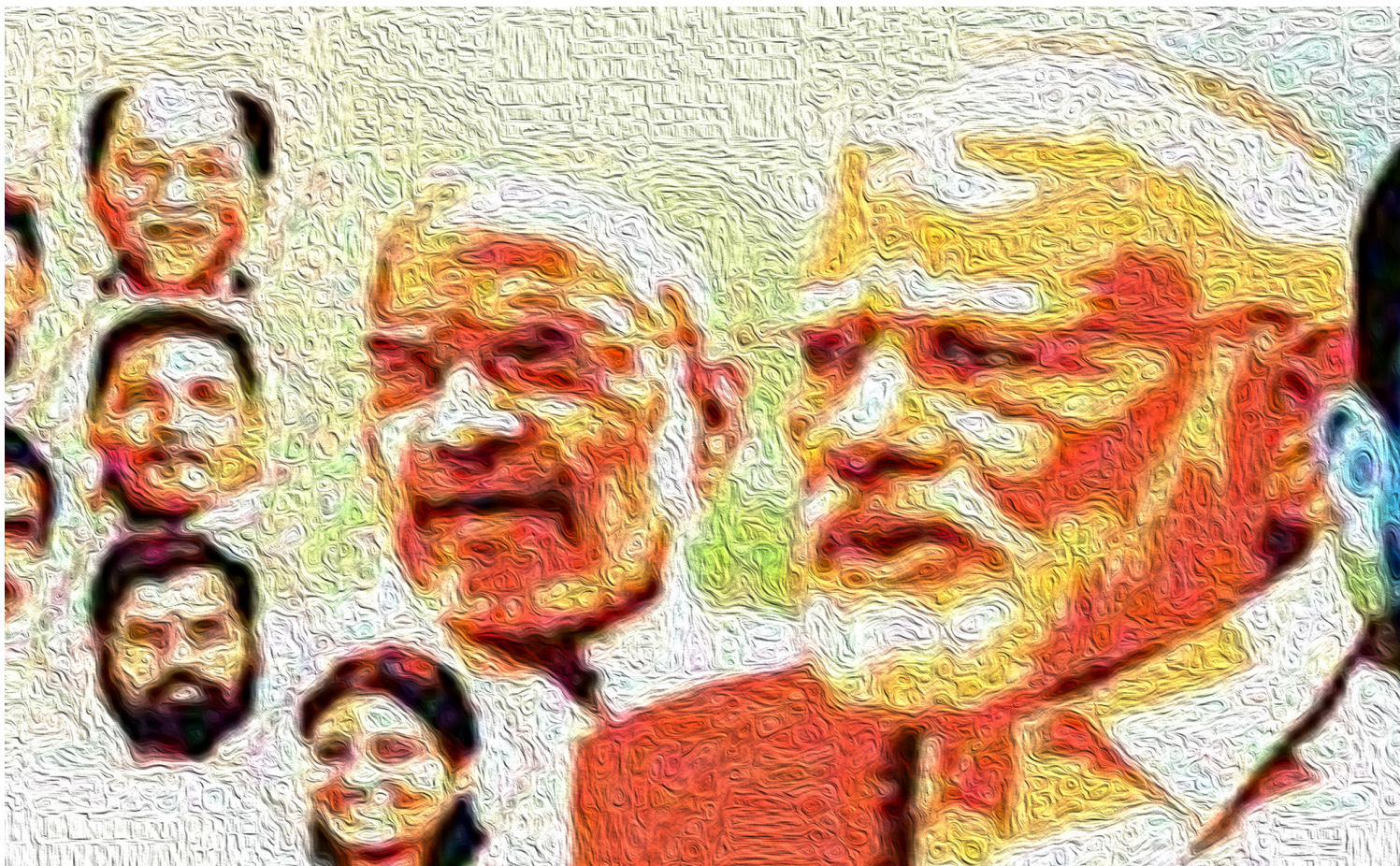
Budget 2024: Can PM-Kisan Augment
30 Female Farmer Income in India?



Vibrant Democracy Dances into Action: Lok Sabha 2024 Comes Alive

By Prashant Tewari, Editor-in-Chief

The upcoming Lok Sabha elections of 2024 in India are anticipated to be one of the most crucial, mammoth, and consequential electoral exercises in recent history. The likely outcome of these polls, the national effect, and the global implications are topics of immense interest and significance.



Likely Outcome of Lok Sabha Polls 2024 Political Landscape:

The 2024 Lok Sabha polls are expected to witness a highly competitive landscape, with major political parties vying for power. The resurgent ruling BJP led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi will seek re-election, while the opposition, primarily the Indian National Congress (INC) and regional parties, will aim to challenge the BJP's dominance.

BJP's Prospects:

The BJP's prospects in the 2024 polls are influenced by various factors such as its performance in governance, economic policies, social initiatives, majority supremacy, and leadership under PM Modi. The party's ability to address key issues like unemployment, economic recovery post-pandemic, and national security will significantly impact its electoral performance.

Opposition Challenges:

The opposition, particularly the INC and regional parties, faces the chal-

lenge of presenting a united front against the BJP. Coalition politics, alliances, and strategic electoral campaigns will play a crucial role in determining the opposition's strength and impact. A lack of credible leadership may pose a serious threat to the opposition's chances of returning to power.

Regional Dynamics:

Regional dynamics in states like Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Bihar will be pivotal. The performance of regional parties and their alliances will shape the overall outcome of the elections, with state-level issues and leadership influencing voter sentiments.

Emerging Players:

The emergence of new political players, youth-led movements, and issue-based campaigns adds complexity to the electoral landscape. Factors such as social media influence, digital campaigning, and youth engagement will be significant in shaping voter preferences.

National Effect of Lok Sabha Polls 2024 Policy Direction:

The outcome of the 2024 polls will determine the policy direction of the Indian government for the next term. Key areas such as economic reforms, social welfare schemes, infrastructure development, health-care, and education will be influenced by the electoral mandate.

Stability vs. Change:

The national effect of the polls will reflect whether voters prioritize continuity and stability under the incumbent government or seek change and new leadership. This choice will impact governance, decision-making, and long-term policy agendas.

Federal-Union Relations:

The relationship between the central government and states will be shaped by the electoral outcome. Cooperative federalism, state autonomy, and center-state coordination on issues like GST, agriculture reforms, and healthcare policies will be impacted.



Economic Impact:

The stock market, investor confidence, business sentiments, and economic growth trajectory will respond to the election results. Clarity on economic policies, fiscal measures, and regulatory frameworks will influence market dynamics and investment flows.

Social Cohesion:

The electoral outcome will also impact social cohesion, communal harmony, and cultural narratives. The government's approach to diversity, inclusivity, and social justice will be reflected in policies related to religion, caste, gender equality, and minority rights.

Global Implications of Lok Sabha Polls 2024 Foreign Policy Alignment:

The electoral mandate will shape India's foreign policy priorities, diplomatic engagements, and international relations. Alignment with global powers, strategic partnerships, trade agreements, and geopolitical strategies will be influenced by the new government's agenda.

Global Trade and Investment:

The global business community will closely monitor the election results for insights into India's trade policies, market reforms, and investment opportunities. Clarity on economic vision, regulatory stability, and ease of doing business will impact global trade relations.

Climate and Sustainability:

India's stance on climate change, renewable energy initiatives, environmental policies, and sustainable development goals will be under scrutiny post-election. Commitments to global climate accords, green technologies, and conservation efforts will have international ramifications.

Security and Defense Cooperation:

The geopolitical landscape, regional security challenges, defense partnerships, and counter-terrorism strategies will be influenced by the new government's security agenda. Collaboration with global defense allies, arms procurement, and military modernization will be key areas of focus.

Multilateral Engagements:

India's role in multilateral forums, United Nations initiatives, global health governance, and humanitarian efforts will be impacted by the election outcome. Participation in international forums, peacekeeping missions, and global leadership roles will reflect India's foreign policy priorities.

In conclusion, the Lok Sabha polls of 2024 hold immense significance in shaping India's domestic policies, national direction, and global engagements. The likely outcome of these polls, their national effect, and global implications underscore the critical juncture at which India stands in its democratic journey.

The Divine Verdict: Ram Mandir's Legal Triumph and Cultural Resurgence in India

By. Karthikeya Kothari

It's the triumph of lord Ram, the Hindu god who fought many battles with the mortals and divine once upon a time, won a 500-year-long legal battle, to survive eternally as a deity in the magnificent Ram Mandir in Ayodhya city in Uttar Pradesh, India and also, within the contemplation of millions of Indian minds where he is a source of hope and virtuous life values. Ram Lalla, or child Ram declared as a juristic person, a non-human legal entity with legal recognition, and is entitled to rights and duties similar to mortals. Hence, the deity is the main petitioner in the filed suit for the claim of the disputed land. The Ram Mandir construction controversy in Ayodhya has implications on various aspects of In-

dian society, including secularism, law, and economy, and is an acid test our sacred democracy is subjected to. The 5-member Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court of India, in its unique verdict on the Ayodhya dispute on November 9, 2019, allowed Hindus to build a temple on the holy site. The court also promised an alternative 5 acres of land to raise a Mosque or similar shrine to the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board and Nirmohi Akhada to compensate for the demolished Babri Masjid. Although the applauded verdict also raised concerns about provoking law and order disturbances and communal violence in sensitive zones, these were deftly handled by the central and Uttar Pradesh governments, sometimes

also requiring the imposition of Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure code and observation of compliance to law was made sure. To many intellectuals, Bharat, a secular country, an epitome of religious tolerance and acceptance, seems to transform paradoxically from a secular to a sectarian state with a hint of fascism, strongly supported by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Shiv Sena with many monetary contributions also given by influentials like Morari Bapu, past President Shri Ram Nath Kovind, Yogi Aditya Nath, and many more, with reins in hands of the contemporary government. Other political parties may fear vote bank diversion upon their slightest support. Ram Janmabhumi construction, costing a whopping 1000 Cr or



more, being managed by The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust receives a constant inflow of donations from all over the world. Our honorable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, and many dignitaries from all spheres shall attend the inaugural ceremony. Lord Ram doesn't mind the nature and number of attendees and absentees, till the event promotes the inclusiveness of a larger and diverse humanity. The four Shankaracharyas will be blessing it from their respective abodes. I recall some examples of the dismal state of secularism in India making us seriously ponder over the implementation of our fundamental rights in light of secularism. Pew Research Centre, through its polls and various research work in the last couple of years ranked India as the fourth worst country

among 198 nations known for religious intolerance. The issues of Kashmiri Pandits, forced religious conversions, reservations, and minority issues, are other burning examples of secularism under siege. Will the event lessen the gravity of the above? Time shall reveal. What about the minorities and all other castes in India that watch the idealized extravaganza avidly shouldered by the present Government? Although the compensatory measures for the historical demolition have been aptly made for the Muslim community, the sentimental erosion can never be compensated for. Every Indian ponders over the far-reaching social, legal economic, and democratic implications of the construction of Ram Mandir. Our Chandrayaan rover is busy collecting the moon dust, and

we are content with the holy ash Bhabhoot of lord Ram blessing us. [I call it AI] Amazing India! Well, goddess Laxmi and lord Kuber would be showering plenty through its devotees and Ayodhya shall be bestowed with economic potentials of all orders. Expect a 7-star welcome into God's terrain and spend wholeheartedly for the sake of idol of ideals! A boost to small-scale industries, tourism, transport, literature, and endless opportunities to residents shall usher and propagate the glory of our sacred imagination through physical form, and it may be even through a tiny toy Ram! The sole purpose of the Ramjanma Bhoomi restoration is not only religious but a global recognition of the efforts of the current leaders and opening a new vista and invitation for cultural exchange. A positive



response is expected in the future. Live webcasts, rallies, and chariot processions will mark the momentous occasion worldwide. India celebrates with the world on 22nd January 2024. Lord Rama, incorporated into robotics, animations, effigies, laser shows, fancy dresses, replicas, and all possible forms shall again prove the supremacy of the virtual in this era too. A secular and inclusive society with harmony in all aspects ushering financial and psychosocial growth is the desired habitat of the contemporary youth. The leaders have to be answerable to them and accept the cosmopolitan culture adopted by the Indian youth that thinks beyond religion and borders that global exposure has infused them with. A 'pizza prasad' isn't any surprise for an amalgam of generations that stand before lord Rama and receive it. There is certainly no place for communal violence, discriminatory practices, and religious intolerance often used as tools for power, as witnessed in Indian history. As a student, I would not

agree with the fact that this move shall raise religious schism in our country as a well accomplished dynamic youth exists, that still has roots in family and observe their respective religions. However, theoretical untoward possibilities raise the need for a legal exercise. A mentality of respect and non-interference in any religion by a single person or a political party through thought, speech, or action should prevail and boundaries for its breach should be set. Strict penalties should be imposed on any anti-democratic activity. We must be aware of the Places of Worship Provisions Act 1991 specifically section 4(2) which ensures legal sustenance and non-conversion of the existing religious architecture post-independence. The Campaign finance laws that regulate money obtained through politics and elections prohibit political parties from receiving donations from religious organizations must become more stringent. A continuous track on NGOs with a religious or philanthropic motive should mandate the submission of

their audit report periodically. The Daan Patras can be converted to local banks, and accountability of the 'Chadhawas' in the form of currency, metal, food etc. 'blessed' by lord Rama should be fairly utilized! This is another Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan guided by a religious force. A lot has been debated on the inclusion of our glorious past into our school textbooks, and this mega event shall be discussed for decades to come where the very essence of secularism should resonate with the principles of equality, fraternity, and liberty. This surely will be acknowledged happily by Ram Lalla. I sincerely hope that we set an example of religious harmony for the world to witness and cite. May the star 'Bhabhoot' fall on all of us.

The existing social structure or feminism?

By. Srishti Gautam

In her article “Sindoor, mangalsutra or feminism” dated January 7, 2024, Adrija Roychowdhury mentioned the dilemmas a woman, especially a feminist woman faces when it comes to confirming societal expectations, intrinsic to which lie ideals of patriarchy. The dilemma was about, on one hand, being a feminist and on the other hand, getting married and embracing the symbols of patriarchy by ornamenting oneself with mangal sutra and sindoor. Patriarchy is at the very heart of social structure and for a feminist, to fight it completely would mean refusing to exist in the existing structure itself. For a woman feminist, she has two options when it comes to getting married- either get yourself ‘accepted’ and ‘adjusted’ in society by getting married in the same patriarchal way or be deviant, refuse to get married and face prejudice, and social alienation for the rest of your life. This won’t have any effect on the existing social structure, but would rather lead to further alienation of the very concept of feminism itself from the mainstream society.

I am a 21-year-old feminist girl, who at this young age, has not seen enough of the world. But what I have been seeing since childhood, is people getting married as this is ultimately what they do. So, I have had this in my mind, since always, that except for me getting married someday, everything else is uncertain. Now, I am an adult, but also a feminist. So, the idea of marriage

doesn’t please me anymore. And every once in a while, the same dilemma faced by Adrija Roychowdhury haunts me. I have aspirations and I have dreams. But even if they are limited to some extent by the requirements of societal norms and values, every once in a while, I ask myself, “Why am I working so hard? What do I wish to achieve? Is it just a ‘respectable’ job that I want for myself? Isn’t getting married my ultimate fate or goal? Or, do I want to do something more? Do I not want to think more, think differently, and do things differently? And if I do, can I do it along with confirming societal norms?”

In that light, I would like to bring attention to Amartya Sen’s capability approach to human development, which stresses providing people with choices of functionings (which form the state of ‘being and doing’ or, in other words, which means providing one with the choices of living a life which one considers meaningful for her/him/themselves) in the form of capability. “Capability”, when read with feminism, for a woman, cannot be manifested just in eliminating poverty or generating skills, education, employment, equal wages for equal work, or equality before the law, and so on. Making existing social structures and societal norms suitable for women to have the freedom to not just live the way they want to, but to also be able to think outside the considerations of those norms is equally important. One might ask, “But how can

we achieve this?” as I said earlier, bringing absolute structural changes within the existing social structures is not feasible. But we must also remember that the forms of existing structures are also dynamic and not static or rigid. This can be understood by the examples of legally doing away with certain discriminatory social practices in India, like the Sati System in 1829, raising the marriage age of girls to 18 years in 1976, and the recent prohibition on triple talaq in 2019. So, developing capability for women in this respect might not even require an overall refusal of the social system in the form of revolution. But when we women decide to do away with all the discriminatory practices imposed upon ourselves from this day itself, the foremost thing that we need is unity among ourselves. All of us need to join hands in our fight against the patriarchal structure of society. That will save us from being alienated for being deviant and also keep the cause of feminism alive to bring about desired structural changes to realize our capabilities in a real sense.

Pandit Nehru: The Immortal Moribund Redeemer

By. Nabeel Kolothumthodi

As the country's befouled political landscape evolves around Ayodhya, the profound influence of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the begetter of independent India and the architect of the existing nation's democratic ideals cannot easily be forsaken. Whereas, the murky political aura has opened up his party's ideological hollowness and steered the very essence into the opposition's relentless political trap, reigniting debates over secularism and religious identity. The critics argue that the Bharatiya Janata Party's emphasis on Hindutva politics has led to a redefinition of the nation's identity, straying from the inclusive vision envisioned by the Pandit.

Nehru's vision of the infant nation was deeply enrooted to the values of democracy and secularism. Pandit, as a Fabian socialist who was also admiringly impressed by the emergence of the socialist superpower in the north managed to embrace the coexistence of religious communities and emphasised the importance of religious harmony. It was a backbreaking task for a statesman who faced a devilish religious separation during the independence. His charisma and ideological backbone succoured him in the making of a

disbanded nation.

Nehru was the prime minister when the Ayodhya dispute of Ram Janmabhoomi firmed its roots. He already had the assorted princely state's dilemma to deal with. His views on the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi dispute too were in line with his commitment to India's secular fabric. In the context of Ayodhya, he aimed to maintain a secular character for the newborn promising nation, advocating for the protection of religious sites of all communities.

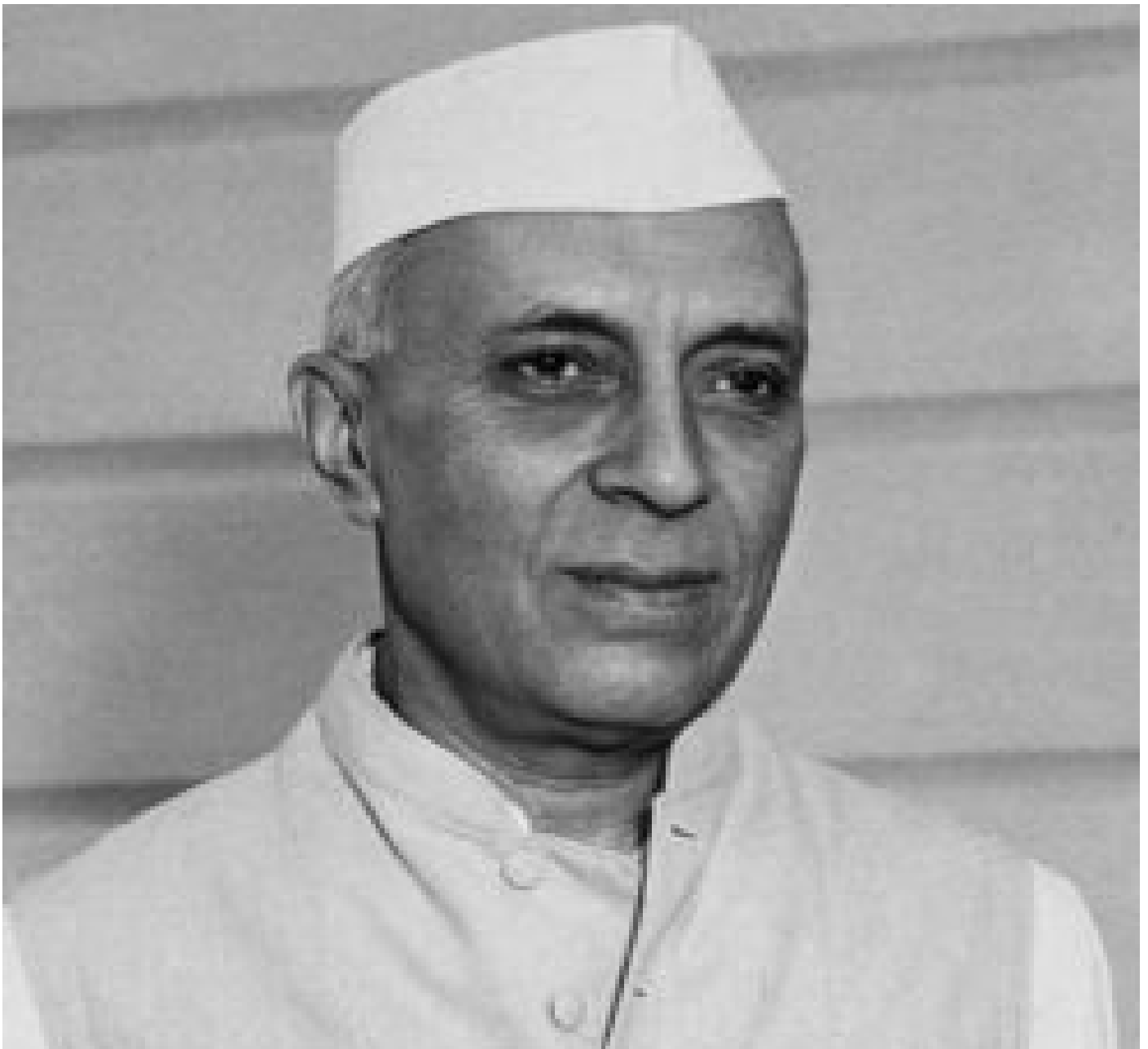
Ayodhya has been a continuing dispute topic since the 1940s. After independence, from the followed Ram-Janmabhoomi movement, the BJP took up their potent trump card against the then so-called "secular" party. They managed to construct a narrative that, the government explicitly favouring Muslims by opposing Hindu interests to perpetuate a secular badge. Congress after Smt. Gandhi could not even handle this political trap forged by the then "truly secular" Bharatiya Janata Party. They could even posterize the "pseudo-secular" imprint on Congress through lustrous propaganda.

On the night of December 23, 1949, two idols, representing Lord Ram and Sita, mysteriously appeared inside the central dome

of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. The placement of these idols led to conflicting claims, with some asserting a miraculous appearance and others contending that a group had surreptitiously introduced them. This incident heightened communal tensions in Ayodhya and across the United Province (as Uttar Pradesh was then known).

Govind Ballabh Pant, a seasoned Congress leader, was the Chief Minister of the United Province at that time. Concerned about the unfolding situation, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru urgently communicated with him via telegram regarding the Ayodhya dispute. Nehru expressed his disturbance over the developments, emphasizing the need for his immediate involvement in the matter. In his message, Nehru underscored the potential dangers of the precedent being set in Ayodhya and warned of adverse consequences. Some reports suggest that Nehru additionally penned a note instructing the state government to relocate the idols of Ram Lalla and Sita from the premises of the Babri Masjid.

K.K. Nair, who became a Member of Parliament through Jan Sangh's ticket, was the District Magistrate the while. The nefarious intention of the bureaucrat made the atmosphere belligerent. Even though the



Prime Minister constrained for executive action to remove idols from the mosque through the state government, Nair hung back and dumbly abetted the zealots. From there, events unfolded.

Pandit Nehru was a self-declared atheist, who dreamt of a nation set apart religion from the political penumbra. Till the last breath, Pandit showed his boldness against divisive politics. Expostulated the president against the Somnath temple opening ceremony was a crucial historical juncture. Pandit insisted that the democratic head should steer clear of religious ceremonies.

Invoking the legacy of the

last “messiah” is the only hope for the revival of the contemporary Congress party. The party cannot think of any drastic hopeful strides against the mammoth ruling party without moulding its political position. The recent poll retorts from the Hindi heartland states exhibited the impotence of the party machinery against the hardcore “Hindutva”. It was evident that anything softer would not help anymore.

Apart from the rotten political howlers, where the newly baked schismatic agendas nearing, while the Party navigates through the complexities of contemporary politics, where the historical crossroad demands a trailblazer’s visionary

strategies, Pandit’s vision of a secular, inclusive, and democratic India remains the only suasive approach. Let this not be the history’s impending “what if!”

Nabeel Kolothumthodi is the Parliamentary Associate to a Lok Sabha MP. Views expressed are personal.



What is the ultimate objective of BNP's political endeavors?

By. Farabi Bin Zahir



The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is one of the major political parties in Bangladesh. President Ziaur Rahman founded this party on September 1, 1978. Established by Ziaur Rahman, this party has been in power in Bangladesh four times. In its long journey, BNP did not have a smooth sailing. Especially after the death of Ziaur Rahman, when a large part of the then-BNP joined the Jatiya Party holding the hand of the then-ruler Ershad, BNP had to face a lot of setbacks. But under the leadership of Ziaur Rahman's wife Khaleda Zia, BNP sprang back like a phoenix. By playing an effective role in the anti-autocracy movement, the party again made politics effective and acceptable for them. Continuing in that vein, BNP under the leadership of Khaleda Zia got the opportunity to run the country 3 times. Despite various discussions

or criticisms, the fact remains that BNP has occupied an important place in the history of Bangladesh's politics.

Recently, the political party called BNP is undoubtedly going through a tough time. The party has been out of power for the last 15 years. Naturally, due to being out of power for such a long time, leaders and workers at all levels of the party are facing various kinds of pressure in the political and social spheres. The ability of BNP leaders and workers to provide the necessary financial or social capital is diminishing day by day. In reality, apart from a handful of top leaders, BNP leaders and workers cannot legally fight against these cases.

But why has this situation been created? To answer this question, we have to look back at BNP's rule in 2001-06. At that time, serious allegations of corruption in

various sectors including electricity were brought against the veteran leaders along with the young leaders of the BNP. In that context came the 1/11 government. As part of the non-politics of that 1/11 government, BNP also had to go through a tough time like other political parties. Although they survived that difficult time, BNP has not been able to bounce back.

The party has been out of power for almost fifteen years. Despite repeated attempts, the party has failed to build a successful anti-government movement. Even on many controversial or unpopular decisions of the government, the party failed to unite the people in protest. The protest processions of BNP can be broadly divided into two parts - before Khaleda Zia's imprisonment and after Khaleda Zia's imprisonment. Most of their protests before Khaleda Zia's imprisonment were limited to per-

sonal issues like Khaleda Zia's house or Khaleda Zia's cases. Due to the lack of vigor in their protests at that time, the government was able to easily send Khaleda Zia to jail. When BNP failed to show much resistance while sending its chairperson to jail, it dealt a major blow to BNP. An element of shortsightedness and lack of coordination has been noticed in BNP's protests after Khaleda Zia's imprisonment. Despite getting many opportunities, BNP failed to reap the benefits of protests due to a lack of right decisions at the right time.

If we look at BNP's rally on October 28, we will see that although the non-violent agenda of BNP a few days before the rally had created some excitement among BNP leaders and workers, the violent incidents of the rally meeting put BNP in an awkward position. Some incidents happened in the meeting that also raised questions about BNP in the eyes of the general public. For example, attacks on journalists, attacks on hospitals, attacks on police, etc. It is difficult to understand what BNP wanted to achieve by attacking journalists who went to cover the BNP meeting as part of their professional duty! Again, according to International Humanitarian Law, attacks on hospitals are considered war crimes. By attacking the hospital, what message did BNP want to give to the international community - only the leaders of BNP can best explain! Even before the violent incidents of the rally subsided, a fraudster posing as an advisor to an influential head of state suddenly appeared. Without knowing or inquiring about that fraudster, BNP leaders respectfully brought him in and gave him the opportunity of a press conference. We have seen before how an uncomfortably disturbing situation was created centering a phone

call from an influential leader of a neighboring country or a meeting with the president of that country. Rather than coming out of that uncomfortable situation, the attack on the train added fuel to the fire.

Without the aftermath of the meeting violence subsiding, the party continues with frequent blockades and violent agendas. No matter how BNP tries to explain, it should be remembered that according to the eternal rule, all responsibilities regarding incidents centered around an agenda lies with the owner of that agenda. So when the Moitree Express train was attacked centering this blockade agenda, BNP's image was also tarnished in the neighboring country. We have seen before how an uncomfortably disturbing situation was created centering on a phone call from an influential leader of a neighboring country or a meeting with the president of that country. Rather than coming out of that uncomfortable situation, the attack on the train added fuel to the fire.

The excitement surrounding the recent elections is also coming to an end. The government has held elections fairly smoothly. The new cabinet has been sworn in and taken over responsibilities. Local and foreign powers have also accepted the elections. Finally, with congratulations from the United Nations regarding the elections, BNP has been completely cornered. The foreign friends on whom BNP has pinned so much hope for so long have also explicitly expressed their intention to work with the government, letting go of BNP. Overall, at this moment BNP has no other way but to be immersed in an ocean of frustration. The party called BNP has become quite aimless. If this continues, the road ahead will become

very difficult for BNP.

One thing that needs to be realized is making politics time-befitting. There is no denying the fact that BNP has workers, it has supporters as a party. So to utilize these workers and silent supporters, BNP's leadership will have to make their ideology and work process contemporary. Just because a particular agenda was successful 15 years ago does not mean it will be successful now too - this kind of thinking needs to be got rid of. More attention has to be paid to public-related work processes instead of violent processes. If BNP's policymakers fail to realize this truth, according to the eternal rules of politics, the party will have to pay a heavy price.

(The views expressed are personal to the writer)



World, we have you covered—
from home base to base camp.

Cambium Networks is the only company that
provides a complete wireless fabric technology solution
for Enterprise, IoT and Community Networks.

CambiumNetworks.com



Highest Hotspot on Earth

Cambium e500 serving 900 climbers
and 1500 support staffs.

Common 'Chaotic' Law Admission Test

By. Dr. Shashank Singhal

As the Common Law Admission Test, a common entrance exam for all but one National Law University has almost completed 15 years, it falls short of a fair, competitive exam by a vast distance.

1. Frequent Changes in Pattern/Question Paper Format OR Mode of Examination: The Consortium of National Law Universities (CNLU) as a body and CLAT as an exam are among the most uncertain examination-conducting bodies in the country. They have changed the pattern or mode of the examination as many as seven times in the last 15 years. Firstly, it was altered for CLAT 2009 right after the exam was conducted for the first time. Then again, the pattern was changed for CLAT 2013 when negative marking was introduced. For CLAT 2015, the mode of the examination was changed to a computer-based test (CBT). It was again shifted to an offline mode for the CLAT 2019 exam as there was heavy litigation on irregularities in the CBT mode confirmed by the High Court. Then, in 2018, a Consortium of National Law Universities was found, which was all but helpful. Again, for CLAT 2020, the pattern was changed six months before the scheduled exam, and then the mode of examination was changed two months before the scheduled exam (from offline to

online). Again then, when there were alleged issues with the CBT mode for CLAT 2020, it was again shifted to the offline mode from CLAT 2021 onwards. When this was insufficient, the exam timing was changed from May/June to December from CLAT 2023.

If we feel this is the end of changes, the question paper format was again changed for CLAT 2024 (five months before the scheduled exam).

The same has happened for AILET, where they changed the exam pattern six months before 2022 and again in 2024 (this time four months before the scheduled exam).

2. Not sticking to the Pattern OR sample questions: This year, for CLAT 2024, they have done the same again by giving as many as 40 questions out of 120, not as per the pattern. When 33.33% of the paper is not based on the Question Paper pattern given by the CLAT authorities and the sample questions provided, how can we not expect merit to be compromised in the exam?

In CLAT 2024, the Consortium didn't stick to the pattern at multiple levels. In the section on General Knowledge, as many answers to 20 out of 28 questions were given in the passage. The section lost its relevance as General Knowledge means that the candidate's prior knowledge of events will be tested,

but that didn't happen. It just became a section of Reading Comprehension. Also, such a thing should have been mentioned in the pattern, and such a thing was not there in the four sets of sample questions given by the consortium. This also helped the students who had yet to prepare for the exam to do better than the ones who had put in the amount of hard work. This is primarily because a student who has gone through last year's papers and sample questions will never go through the passage for GK, but the novice will.

Also, in the section on Legal Reasoning, it was explicitly mentioned in the pattern that a set of facts would follow the passage. The same thing was present in all the sample questions for the Consortium for CLAT 2024. But on the day of the paper, only 12 out of 32 questions were fact-based, and the rest were just questions from the passage (like that of Reading Comprehension), which made the section no different from the section of English, i.e. Reading Comprehension.

All this is against the basic common law principle of the doctrine of reasonable expectation, which is taught to all law students and applied in all cases worldwide. 3. Exam of Elite: The Chief Justice of India has mentioned on a couple of occasions:

"The CLAT examination,



a crucial gateway to the legal profession, is conducted entirely in English. By using English as the medium of examination, we are essentially favouring an urban-centric approach and creating a significant bias against individuals from rural or marginalised backgrounds.” (On November 26, 2023) CLAT has become an exam of the elite for multiple reasons. Firstly, the exam is conducted only in English, whereas all the major national exams are conducted in various languages. Also, the paper (especially from CLAT 2020) is designed in such a way that it suits only elite English medium students. This is because 66.66 percent of the paper comprises reading comprehension, which is only in English, and it unfairly takes out not only all the Hindi medium students but also most of the English medium students from tier 3 and tier 4 cities. It also doesn't take into consideration all those students who are studying in vernacular languages.

The exam cannot hide in

the garb that English is also necessary in NLUs. The fact is that even the medium of instruction in all IITs, NITs, and medical colleges is English, and the entrance exam is still conducted in multiple languages. The same holds for them as well.

Except for the Supreme Court, none of the courts, including all High Courts, have English as a mandatory language in the system.

Last year, in the Delhi High Court, when the Consortium expressed its so-called “inability” to conduct the exam in multiple languages, NTA offered to perform the same exam in various languages (not only in Hindi).

4. Consortium being a Kitty Party: Lastly, all this confusion and concurrent changes (for no reason). The consortium is a standard body (having its head office in NLSIU Bangalore) made in 2018 after the instructions given by the Court and the issues that came forward in CLAT 2018. The Consor-

tium acts like a kitty party where a kitty is announced every year, and a different person/s is made the President of the Consortium and the Convenor of CLAT 2024. This is the primary reason for the lack of consistency in the CLAT exam. Due to all the above-mentioned reasons, we feel that the National Testing Agency (NTA) should conduct an exam like CLAT, as it has already offered to do in an affidavit to the Delhi High Court rather than the Consortium of National Law Universities.

Canada is not the country of opportunity any more under the Trudeau Liberal government

By. Surjit Singh Flora

Starting on January 1, 2024, Canada will implement substantial changes to its study permit program for international students. These changes include a reduction in the number of study permits issued, limitations on working hours, and an increase in the financial requirement for study permit applicants. The cost-of-living financial requirement will be raised from the current amount of \$10,000 to \$20,635. Additionally, applicants will need to demonstrate sufficient funds to cover their first year of tuition fees and travel expenses. These adjustments aim to enhance the preparedness of international students for their lives in Canada. The minister asserts that the current situation has reached a point where further action is necessary.

Indeed, the truth is, these changes were made due to the fact that there are too many students in Canada, no proper housing arrangements, no jobs, and Canadians, including foreign students, depending on food banks, while many food banks denied catering to international students last month. After that, many Canadians made noise about why these international students were depending on food banks while Canadian immigration policy required \$10,000 while they studied.

Blame lies with the government and loan companies that



exploit students for visa money. The government will be increasing the student permit fee starting on January 1, 2024. Proof of funds is required annually along with tax returns. However, this is still insufficient. Once a student is approved for a study visa and arrives in Canada, they will repay the loan, and their bank account will be left with very little funds. The government must make it mandatory for them to provide proof of their bank statement every month to demonstrate that they have sufficient funds in their account.

Also, life's unpredictable, and while students sometimes need a helping hand so do we. Don't punish the good for the bad and the flawed.

However, Canada was once a popular destination for immigrants seeking to earn a living, but

the situation has deteriorated due to these problems. From there, the immigrants have either chosen to move to other countries or return to their homeland. The number of immigrants entering Canada has been steadily rising since the 1980s, according to a recent survey by the Conference Board of Canada for the Institute for Canadian Citizenship (ICC), titled "The Leaky Bucket: A Study of Immigrant Retention Trends in Canada." This trend gained momentum in both 2017 and 2019, resulting in a significant 31 percent increase in average revenue. The number increased after COVID-19 as the economic condition of Canadians generally declined.

The Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) has released their analysis of the Liberal fall minibus budget, which can be summa-

alized as follows: prices are increasing, debt is increasing, taxes are increasing, and time is running out. After eight years under Justin Trudeau's leadership, Canadians are facing the challenge of managing a significant increase in national debt, amounting to one hundred billion dollars. This surge in debt has contributed to higher inflation rates, resulting in a situation where the government's wealth has grown while the financial well-being of the general population has declined.

In their analysis, the PBO reported that the deficit will be \$8.5 billion worse this year than the Liberals promised, meaning more Canadian tax dollars will be spent servicing interest costs on Trudeau's debt. On top of this, they will add another \$20.7 billion in inflationary debt, despite warnings from the Governor of the Bank of Canada that this will make everything more expensive.

Justin Trudeau's uncontrolled spending will keep inflation and interest rates higher for longer, pushing already struggling Canadians over the edge. And this reckless spending risks a mortgage meltdown on the \$900 billion of mortgages that will renew over the next three years.

Immigration and reverse migration hurt Canada's population balance. In 2010, 14.1% of Canada's population was 65 or older, according to Statistics Canada. By 2022, it had jumped to 19%. Migration disruption could fuel these trends. In 1966, 7.8% of Canadians were over 65. In 2022, it dropped to 3.4%, and by 2050, it will likely be below 3%. This affects government funds by having fewer taxpayers and more people relying on support. More elderly, more strain on healthcare.

Canada's aging population poses a big challenge for policy-

makers. Canada actively encourages young immigrants, offering various immigration options such as granting permanent resident status to international students after they finish their studies. This approach remains popular among policymakers. Canada will welcome 485K immigrants in 2024 and 500K in 2025. Canada welcomes skilled workers, temporary workers, and international students as immigrants. Each worker faces unique challenges. Skilled workers in Canada: excitement turns to challenges. Skilled individuals struggle to find suitable jobs and often settle for low-paying work to provide for their families.

America prefers to hire educated people, even if they do not have the same educational qualifications and experience as other immigrants.

The process of getting a license is quite complicated and expensive and takes a lot of time to complete. The influx of international students increased after Canada eased the rules to allow part-time work immediately after school admission. This also benefited the Canadian economy immensely. By 2022, more than 8 million study permit holders will be enrolled in educational institutions. In 2022, the contribution of international students to Canada's gross domestic product was estimated to reach \$22 billion, helping to create nearly 200,000 jobs.

International students are usually paid the minimum wage, which helps small and retail entrepreneurs run their businesses. After completing two years of education and one year of work experience in Canada (1560 hours), a person is eligible to apply for Permanent Residence (PR) but the PR is awarded based on Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS) scores. goes CRS is a points-based system

that is used to measure one's score and rank in the Express Entry pool. The CRS score depends on language, education, work, and age. The CRS cut-off varies in each PR draw round. 2022 saw CRS scores ranging from 491 to 557. The cut-off price depends on applicants, scores, and housing decisions. On October 23, 2023, 214,873 applications were in the pool. Only 3,600 applicants with scores of 431 or higher were invited for the draw on October 26. Applicants must wait a long time to earn more points. They'll be temporary workers with a three-year permit. Earn extra points by getting a job offer or LMIA approval. There were few applications and many rejections.

The government sometimes lowers the CRS score requirement, like in 2021, when it dropped to 75, helping many applicants. Exemptions remain uncertain in terms of amount and timing. International students often go back home. Indian students wait and try various tactics to boost their CRS score, but it's not for everyone. CBC News reported that half of international students had no tax records after finishing their studies, indicating they likely went back home. According to an ICC survey that the same channel cited, 23% of educated new Canadians intend to leave the country in the next two years.

High living costs here make migrants give up on their dreams. Canada's inflation is squeezing wallets as wages remain stagnant. Canada offers immigration, refugee, and citizenship programs but lacks support for their long-term maintenance. The road to residency is a maze of rules and surprises.

Surjit Singh Flora is a veteran journalist and freelance writer based in Brampton Canada



India's Confused Right Wing

By. Shashank Shukla

Since the inception of the NDA Government in 2014, India's right-wing has consistently performed well across all sectors of society. Both print and electronic media have been significantly influenced by this ideology. The bureaucracy and academia have, to some extent, either shifted their political leanings or have begun to accept ideologies they previously rejected. This trend is not confined to India alone; it has also been observed in Europe and the Americas. Figures like Javier Milei in Argentina, Meloni in Italy, Wilders in the Netherlands, Trump and Vivek in the US, among others, exemplify this global phenomenon.

As a right-wing conservative commentator, it's imperative to highlight certain double standards prevalent within India's acclaimed right-wing movement, stemming from a misunderstanding of the

concepts of right and left. The recent statement by India's Prime Minister, boasting an increase in the number of public sector undertakings from 234 to 254, hints at a shift towards socialism, departing from the earlier ethos of free enterprise. The BJP's National Spokesperson, Sudhanshu Trivedi, suggests that the party aligns neither with the right nor the left but identifies as "nationalist." However, it's noteworthy that the BJP is a member of the Asia Pacific Democracy Union, chaired by Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickramasinghe, an organization advocating for freedom and free enterprise. The BJP's past affiliation with the International Democratic Union, comprising conservative and right-wing political parties, further underscores their ideological stance.

Despite these affiliations, prominent figures within the BJP,

such as Cabinet Minister Smriti Irani, openly identify as right-wing. This ambiguity suggests a lack of clarity within India's right-wing movement, perhaps driven more by a desire to retain power than adherence to a specific ideology. Many of the government's policies lean towards socialism, raising questions about their ideological coherence. Notably, prominent economists within the government refrain from advocating for a market-driven economy, indicating a departure from traditional right-wing principles.

Emerging right-wing voices in public life, including practicing advocates of intellectual property rights, professors at prestigious institutions like JNU, and retired IAS officers, have taken to platforms like YouTube to promote conservative ideologies in India. However, their focus often revolves around criticism of Islam and the



glorification of cultural supremacy, overlooking nuances of historical events. While reclaiming cultural heritage from past invasions is important, it's equally crucial to acknowledge historical transformations, such as the conversion of the Jewish Temple into the Al Aqsa Mosque or Constantinople's transition to Istanbul.

Additionally, the selective support for global conflicts, such as remaining impartial in the Ukraine-Russia conflict, despite Russia being a socialist country, and considering the fact that Palestine has never recognized Israel as a nation, while also backing Israel in the Israel-Palestine conflict, highlights inconsistencies within the right-wing narrative.

Moreover, recent incidents, such as the targeting of minorities in India following Hamas attacks and the questioning of Congress's resolution on Palestine's statehood, underscore the complexities of India's right-wing discourse. The narrative often shifts blame onto the bureaucracy for controversial deci-

sions, distancing the beloved Prime Minister from accountability. This evasion of responsibility contrasts sharply with the image of strong leadership projected by PM Modi. Furthermore, while criticizing Congress, right-wing ideologues fail to address their own government's support for Palestine, thereby highlighting the inconsistency in their stance. If the Government of India has taken an independent approach and supported the status quo between Israel and Palestine, it raises questions as to why similar demands are not made of the Congress party.

In essence, the BJP, once perceived as a proponent of neoliberalism, has shown little adherence to these principles since 2014. Criticism from political strategist Prashant Kishore regarding the delayed implementation of lateral entry schemes further reflects this departure from traditional right-wing policies. While the government has distributed appointment letters to counter opposition narratives, it fails to address the un-

derlying issue of unemployment through a shift towards a business-driven society.

It's worth acknowledging the contributions of leaders like PV Narasimha Rao, who, despite leading the Congress, a party with socialist leanings, implemented significant economic reforms. However, the current right-wing populist government in India, along with its supporters in various sectors, including media, bureaucracy, academia, and legal circles, fails to articulate a coherent political and economic ideology.

In conclusion, India's right-wing populist government and its affiliates across different sectors exhibit a lack of clarity regarding their ideological stance. They have failed to effectively communicate their political and economic conservatism, leading to inconsistencies and contradictions within their discourse.



The Ubiquitous Influence of Social Media and the Peril of Human Estrangement

By. Farabi Bin Zahir

The influence of social media has become ubiquitous in modern society. While platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have enhanced communication between individuals, there are growing concerns about their impacts on human relationships and mental health.

A key issue is that social media facilitates superficial connections rather than deep bonds.

Since ancient times, humans have been inherently social creatures. However excessive use of social media has coincided with a decline in intimacy and meaningful relationships. Families living under the same roof can feel disconnected, as if “residing on isolated islands”.

Segregation and intolerance appear to be increasing in society, reflected also on social media. On Facebook, there

is rampant misuse, with people readily attacking others when commenting on sensitive topics like religion or gender. “Virtual public humiliation” in the name of trolling has become common, especially against women. Thus, social media mirrors some of the most negative mindsets in society.

Studies reveal social media’s harms, especially for youth mental health. A Lancet study of 10,000 UK teens found social me-



dia disrupted sleep, exercise and self-image. A Royal Society for Public Health survey showed platforms like Instagram worsened anxiety and body image issues. Two-thirds of teens surveyed said online bullying was exacerbated by social media.

Another negative trend is declining reading habits, as social media eats up free time. Surveys of Indian youth showed most text read beyond textbooks is tabloids and social media updates. Over 60% of Pakistani university students admitted spending excessive time on platforms like Facebook and Twitter, leaving little time for books.

When not reading books, students are often just chatting or networking. A study at two Bangladesh universities found 78% of students preferred spending lei-

sure time on social media over reading books. Shockingly, a third admitted not reading any books daily.

The issues go beyond reading. Fundamental aspects of humanity like emotions, creativity and contemplation are being eroded by social media obsession. The pursuit of knowledge and aesthetic appreciation is diminished. Individuality is giving way to conformity, as popularity on platforms becomes paramount. Immediacy and reactivity are championed over profound analysis.

This threatens to transform humans into “unsocial beings”, disconnected from selves and wisdom nurtured since primitive times. While social media has a role in modern life, vigilance is needed to prevent its misuse. Its strengths for genuine social con-

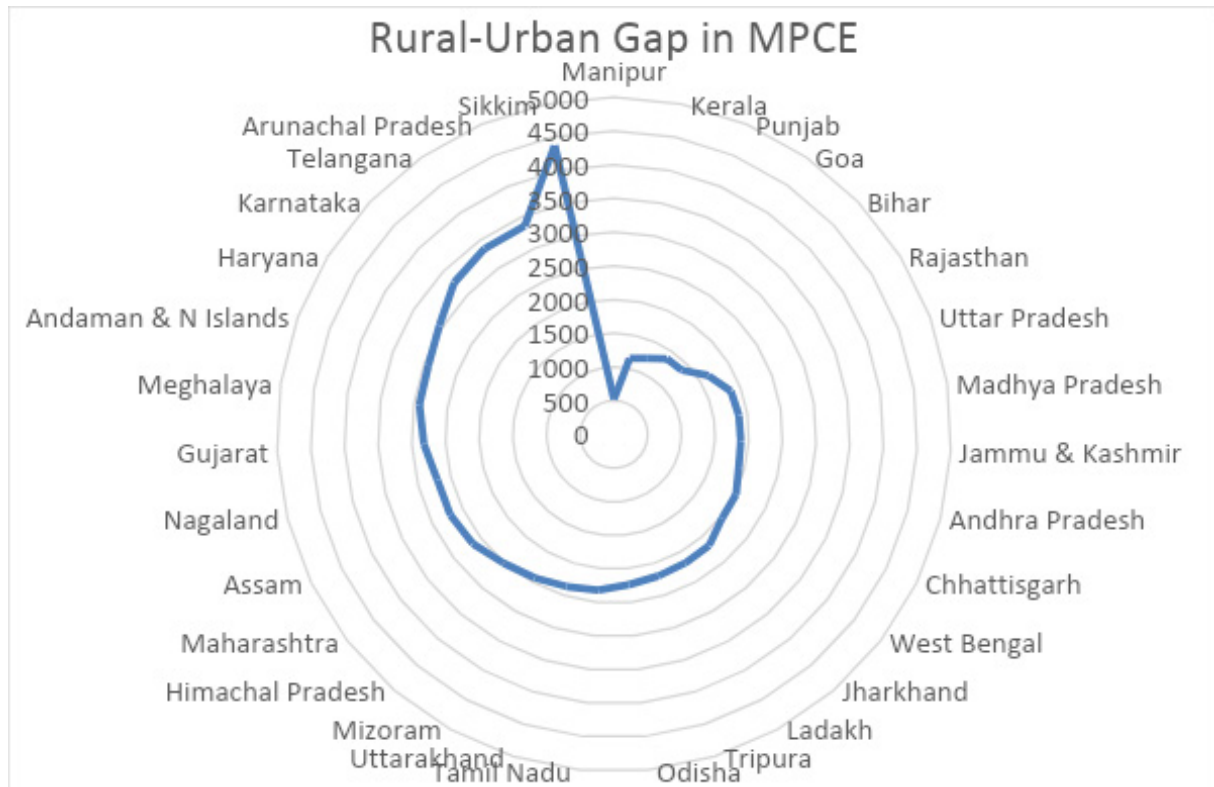
nection, free speech and knowledge-sharing must be nurtured. Teaching responsible use and digital literacy should begin early.

Mental health effects like addiction and anxiety, especially among youth, need addressing. Media literacy programmes can counter misinformation and promote civility online. Law enforcement cooperation can curb criminal activities on platforms. Ultimately, social media should enhance, not supplant, the enduring social nature of humankind. With vigilance and collective effort, technology can be steered as a force for social good.

The Consumption Conundrum:

Insights from Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2022-23 with focus on Education and Health

By. Dr. Sandhya Dubey



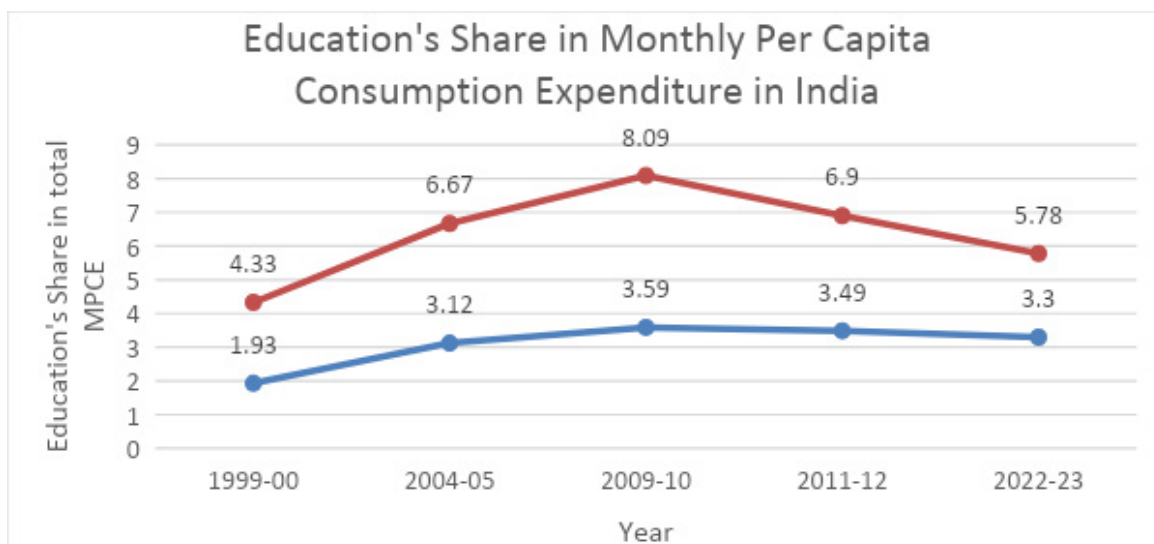
Source: Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (2022-23), NSSO Survey, MOSPI, GOI

Analysis of household consumption surveys is integral for discerning the underpinnings of an economy—its trajectory, its resilience, and its demand potential. As consumption drives a substantial part of economic growth, these surveys unravel the narrative of an economy's strength and the well-being of its citizens. The latest household consumption survey 2022-23 by MOSPI, NSSO presents a striking development: a near doubling of consumption expenditure from 2011-12. This leap underscores not just inflationary

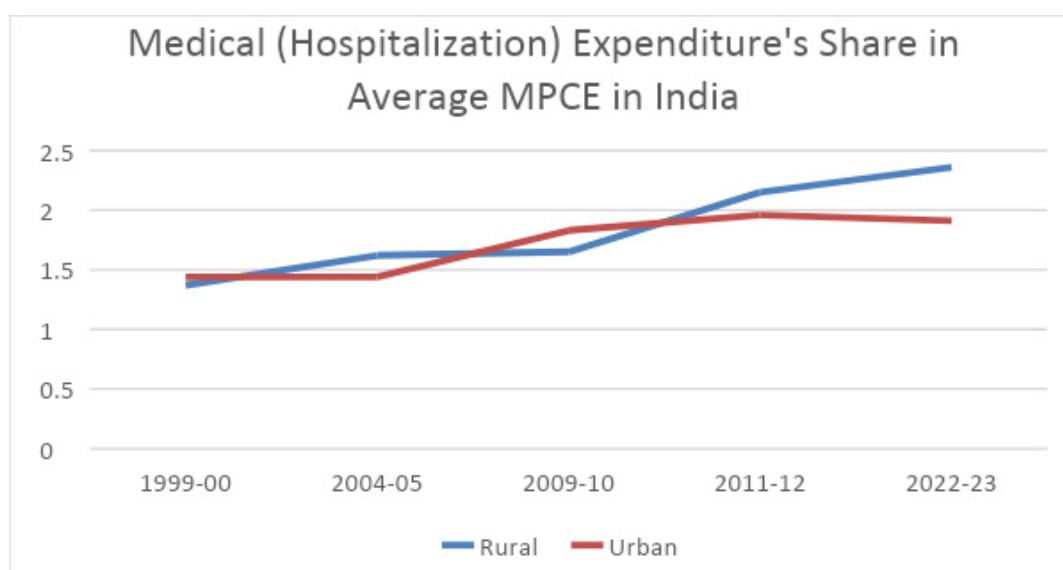
trends but possibly also reflects improved living standards and consumption capabilities of Indian households. Such consumption growth is a testament to an economy's expanding potency, often heralding sustained developmental progress.

However, the widening rural-urban gap in consumption reveals underlying structural disparities. Rural India, with more frugal means, contrasts sharply with urban folks where consumption habits are louder. This split is a salient reminder of the differing priorities and access to resources,

which policy must aim to bridge. Inequalities in consumption weave through the societal fabric, with survey data illustrating disparities amongst social groups and regions. Steeper ascendancy in consumption in more affluent states stands juxtaposed to modest increments in lesser-developed regions, painting a tableau of uneven economic vibrancy across India's diverse landscape. Medical expenses (hospitalization) have swelled, arguably accelerated by the pandemic, increased pollution, and a general rise in healthcare awareness. Further,



Source: Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (2022-23), NSSO Survey, MOSPI, GOI



Source: Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (2022-23), NSSO Survey, MOSPI, GOI

it is alarming to observe that the share of medical expenses in rural household consumption has surpassed urban expenditure on the same over the previous decade. This trend signifies that healthcare needs, which are essential for the well-being and productivity of a population, are becoming increasingly burdensome. In rural areas, where incomes are typically lower and access to healthcare is more challenging, higher health expenses can lead to financial distress and divert resources from other critical areas such as education and nutrition. Further, this pattern of rising medical expenditures suggests systemic issues in the healthcare system, potentially including inadequate public health infrastruc-

ture, limited preventive care, and escalating costs of medical treatment. Such disparities necessitate a multi-faceted policy approach that addresses affordability, access, and quality of healthcare services. Conversely, education expenditure has contracted. This intriguing trend may be argued from a range of possibilities: perhaps a disconnect between education and employment outcomes, the deteriorating perception of education quality, or the digital revolution's successful incursion in making learning more affordable.

Despite these creases, the survey brings to light India's formidable achievement in poverty reduction. A burgeoning middle class is expanding the bottom of

the consumption pyramid, unveiling a market with enormous demand potential. The undercurrents suggest a resilient consumption base capable of fuelling India's growth engine, poised to provide a robust push to the nation's economic aspirations. Such promising horizons reaffirm a collective optimism in India's enduring ascent on the global stage.

SUNGROW

Clean power for all

Finding Ram amidst the Chorus of Ram Temple

By. Preeti Chauhan

Ram- The word uttered in pain and veneration denotes the power of its healing magic. Something ethereal is there in this word as described by Sage Vashishth while naming Ram. The chanting of his name gave solace to millions not only in past Yugas but even in the modern world. And it is the making of modern India after Independence that Ram became the battleground for diametrically different visions of this great country.

The divinity, deepness, and simplicity of Ram seems to be lost in the grandeur that surrounds him today in the run-up to the consecration of Ram Temple on 22nd January 2024. Ayodhya belonged to Ram with or without the temple, and Ram belonged to millions of people who marveled at some of his virtues but also related to his sorrows, his struggles, and some of his contradictions. Ram seemed real and near for he was both a God and also human.

Ram Navami was celebrated across homes in villages and towns of north India without the menacing rallies and calls for violence as has been witnessed in past years. The birthplace of Sita in Bihar saw a Baraat coming from Ayodhya each year, and then moving to Janakpur in Nepal. The little traditions were kept alive for ages without direct state power. Ram Janaki temples abound in many parts of North India particularly

in the Awadh Region and in Mithila. The folk songs and artistry of these regions are full of stories of Sita-Ram. From daily activities to grand events, parts of Ramayan, and Chaupaais from it continued to be recited. “प्रबसिनिगर कीजे सब काजा, हृदय राख कौसलपुर राजा” before beginning a new task for success in it, “राम नगरिया राम की, बेस गंग के तीर, अटल राज महाराज का, चौकी हनुमत वीर” -to be fearless, are just two amongst many such chaupaais that common people continued to say with a firm belief in the presence and guiding force of Ram.

The Ramcharitmanas of Tulsidas was recited not in schools and colleges as is being done and proudly propagated these days, but in homes, temples, parks across North Indian villages and towns. Religion and reverence were personal not marketed and sold! India remained a religious society without blurring the distinctions between secular institutional spaces and religious institutions which are not only blurred but stand collapsed today. Secularism is not an ideal but a necessity in multi-religious democracies as the events of recent years show us clearly. Here, both the much-maligned Nehruvian idea of Secularism with state standing at a distance from religious activities and the Gandhian notion of Sarva Dhrama Sambhaav, show us why. In a multi-religious society with state backing one religion against others, leads

to majoritarianism both in polity and society. Nehruvian idea is therefore instructive here. Trying to give equal space to all religions, though takes away the distance between state and religion but still guards against the brute majoritarianism of the dominant religion. Sarva Dhrama Sambhaav is therefore a valuable idea. Both of these seem to be lost in the run-up to the construction and now consecration of Ram Temple. Ram himself perhaps would have gone for the second conception if he was in a multi-religious society or even the Nehruvian distance as he would have wanted himself to be seen as neutral. Ram can show the way here also!

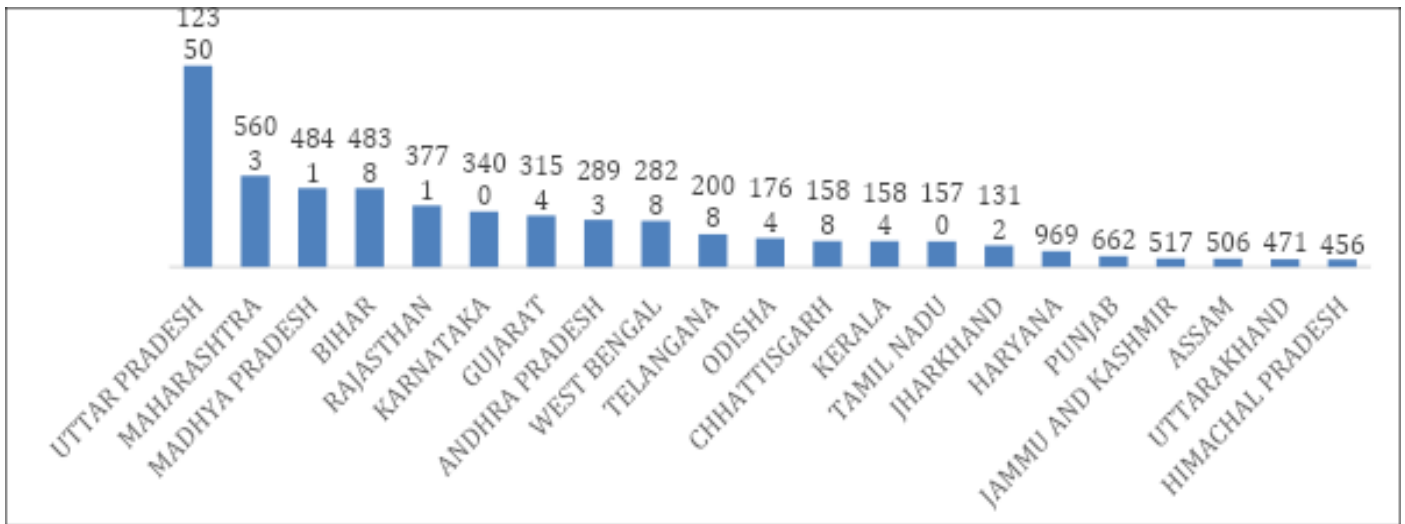
For a generation who has seen Ram being worshipped in smaller, simpler, and yet such meaningful and reverent ways, it's hard to find the karunanidhan, su-jaan sheel that Sita wanted to marry but who following his Raj Dharma banished Sita to the forest, the curse of which Ayodhya continued to bear!

Preeti Chauhan, Teaching Political Science at Lakshmibai College, University of Delhi.



Budget 2024: Can PM-Kisan Augment Female Farmer Income in India?

By. Mitali Gupta and Ujala Kumari



With an increase in the ‘feminisation’ of the Indian Agriculture Sector, rural women play a significant role in the development of the rural economy which is hardly recognised. As per the Annual Periodic Labour Force Survey, 2021-2022, agriculture has the highest estimated female labour force participation of 62.9 percent. According to the Census (2011), there are 3.60 crore women farmers and 6.15 crore women agricultural labourers in the country. Thus, it becomes essential to keep women at the center of India’s policy initiative. The need for empowering women in agriculture is not just a matter of social justice; it’s an economic imperative that should be aligned with the broader goal of achieving gender equity, promoting social justice and bolstering sustainable development.

One such policy initiative has been the implementation of the PM-KISAN scheme. Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) was launched in 2019 to provide basic income support to farmers which enables them to meet their agricultural and household needs. With an annual cash transfer of ` Rs. 6,000 to all

landholding farmer families, the scheme is one of the largest DBT schemes in the world. So far more than 11 crore farmers have been covered under the scheme with the total disbursement of around Rs. 2.81 lakh crore (as of 30th November 2023). The State-wise estimates show that Uttar Pradesh is way above the other states in terms of disbursal of funds under the scheme (as on 23rd March 2023).

Figure 1: Fund Disbursement (in Rs. Crore) under the PM-KISAN Scheme in Major States of India (as on 23rd March 2023)

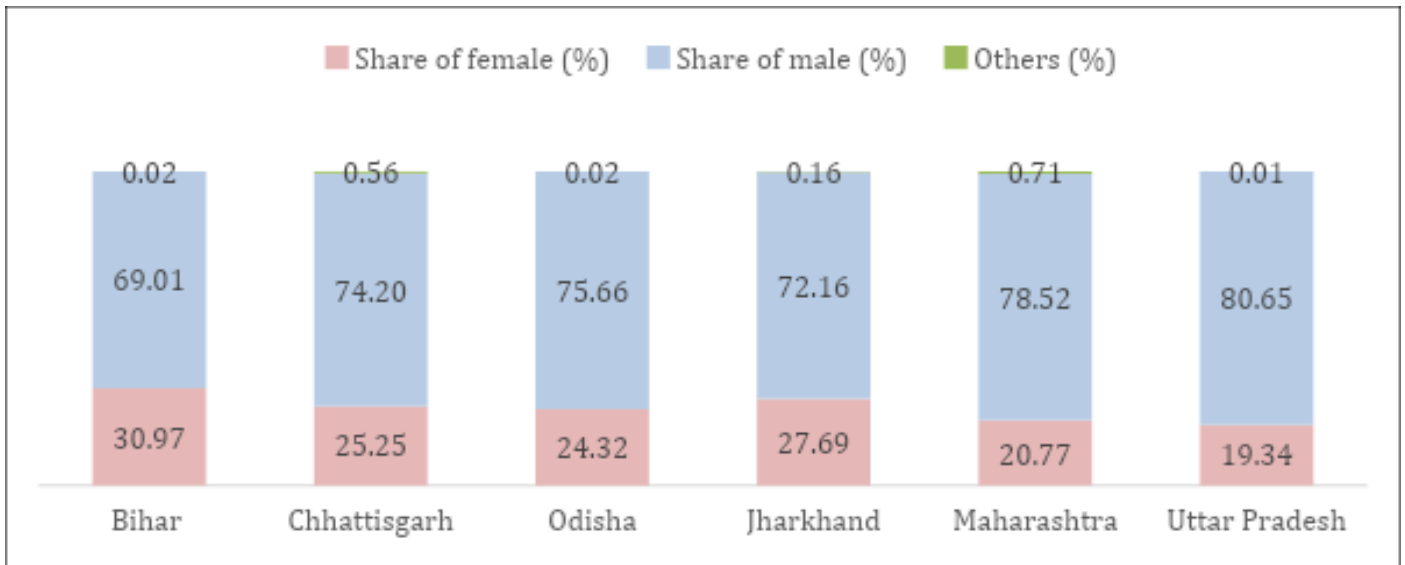
It has been proposed to double the income support (ranging between Rs 10,000- 12,000) to the female farmers in the upcoming Interim Budget (2024-25) under the scheme to promote gender mainstreaming and promote empowerment of women in the agricultural sector. The present article examines the potential impact of the enhanced budgetary allocation on the overall welfare of female farmers in India.

According to the latest estimates, the number of female beneficiaries registered under the PM-KISAN Scheme is 3.03 crore out of the total 8.009 crore total beneficiaries (as on 5th December 2023). Assuming the same number of wom-

an beneficiaries, the fund required in the interim budget for the whole scheme if it is increased to Rs 12,000 for only woman farmers will be approx. 66.234 thousand crore which will not make much difference to the overall budgetary allocation under the scheme. The scheme accounted for 45.6 percent of the Ministry’s allocation in the last year which is one of the highest allocations.

Among the major states, the number of registered farmers who received all 13 installments was highest in Uttar Pradesh (more than one crore beneficiaries), followed by Maharashtra (0.8 crore), Madhya Pradesh (0.71 crore), Bihar (0.73 crore) and Rajasthan (0.53). However, Figure 2 reflects that the scheme did not perform well in terms of its coverage in the states that had a high share of female farmers such as Bihar (31%), Jharkhand (28%) and Chhattisgarh (25%) which are also considered to be the backward states of India. Thus, the proposed hike if implemented will certainly help to address the gendered income inequalities not only in the advanced agrarian states but also in the backward states of India.

PM-KISAN is not the only scheme aimed at promoting the



welfare of women in the agricultural sector, there are several other schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PMKMY), Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), Interest Subvention Scheme, National Food Security Mission (NFSM), Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), Soil Health Card (SHC), Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), National Agriculture Market (e-NAM), Formation and Promotion of 10,000 FPOs, and Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP). These schemes largely have indirect benefits towards facilitating holistic development of women which percolates to them via the development of the community and the sector. This is in contrast to the direct income benefits under the PM-KISAN scheme which directly accrues to the beneficiaries.

The Way Forward

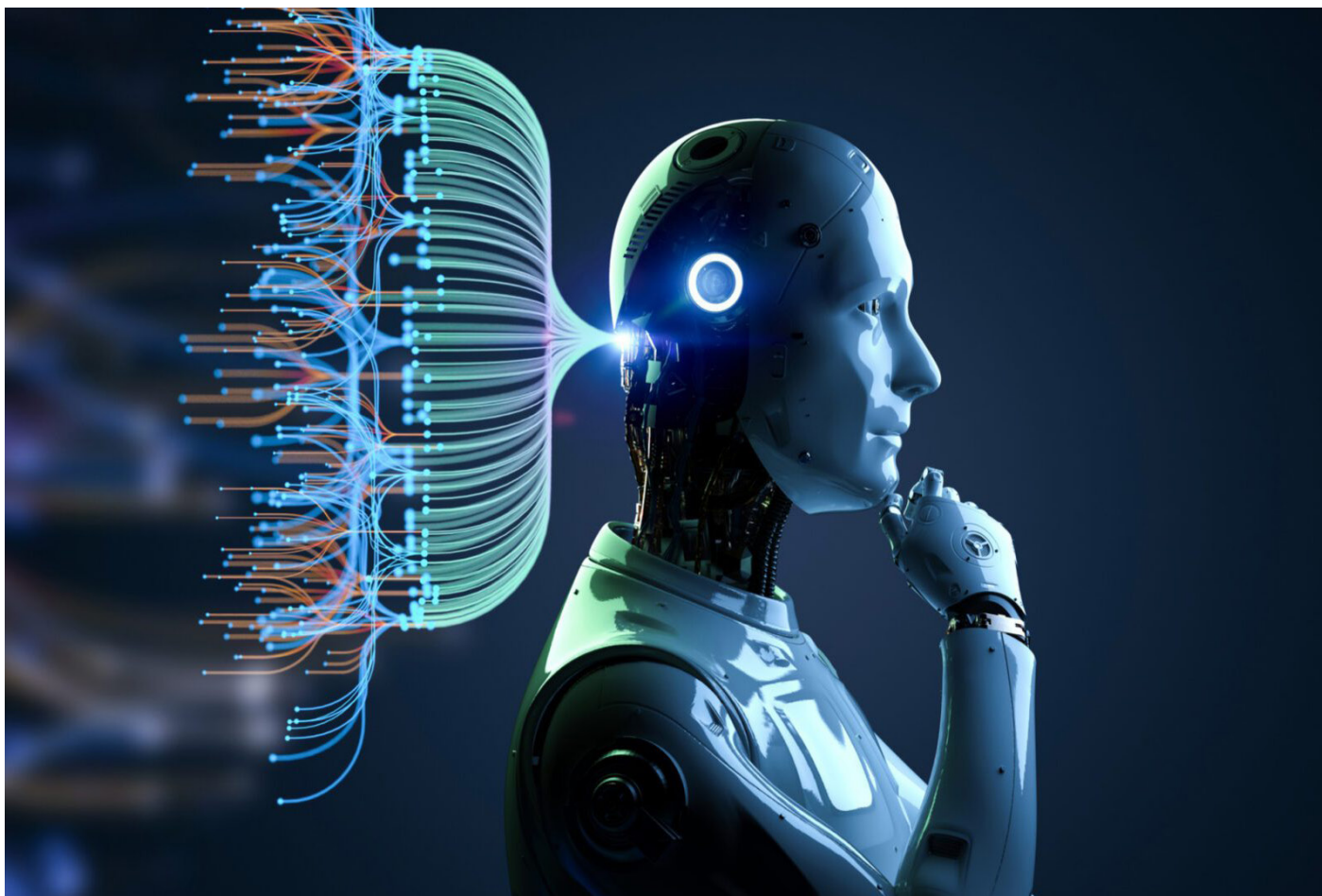
Though the proposed hike under the PM-KISAN scheme for female farmers would be a wel-

come move, however fraught with several challenges. Firstly, the low coverage and disbursement of funds to the eligible beneficiaries in the backward states in itself remains a challenge let alone the inclusion of the eligible female farmer beneficiaries. Thus the ambit of the coverage needs to be expanded in such states to gainfully increase the share of coverage of the female farmer beneficiaries also under the scheme.

Secondly, though it is recognised that rural women have been contributing to the agrarian economy for many years, they mostly work as laborers on their farms and not “farmers” meaning thereby that the ownership rights of the land have largely rested with the men and not the women. For instance, according to the Agriculture Census (2015-16), only 11.72% of the total operated area in the country was operated by female operational holders. Due to this factor, even if the ambit and allocation under the scheme is increased there may be only marginal benefits flowing to the female

beneficiaries. Thus, reworking the criteria for the disbursement of funds can help bring a larger number of female beneficiaries under the scheme.

Thirdly, the distinction between the male and female endowments under the scheme may lead to rampant misuse of the funds and an increase in the number of ineligible beneficiaries availing the benefits of the scheme thus deviating from its true objectives to achieve. In recognition of the above factors, efforts should be made in such a way that it serves the purpose of achieving gender empowerment and mainstreaming in its true letter and spirit.



Consciousness, language and AI

By. Vaidehi Ramanathan

At the heart of AI lies deep-seated debates about human consciousness and the role of language, a cluster of issues that are not altogether either easy to define or explain, most especially in non-technical language. I am going to try, however, since it seems imperative that we cultivate parallel quasi philosophical commentaries to AI's accelerated burgeoning: some our hesitation and anxiety about AI may well be because there isn't enough awareness about some of the various ways in which language and conscious-

ness shape each other. Neither is there adequate awareness of how language and consciousness shape our every experience.

We can start with experience. Consciousness plays a crucial role in every aspect of experience: It is in the melody you hum under your breath, the swish of car tires on I-80, the sight of bare trees against a grey sky, the sharp pain of a knee injury or the sick feeling of anxiety as we await a medical diagnosis. It is because of consciousness that we can see, touch, feel, hear and speak. It is also because of consciousness that we come to know and under-

stand an experience; the experience of smelling something burning, for instance, emerges through the language we use to describe the smell, the burning, the smoke, and the fire alarms.

But consciousness in itself is not an observable physical entity and perhaps needs to be understood in terms of some of its properties. For one thing, consciousness is partially comprised of the presence of both a focus and a periphery. Wallace Chafe, the noted discourse-consciousness linguist, maintains that there is a constant restless movement in our



attentional resources, with some foci emerging as salient and then retreating into the background, while others become prominent. Right now, my attention engages with this piece of writing, but in a back burner are chores I have to run and dinner I should be thinking about. Folded into these movements are points of views, orientations and affective states: irritation at the thought of chores, or relief at the thought of a simple dinner, all of which we have very distinct words for in our various languages, which shape various experiences.

So where does AI come in? Among other things, AI seeks to fully understand every bit of how the human brain works so as to be able to replicate its functioning mechanistically, down to understanding the brain's functioning in its deepest, but most deepest details. Most especially, is its abil-

ity now to mimic the brain's ability to integrate and synthesize very different strands of co-occurring information--- auditory, sensory, linguistic, imagistic—at the same time. Consider deep fakes, for instance: AI is able to reproduce with astonishing precision the many ways a person speaks, sounds, raises her eyebrows, smiles, and nods, and is able to give us a full and robust three dimensional composite of her. The parallel functioning of these various kinds of information opens up questions about the brain's information architecture: how are sounds stored in the brain? Are words stored as entire words or parts, with root forms separate from prefixes and affixes? What is happening in our brains as we experience heartbreak and how that different from the experience of a tooth-ache?

These are questions linguists have been asking for a long

time: AI has been asking them too and is now influencing how we (linguists) about our brains. We are now using computational metaphors for our brains, and in the rush of AI's burgeoning run the risk of forgetting a key point that Searle, a noted linguistic philosopher calls out, which is that the brain is a biological organ like any other, and consciousness is as much a biological process as digestion or photosynthesis.

Vaidehi (“Vai”) Ramathan is a professor of Applied Sociolinguistics in the Department of Linguistics at UC, Davis.

“DISMANTLING ARTICLE 370: CONSTITUTION CROSSROADS, JUDICIAL IN- TERPRETATION AND ECHOES OF HISTORY UNVEILED”

Introduction:

The Supreme Court (SC) on December 11, 2023, upheld the constitutional validity of the order of the Union Government to repeal the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370. Although a contentious issue, the judgment was passed in a 5-0 unanimous verdict. Some people term it as a political decision and some don't. The Kashmir issue has been going on for decades and finally, this verdict may seem an end to the regular conflicts. In the present article, we will dive into the history of the state of Jammu and Kashmir analyzing its past. Then, the article will further elaborate upon the arguments given by the advocates in the SC and some issues related to the same. At last, the article will highlight some positive aspects of the judgment and conclude.

Background:

Jammu and Kashmir, named after an ascetic Kashyap, who, as believed by historians, reclaimed the land from a vast lake, has been a turbulent territory of India since time immemorial. Earlier known as Kashyapamar, the state has been subject to violence and arbitrary rulers since its formation. The Ashoka rulers, who ruled in the 3rd century BCE brought vast prosperity and an advent of Buddhism in the state. Then, the state was annexed by Muslim rulers of the Shah Mir Dynasty, and for the next five centuries, Muslim monarchs ruled the territory including the Mughal Empire which ruled from 1586 to 1751. The first ruler of Kashmir, Rinchan Shah, also known by his titular name Sadr-ud-Din Shah was the founder of the Sultanate of Jammu and Kashmir. After the Muslim rule, Kashmir was annexed by the Sikh rulers in 1814, established by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. These rulers ruled over Kashmir till India came under the British Raj after which it was considered as a part of the 565 princely states of India. The Sikh rulers were considered one of the most exploitative and oppressive rulers that Jammu and Kashmir had witnessed until the British rule.



Maharaja Hari Singh, who was the last ruler of Jammu and Kashmir before independence wanted the state of Jammu and Kashmir to remain an autonomous region but, soon after Independence the state was annexed by military troops and insurgents from Pakistan on its northern border due to which the Maharaja fled from Jammu and Kashmir and signed an Instrument of Accession to the territory of India which declared the state to be a part of this country. According to the terms of this document, India would exercise its power in the external affairs, communications, and defense of the state.

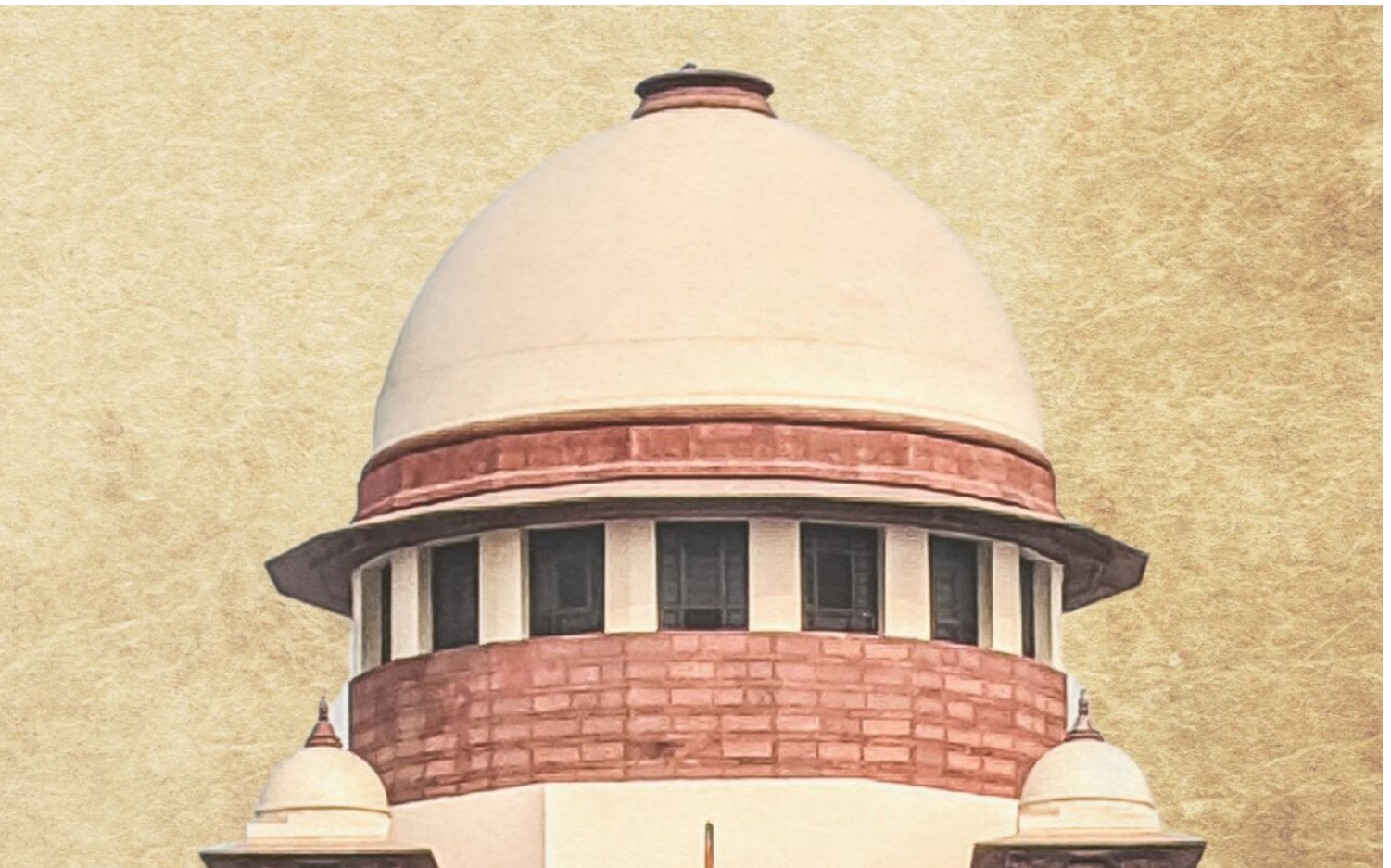
After the signing of the Instrument Of Accession, the Delhi Agreement was signed between the Prime Ministers of India and Jammu and Kashmir which gave a special status to the state under the constitution by establishing Article 370 (drafted by N. Gopalaswami Ayyanagar) in 1951. The state's constitution came into force on

26th January 1957 under which elections to the state assembly were held for the first time. Article 35A passed through a Presidential order in 1954, defined the permanent members of the state, and prevented people from other states from buying properties inside the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

EVENTS LEADING TO THE ABROGATION

The abrogation of Article 370 took place in August 2019 and nationwide protests erupted resulting in multiple attacks on security forces and police stations. There are many incidents which led to the abrogation of this provision. Insurgency – Militant organizations which were disillusioned by the lack of progress and development began to emerge in the region in the 1980s leading to an increase in attacks on civilians as well as the people visiting the state. With the BJP winning the elections, their insecurity

also increased due to Kashmir being a Muslim majority and the BJP being a promoter of Hinduism or 'Hindutva'. By the early 1990s, the militancy had evolved into an insurgency, with India engaging in a crackdown campaign. Also, the Kargil area of western Ladakh has been a target for many counter-insurgency operations and a contentious area between both India and Pakistan. In May 1999, Pakistan increased its artillery shelling in the region. The Indian army also discovered that militants had infiltrated the Indian zone from Pakistan and taken positions in the Kargil area. Due to this, intense fighting ensued resulting in the Kargil War in which many combatants died from both the countries. State strategy – The state's focus on counter-insurgency operations and several crackdowns on civilians, imposition of arbitrary rules and regulations, and regular harassment of citizens belonging to the state led to sustaining militan-



cy and delegitimization of democratic politics. People wanting to have a good quality of life, democratic elections, and have their grievances resolved were met with regular harassment by the army personnel and monitoring of their activities along with regular internet bans and gunfire which also led to the dissatisfaction of the people of the state with the government. On February 14, 2019, the largest ever suicide bomb was blasted near a police station which killed nearly 40 security personnel from the Indian Central Reserve Police Force, the highest number of security personnel killed in a militant attack in three decades. Quasi-violence - The period between 2013 and 2019 was marked by mass quasi-violent resistance, increasing state control, and an anti-institutional alternative to democratic politics, which all posed significant challenges to the government's counterinsurgency strategy. Quasi-violence is characterized by non-lethal attacks

by the citizens to push for reforms and considerable publicity. These attacks are asymmetric which results in them appearing as more of a nuisance to the security personnel than a threat. It involves confrontation through methods such as stone pelting and public protests which are rather violent, and capitalizing on overreactions that might delegitimize the state. All these factors collectively contributed to the abrogation of Article 370.

ARGUMENTS RELATED TO ARTICLE 370

Abrogation of Article 370 may be termed as a politically correct decision because in one strike all the provisions of the constitution will apply in the same manner to Jammu and Kashmir as to the rest of India and the basic doctrine of equality would be reached. But the judicial interpretation which acted as a path to prove the decision constitutional sets a wrong prec-

edent. The judicial interpretation of the article is the Achilles heel in the judgment. It might have dire consequences on the constitution and federation of India. Firstly, the interpretation of the word 'constituent assembly' as 'legislative assembly' sets a wrong precedent. Secondly, the court supported the mighty power claimed during the presidential rule to convert a State into a Union Territory. Thirdly, the courts were silent on the question of whether a Parliament can change a State into a Union Territory.

1. The President in order 272 para 2 has used the word 'legislative assembly' instead of 'constituent assembly' which resulted in the addition of a sub-clause to Article 367. This interpretation can be very disastrous which was also an observation made by the court in this judgment, but still, the court held this order as constitutional. This shows the gigantic power the president has under Art. 356 of the



constitution. In the SBI case, the judges held that the Art. 370 can be rescinded only by the consent of the Constituent Assembly. The main object of putting the word 'constituent assembly' in Article 370(3) was to have people's representation. But at the time of abrogation, there was no such assembly in existence. In the order passed by the President, the word legislative assembly has been used concomitantly. Also, instead of taking into account the people's recommendations, the recommendation of the governor was taken who is appointed by the President of India. People's consideration is very necessary before making irreversible changes in any area. The government by not giving heed to people's opinions has given a blow to

democracy and federalism.

2. The court's opinion is that the recommendation of the state is not necessary, and is limited to a recommendation, which the government is not obligated to follow. This issue is a direct wound to the democracy and the federalism of the state. The court's opinion sets a perilous precedent as the government with a majority in both houses of the Parliament can make undue use of it. For passing such an order in the upper house more than 50% of the Quorum should be in favor, which is not a big deal for a party having the majority. The court's observation put forward a notion that the opinion of the state is just for the namesake, and the decision will depend on the whims of the government in the majority.

In S R Bomai's case the ambit of Art. 356 was compressed because they were aware of the possible threats it could create in the future if it were not curbed. SC through this decision has again widened the ambit of Article 356.

3. The vague reply from the government's side to the question of restoration of statehood and the court having no objection to it raises some serious concerns. The Supreme Court then directed the Election Commission(EC) to conduct elections in the area of Jammu and Kashmir and told the government to restore the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir but the question of the authority of the Parliament to convert the state into a UT was left unanswered. Art. 3 renders no power to convert a state into UT



ARTICLE 370

and assurance by the government of restoration of statehood cannot act as an ointment to the wound.

POSITIVE IMPACTS

The abrogation and judgment in favor of abrogation have also acted as a green flag for positive changes. The removal of Articles 35A and Article 370 adds a pillar to our constitution. The principle of equality is one of the pivotal principles of the constitution and this abrogation has strengthened it. Through this judgment, people from all over India can purchase property in the area of Jammu and Kashmir, thanks to the removal of Article 35A. Keeping the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the same pedestal as people of other states will help

in the development of that region and consequently development of the nation at large. Looking at a positive aspect of judgment, the Supreme Court in a 4:1 ratio had decided that Jammu and Kashmir had lost their sovereignty when they signed the Instrument of Accession. The court had relied on the proclamation issued by Yuvraj Karan Singh in 1949 and held that Jammu and Kashmir lost their sovereignty after it. By this decision, the foundations of sovereignty have been maintained. The SC also stated that Article 370 was a temporary provision and not a permanent one. The democratic conduction of elections in the state is a need of the hour for Jammu and Kashmir, which was also stressed by the court.

CONCLUSION

As every coin has two sides, the same is the case with this judgment. Abrogation of Article 370 may be termed as a politically correct decision but the judicial path used by the courts to prove it correct has laid some wrongful precedents. Even the interpretations used by the government to implement the order are in contravention of the accepted procedure. The government should ensure that elections are conducted as soon as possible and statehood should be given to Jammu and Kashmir. The impacts of this judgment will be deciphered in the future.

COP28 AND BEYOND – DAWN OF A NEW ERA

By. Shailesh Haribhakti

Climate Change and International Law

Climate Change is one of the most vexing issues that plague the world today. It is real and widely felt. Global dialogue, political subterfuge, and passionate heckling envelop any forum. The UN Climate Conference in Dubai concluded with nation-states expressing commitment to energy transition, and a determination to find more resources and pathways to Net Zero by 2050. Deep acceptance of historical differences in development and collaboration are the new watchwords. Biodiversity loss and unsustainable emissions were recognised alongside the economic rationale for sustainable development. In international environmental law, sustainable development and intergenerational equity are the two prime criteria for any country to showcase its compliance scorecard. However, in this globalised world, it would be inapposite to restrict it to environmental protection only and it makes practical sense to extend it to developmental law. Committed environmental protection and developmental law will apply to Global Banks who must ensure that Scope 3 emissions from borrowers (and external sources) are mitigated.

Tough Journey

From the Stockholm Declaration of 1972 to the Rio Declaration of 1992 has been a tumultuous journey for the entire world as the developed nations had to concede that environmental protection had to ensure not only a healthy life on the planet but also, sustainable development so that pro-



gress was not stultified in developing nations merely because the big boys had become bullies. Sustainable Development Goals were agreed by 193 nations, and increasingly nations concede that environmental protection and sustainable development go hand in hand. Fortunately, the economic justification for renewables and recycling is today compelling.

End of Fossil Fuel Era

The 2023 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (“UNFCCC”) released the “Global Stocktake” in September, painted a bleak but realistic picture of the amount of work to be done in many aspects. Therefore, at COP28, Nation States after a healthy debate agreed to transition from the fossil fuel era to the renewable and energy efficiency era! This is critical if the Paris commitment to increase in temperature is to be contained to 1.5°C. The idea is to triple renewable energy in the

mix and to double energy efficiency by 2030. The space to conserve biodiversity will open up only if this containment happens economically. Reimagining the plastics industry and implementing Deposit Return Schemes are critical to this end. A healthy ocean ecosystem with a Plastic cleanup and carbon sinks would help. Cleaning of all water bodies is critical to safely maintaining our food supply.

Green Credits Initiative

This initiative championed by India heralds a new dawn for the human race where initially the emphasis will be on water conservation and afforestation. It is based on the green credit program where credit would be given to plantations on waste and degraded lands and river catchment areas. This will help secure a fair distribution of Water – a soon-becoming scarce natural resource.

Zero to Landfill Policy

The waste management problem is a major contributing factor to climate change due to leading to greenhouse gases. The process of dumping solid waste in landfills generates methane, while waste combustion begets nitrous oxide. Disposal at source is the preferred method but much debated. All waste must and can be turned to wealth. Human, animal, crop, plastic, metal, building material, electronic and toxic must be converted to gas using the best technology known to mankind. At the Abu Dhabi International Progressive Energy Congress (ADIPEC) this year, we saw this! India advocated the 'zero to landfill' policy and gave the example of Thiruvananthapuram as one of the cities to have successfully implemented decentralised waste management. The city generating close to 500 tons of waste shifted to decentralisation thereby winning international applause for being a 'zero waste city'. With increasing challenges of waste management, the COP28 hosted several discussions to ensure a "zero to landfill policy". The antiquated methods of landfills, incinerators and waste management plants have been shown to increase greenhouse gas emissions and it would be better if organic wastes were converted to compost or CBG making it usable for kitchens or gardens, and ultimately to green Hydrogen.

Loss and Damage Fund and V20 Countries The most vulnerable nations that would succumb to Climate Change represented through size, geographical location and economic development include the likes of Afghanistan, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nepal, etc. One significant achievement of COP 28 this year has been its effective focus on the dire need to safeguard vulnerable countries from the detrimental impact of extreme weather conditions. The establishment of the loss and damage fund, initially endowed with an estimated \$475 million, will play a major role in softening the impact on developing countries that wrestle with the aftermath of climate change. It is only with these funds that these countries

can meet the challenges and succeed in what the global elites euphemistically call "Adaptation,"

Refusal to sign Green Pledge

India refusing to sign the Green Pledge (to reduce investments in coal) and Health Pledge (to endorse the health and climate change declaration) indicates that back home the Indian corporate would have raised a ruckus on not having enough Coal – an essential ingredient for many of its industries. Also, to be a signatory to the Health Pledge would be tantamount to being legally obliged to combat Climate Change with full vigor and compromising on many developmental aspects that are needed to take India to a \$5 trillion economy. Smart move – staking your claim to development (whilst refusing to sign) and trying to walk shoulder-to-shoulder with the developed world.

G20 Presidency Responsibility

India, as the G20 President, has taken the lead in representing the Global South's voice to the world on climate-related issues. India successfully led the allocation of resources to energy transition, technological advancements and climate resilience. This would, in turn, generate suitable policies to woo more investors thereby increasing our economic clout.

Anthropocene Era to Politico-Economic Consensus-Driven Era

Over 75000 delegates (largest ever) from across the world in CoP28 acknowledged past failures by focusing on the mitigation of greenhouse gases, keeping global warming in check, and on climate change adaptation. It has become crystal clear that the human race must scorch the Anthropocene Era. What is heartening is that the global village acknowledged this and welcomed an Age that will be governed by a warm handshake between political maturity and economic initiatives. The World Economic Forum, headquartered in Cologny with its offshoots at power centers across the

globe continues to play a stellar role in bringing nations together. The International Financial Reporting Standards Foundation (IFRS), a nonprofit organization headquartered at Canary Wharf, London has established under its aegis the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) to maintain sustainability-related standards. The reason behind its establishment is to develop transparency across capital markets and to encourage consistent sustainability reporting.

Conclusion

The global chessboard with its byzantine maze and countless permutations and combinations bodes well if the grandmasters sit across the table and narrow down the solution-path. India despite a huge population has done better than most but to rule the roost at a regional level – across South Asia, a fragile climate area – is where India needs to take the lead. We can and we will! India's time has come to have a stronger imprint of the pen on the global paper.

Shailesh Haribhakti is an Independent Director on several Boards and Swapnil Kothari is an International Corporate Lawyer and President, the Council for Fair Business Practices

Letter to CBSE Examination Controller - Early Release of Class X Results

By. Avnish Kumar Singh

In India's education space, a lot of conversations revolve around making education accessible, reducing the academic burden on students and shifting focus away from rote learning to experiential learning. These conversations have gained prominence since the NEP 2020 was unveiled and the Education Minister Shree Dharmendra Pradhan announced his intent to bring reforms in the Senior Secondary Schooling System (Class IX to XII) from Session 2025-26. Yet, there has been little conversation about ensuring a smooth transition from the current system to the proposed one while ensuring minimum discomfort for all the concerned stakeholders. Among the various stakeholders who will be experiencing the proposed changes in the Senior Secondary Schooling System are the millions of Class X students who wrote their CBSE Board examinations this year. It is in their interest that I argue for an early release of Class X results from this year onwards to ensure an effective transition as mentioned above.

For many students who fare well in Class X, the transition to Class XI turns into a horrid nightmare when they realise the vastness of the syllabus, the enhanced difficulty level, and the collective pressure of writing Boards and

competitive examinations at the end of Class XII. These problems are compounded by the delayed release of Class X results by the CBSE Board, which has a tradition of releasing Class X and XII results together primarily because the Results Committee gathers only once to finalise the two results. This year Class X examinations have ended as early as 13th March, which would probably be the earliest conclusion of CBSE Board examinations for Class X since 2006. With the examination evaluation work already in full swing, the CBSE Board ought to consider an early declaration of Class X results preferably by mid-April of this year.

If the release of Class X results is advanced by thirty days to mid-April, it would ease the transition of millions of students moving from Class X to XI every year due to the following reasons. Firstly, the career choices that students (or their parents) make in our country are still largely influenced by the grades secured by the students. Until the Class X results are declared, many parents show hesitation in enrolling their wards for higher secondary education. This would also aid the schools in commencing the session for Class XI as early as April last week. Secondly, the early commencement of session for Class XI would allow for

more time to complete the syllabus of Class XI across all the schools. At present, Class XI students get the least number of days to wrap up their (mammoth) syllabus in comparison to all other classes. This results in a rushed completion of the syllabus, leaving many students struggling throughout Class XI and XII and subsequently impacting their performance in competitive examinations as well. Lastly, we also have to keep in mind that the upcoming Class XI batch will be the first ones to face the Class XII CBSE Board exam twice from Session 2025-26. When we consider all these three factors together, it makes no sense to hold back the declaration of Class X results merely because of the delay in the preparation of Class XII results.

The author is a graduate of the West Bengal National University of Juridical Science, Kolkata. He works at a CBSE-affiliated school in Bihar.

Transgender Rights — A Deferred Dream!!

In Indian legal history, some moments shimmer with the promise of equality, when the judiciary illuminates the path toward a fairer society. The National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India (“NALSA Case”) in 2014 stands tall amongst such luminous milestones, casting aside the shadows of discrimination to recognize transgender individuals as the ‘Third Gender.’ It was a seismic shift, a triumph of human rights over entrenched prejudice, heralding a new era of inclusivity and dignity. Yet, beneath the veneer of progress lies a stark reality: the echoes of justice often reverberate faintly in the corridors of power. Despite the recognition of transgender persons as the ‘Third Gender,’ signaling a departure from traditional binary notions of gender identity and the subsequent enactment of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2019 (“2019 Act”), the plight of the transgender community remains entrenched in systemic neglect and societal ostracization. The designation as the “Third Gender” was meant to be a clarion call for respect and recognition, yet it seems to have fallen short of its transformative promise.

A recent plea filed in the Supreme Court of India by a transgender teacher sheds light on the harsh realities faced by many in the community. Despite legal safeguards ostensibly in place, stories of discrimination, harassment,

and exclusion continue to plague the lives of transgender individuals across the country.

The words of the Hon’ble Chief Justice of India upon scrutinizing the case are both poignant and damning. “Something has to be done for her,” he remarked, highlighting the egregious cycle of employment discrimination faced by the transgender teacher. Her repeated termination solely based on her gender identity speaks volumes about the pervasive prejudice that still pervades society. The case of this transgender teacher serves as a sobering reminder of the urgent need for tangible action to address the injustices faced by the transgender community.

In this tableau of legal theater, one cannot help but invoke the words of Cicero: “Salus populi suprema lex esto” – Let the welfare of the people be the supreme law. Yet, for the transgender community, the promise of legal protection remains an elusive mirage, a distant shore obscured by the tempest of prejudice.

Although in the NALSA Judgment, the Supreme Court undertook a comprehensive analysis of the framework of equality enshrined in Article 14 of the Constitution, which mandates that the State must ensure equality before the law and equal protection of the laws for “any person” in India. Notably, Article 14 imposes a proactive duty on the State to enact social and economic reforms to

guarantee equal protection, thereby encompassing individuals of all genders, including those who do not fit traditional male or female classifications, such as hijras/transgender persons.

The Court rightly recognized that the term ‘any person’ under Article 14 is not restricted to binary gender categories and extends to encompass transgender individuals. Consequently, they are entitled to the full protection of laws across all facets of state activity, including employment, healthcare, education, and civil and citizenship rights, on par with any other citizen.

Furthermore, the Court delved into the constitutional guarantee of personal autonomy under Article 21, which safeguards an individual’s right to self-determination. Within this realm, the right to determine one’s gender identity is integral to personal autonomy and self-expression, constituting a fundamental aspect of the personal liberty guaranteed by Article 21.

Hence, based on these constitutional principles, the Court classified the transgender community in India as the “Third Gender”. However, the recognition of transgender individuals as the Third Gender by the judiciary is undoubtedly a positive development, affirming their existence and rights within the legal framework. Still, the true measure of justice lies not merely in theoretical acknowledgment

but in the practical realization of rights and equality in everyday life. The recent case of a transgender teacher facing recurrent termination from employment serves as a stark reminder of the lingering challenges and barriers faced by the transgender community. Despite legal safeguards and constitutional protections, discrimination and societal prejudices continue to undermine the rights and dignity of transgender individuals, particularly in the realm of employment.

In addition to the NALSA Judgment, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2019 further solidifies legal protections for the transgender community in India. Notably, Section 3(b) and 3(c) of the Act explicitly prohibit discrimination against transgender individuals in employment settings, whether in government or private establishments. These provisions aim to address the pervasive issue of unfair treatment and denial or termination of employment faced by transgender persons.

Specifically, Section 3(b) and 3(c) establish a comprehensive framework to combat discrimination in the workplace, mandating that no person or establishment shall unfairly treat or deny employment to transgender individuals. Moreover, Section 9 of the Act reinforces these protections by explicitly prohibiting discrimination in all aspects of employment, including recruitment, promotion, and related matters.

Despite the clarity and forcefulness of these legal provisions, the reality on the ground paints a different picture. Discrimination against transgender individuals persists, creating a stark dissonance between legal recognition and lived experiences. This disjunction underscores the need

for robust implementation mechanisms and proactive measures to bridge the gap between legal theory and practical application.

One potential reason for the continuing prevalence of discrimination is the deep-seated societal prejudices and stereotypes that persist despite legal advancements. Transphobia and gender-based discrimination remain deeply ingrained in social attitudes, perpetuating systemic barriers to equality in employment and other spheres of life.

Furthermore, there may be a lack of awareness or understanding among employers and policymakers regarding the rights and needs of transgender individuals. Inadequate training and education on transgender issues can contribute to ignorance and bias in employment practices, hindering efforts to create inclusive and equitable workplaces.

Moreover, the enforcement mechanisms and accountability measures outlined in the 2019 Act may be insufficient to address instances of discrimination effectively. Without adequate monitoring, reporting mechanisms, and sanctions for non-compliance, the legal protections afforded to transgender individuals may lack teeth in practice.

Given these challenges, mere rhetoric and legal pronouncements are insufficient to dismantle entrenched discrimination and promote inclusivity. Concrete actions, such as robust enforcement mechanisms, proactive education and awareness campaigns, and targeted interventions to address systemic inequalities, are essential to ensure substantive equality for transgender individuals.

In conclusion, while legislative measures such as the 2019 Act represent important steps towards recognizing and protecting the

rights of transgender individuals, their effectiveness hinges on the implementation of comprehensive strategies to address the root causes of discrimination and promote a culture of inclusion and respect for diversity in all aspects of society.

It is incumbent upon policymakers, lawmakers, and society at large to heed the call for justice and equality. The time for lip service and token gestures has long passed. Concrete steps must be taken to ensure that transgender individuals are not only recognized but fully embraced as equal members of society, free from discrimination and persecution.

The existing social structure or feminism?

By. Srishti Gautam

In her article “Sindoor, mangalsutra or feminism” dated January 7, 2024, Adrija Roychowdhury mentioned the dilemmas a woman, especially a feminist woman faces when it comes to confirming societal expectations, intrinsic to which lie ideals of patriarchy. The dilemma was about, on one hand, being a feminist and on the other hand, getting married and embracing the symbols of patriarchy by ornamenting oneself with mangal sutra and sindoor. Patriarchy is at the very heart of social structure and for a feminist, to fight it completely would mean refusing to exist in the existing structure itself. For a woman feminist, she has two options when it comes to getting married- either get yourself ‘accepted’ and ‘adjusted’ in society by getting married in the same patriarchal way or be deviant, refuse to get married and face prejudice, and social alienation for the rest of your life. This won’t have any effect on the existing social structure, but would rather lead to further alienation of the very concept of feminism itself from the mainstream society.

I am a 21-year-old feminist girl, who at this young age, has not seen enough of the world. But what I have been seeing since childhood, is people getting married as this is ultimately what they do. So, I have had this in my mind, since always, that except for me getting married someday, everything else is uncer-

tain. Now, I am an adult, but also a feminist. So, the idea of marriage doesn’t please me anymore. And every once in a while, the same dilemma faced by Adrija Roychowdhury haunts me. I have aspirations and I have dreams. But even if they are limited to some extent by the requirements of societal norms and values, every once in a while, I ask myself, “Why am I working so hard? What do I wish to achieve? Is it just a ‘respectable’ job that I want for myself? Isn’t getting married my ultimate fate or goal? Or, do I want to do something more? Do I not want to think more, think differently, and do things differently? And if I do, can I do it along with confirming societal norms?”

In that light, I would like to bring attention to Amartya Sen’s capability approach to human development, which stresses providing people with choices of functionings (which form the state of ‘being and doing’ or, in other words, which means providing one with the choices of living a life which one considers meaningful for her/him/themselves) in the form of capability. “Capability”, when read with feminism, for a woman, cannot be manifested just in eliminating poverty or generating skills, education, employment, equal wages for equal work, or equality before the law, and so on. Making existing social structures and societal norms suitable for women to have the freedom to not just live the way

they want to, but to also be able to think outside the considerations of those norms is equally important.

One might ask, “But how can we achieve this?” as I said earlier, bringing absolute structural changes within the existing social structures is not feasible. But we must also remember that the forms of existing structures are also dynamic and not static or rigid. This can be understood by the examples of legally doing away with certain discriminatory social practices in India, like the Sati System in 1829, raising the marriage age of girls to 18 years in 1976, and the recent prohibition on triple talaq in 2019. So, developing capability for women in this respect might not even require an overall refusal of the social system in the form of revolution. But when we women decide to do away with all the discriminatory practices imposed upon ourselves from this day itself, the foremost thing that we need is unity among ourselves. All of us need to join hands in our fight against the patriarchal structure of society. That will save us from being alienated for being deviant and also keep the cause of feminism alive to bring about desired structural changes to realize our capabilities in a real sense.

Canada is not the country of opportunity any more under the Trudeau Liberal government

By Surjit Singh Flora

Canada is not the country of opportunity any more under the Trudeau Liberal government. You won't earn a lot of money here since taxes are high, the cost of living is high, and the economy isn't flourishing like in other nations. So, whoever came here expecting to make a billionaire is now leaving.

Racism is on the increase. Seriously, I don't want to offend anybody here, but even though I am a Brown Indian living here in Canada since 1989, I never try to be a bad actor, always follow the law and try to blend in with Canadian culture. But new Indian immigrants, especially the students, are a hilarious bunch of troublemakers, breaking every law and rules and regulation, and not only that, but they are also trying to change Canada's culture

and heritage.

Because of that, Indians in this country are split into three groups: offspring of immigrants born and reared here, new immigrants, and Indian-origin immigrants from other countries.

Combine this issue with Canadians (white-skinned) and new Middle Eastern immigration. The government is providing significant assistance and advantages to Middle Eastern immigrants, and this action has raised many eyebrows throughout the country.

There is a mismatch between what Canada requires in its work force and immigrants' abilities.

Canada does not need highly competent immigrants with university degrees seeking white-collar professions; the nation already has an abundance of university-educated individuals from its own institu-

tions.

Canada needs blue-collar and unskilled labor.

This indicates an imbalance between the number of qualified candidates and the available job opportunities.

When employers are looking to fill white collar positions, they often require candidates to have "Canadian experience," which can be a challenging requirement to meet. (Here is another complete subject.)

Each immigrant brings a unique perspective to the situation. Many individuals persevere through years of entry-level work until they secure a professional position, while others choose to pursue higher education or start their own businesses. Some are



fortunate enough to find a good job early in their career. And others choose to depart because they can find a more fulfilling existence elsewhere.

However, when it comes to immigration selection, you must filter in some way to ensure that you choose the best educated, healthier, younger, richer, and so on individuals who will not cause any problems in Canada or burden the system.

Canada has historically welcomed immigrants seeking a better life. Interestingly, recent Statistics Canada research found that many immigrants depart Canada after 20 years of becoming permanent citizens. This analysis illuminates the causes of these migratory trends and their possible effects on the economy and society.

The survey found that over 15% of permanent residents in Canada depart after 20 years. Additionally, 5.1% of immigrants ex-

patriate within five years after admission. Despite some immigrants' premeditation, the research reveals that their departure also reflects their struggles to assimilate into Canadian culture and the job market.

Research found that emigration is most prevalent three to seven years following immigrant arrival in Canada. This timeframe seems to mirror the time immigrants need to locate employment, find housing, and adjust to Canadian life. If they face substantial problems during this key phase, newcomers may emigrate.

Several variables affected immigrant emigration. Taiwanese, American, French, Hong Kong, and Lebanese immigrants emigrated more. Investors and entrepreneurs also emigrated more. Educational immigrants were also more likely to emigrate.

In contrast, fewer than 10% of immigrants from the Philip-

pinas, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, or Jamaica left Canada within 20 years after entry. Children made immigrants less inclined to emigrate. The biggest emigration rate was among older immigrants, particularly those over 65.

While one of the Quora writers, Steve Harding, posted his perspective, "I was born and raised in Canada. I am 60. I'd love to leave. I've seen this nation degrade. It has grown much too costly; most people cannot afford to purchase a house, let alone pay rent while still feeding and clothing themselves. It is a nation for the wealthy, and they continue to prosper. Run by crooked politicians. Over the course of eight years, Justin Trudeau has wrecked the economy while enriching himself with crooked money. If I were younger and knew what I know now, I would take my money and flee, never looking back. If you are young and rent \$3000 or more per month, you might con-

sider purchasing a property. One last note: the healthcare system is broken and will never be mended. While Michael Rose wrote. There are few professional prospects, but many unskilled and temporary occupations. Because of the fierce competition, finding work here is quite difficult. Even Canadians struggle to find work. I work in engineering and have firsthand knowledge of how difficult it is for Canadian engineering graduates to find employment. It's much more difficult for health-care workers unless they relocate to the north or to little places where no one wants to go. Larger cities are overcrowded, making it difficult to stand out. I used to reside in Calgary, and there were many registered nurses and pharmacists who were unable to find secure jobs. Many others are also jobless.

Imagine that these people are not immigrants; they were born and raised in Canada; they are Canadians. They are ready to leave; it's their own country. Emigration may hurt Canada's economy. Foreigners frequently have more education and skills than Canadians. Thus, skilled immigrants leaving may hurt the economy.

The report shows emigration trends, yet Canada still has good immigrant retention rates. About 95% of immigrants stay during the first few years, and 83% stay for 20 years or longer. Experts say immigrants need better economic integration techniques and international credential recognition to succeed in the job market.

Canada's immigration system is well-intentioned yet paradoxical. While there is a desire for exceptional talent to immigrate through the express entry program, the economy's current strength may not be sufficient to support them, and the compensa-

tion offered may not be as competitive as desired. The US provides both options. So, Canada provides immigration opportunities while the US offers the desired compensation.

Canada's housing crisis, especially in big cities where immigrants reside, is another challenge. Addressing high housing prices is crucial to integration.

The current Statistics Canada research sheds light on immigrant emigration trends and the variables that influence their choices to remain or leave. Despite excellent retention rates, Canada must execute effective economic integration methods and solve housing constraints to maximize immigration's economic and social advantages. Understanding these tendencies is crucial for creating policies that encourage effective integration and long-term retention as Canada continues to accept immigrants from across the globe. If you're considering moving here solely for financial gain, I would advise against it. If you consider various factors such as pollution, population, and the future well-being of your children and family, as well as the desire for a better life, concerns about the impending water crisis by 2030, the impact of global warming, access to clean food, improved healthcare, or a reliable social security system, it is important to understand that starting from scratch will be necessary upon arrival, unless you have a substantial amount of capital to invest, which still does not guarantee any outcomes.

Simply being successful in India, the UAE, SA, or any other country does not guarantee that you will have immediate access to opportunities like Google or Boeing or a high-paying job of \$100,000 per year. When you arrive in Canada as a newcomer, you

are starting fresh. Done. It doesn't matter if you were running TCS back home. Well, in that case, it could potentially have a significant impact.

The Canadian work experience has existed for decades. Even in the 1970s and 1980s, the joke was that Ph.D.'s drove cabs. The difficulty today is that there are many more new immigrants than previously.

Many immigrants sponsor family members who do not meet the requirements to immigrate independently. This contributes to the stereotype of current English-speaking immigrants.

Finally, most immigrants settle in a few big cities where they can connect with people and use resources from their native country. This presents two issues: the expense of living is much greater in these locations, and they spend more time with individuals who speak their original language, limiting their ability to improve their English, reduce their accent, and develop a better knowledge of Canadian culture. Right or incorrect, the latter elements assist in finding acceptable work.

Surjit Singh Flora is a veteran journalist and freelance writer based in Brampton Canada

Is India at the broken wall of secularism?



Recently Ram Mandir was inaugurated. It was celebrated like Diwali by Hindus in the country. But on the same day and same time some Hindu extremist groups hoisted their religious flags in the mosques and churches. Several videos went viral on social media. On a holy day for Hindus, this hateful action shows the red signal in secular society.

Politically, some questions were raised. The inauguration of the temple was a religious event and the huge participation of politicians and the nonstop coverage on national media of India even

for several days had birthed many questions which were catalyzed by two matters. Firstly, for the mosque that was to be built in Ayodhya, construction hadn't even started yet and two weeks after the inauguration of Ram temple, two big historical mosques are questioned now and in one of these, a court allowed Hindus to worship inside the mosque.

The religious sites are saved by the act that came in 1992, but the question that is in society is whether this act would be demolished to change the religious sites again. By the way, the matter of Babri masjid was exceptional for

this act.

Historically, many temples were demolished and on the same lands some, mosques were built. But it is a matter of clarification that not every temple was demolished for building mosques and not every temple was demolished by non-Hindu kings.

Recently, some questions came on screen that if the government and politicians are interested in doing justice to what happened hundreds of years ago, why can't they rebuild the Jain and Buddhist temples which were demolished to build Hindu temples which are standing up till now?



For example, Doddabasappa temple and Melgudi Jain temple in Karnataka, Undeshwar Mahadev temple in Rajasthan, Malayadikurichi Cave temple in Tamilnadu all these were Jain temples which later transformed into Shaiv temples. Ghorawadi caves were Buddhist caves which later transformed into Shaiv and Vaishnava temples.

Now what is happening in Ayodhya with poor's? In 2011, Uttar Pradesh government decided, who possesses upto 300 sq.m. of Nazul land since 1 December 1998, granted the rights to become legal owners of the land after buying it from the government. In 2022, the state government decided to take back Nazul land and wouldn't grant the rights. Hundreds of poor families went homeless. Hundreds of houses and shops are demolished. This all happened to make the lane wider.

The top Hindu religious gurus, the four shankaracharyas, were against the inauguration of temple in January, as its construction was only half completed and according to hindu rituals and practises the opening ceremony of temple should be unwelcomed. They also claimed that according to their rituals, the man without

his wife can't inaugurate and sit for the ritual. But still, both things happened. Does this show the religions getting the polish of politics?

After this big Babri masjid matter, we see the rise of two more religious matters with the same story curve, with the same attention of the public and leaders. Are politicians in India betting on religious peace and secularism of society?

In my opinion, in some past years, India saw a huge inclination of public interest towards right-wing politics. In my theory, this is happening because of many reasons. The first one is the media. Out of the total debates of national media, nearly half are on religion. Millions of viewers who consider this media as a source of current affairs facts are just filling their ears with nonstop invaluable debates. The second reason that I consider not only affecting crores of people but which can harm the country's politics is the involvement of religious speeches by well-known politicians. The third reason which is the traumatizing one is the matter of violence by one religious group or people on the other religious beings. Some days before the country watched the matter of forcing Mus-

lim men to speak 'Jai shree ram', and a policeman shot at the three Muslims in the train.

Is this unifying our country? Obviously no. The third reason is the most dangerous among all, I consider, and the reason for it is if the common people started to be part of religious violence it slowly becomes much more difficult to take the society out of its affection or to re-establish the peaceful community with the so intense diversity. As we know, in India, within the same religion or the same castes there are sub-divisions and we see the different methods or rituals and practices. Indian society daily recognises the injustice against the Dalits by higher castes and even many times by the government officers and even leaders. And this all is making it much more difficult to re-establish a society in which many religions, castes, and different peoples with different practices (even if they belong to the same religion) live together in a better way and unity.

It is a big matter of concern and this can only be treated if common people show their interest in the participation for unity.



Shriram
Properties

Homes that **live in you**



Shapoorji Pallonji

**ENGINEERING &
CONSTRUCTION**