



**A thought for today**

We rejoice when a new kind of cotton is grown and strawberries bloom in Israel

GOLDA MEIR

# Modi In Israel?

A visit by the PM will be an appropriate way to mark 25 years of formal ties

Towards the middle of this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to embark on an official visit to Israel. It will be the first visit by an Indian PM since the countries normalised relations in 1992. In the context of India's growing ties with Israel, this will be an important moment and should serve as an occasion to expand bilateral engagement.

Israel has emerged, along with Russia and US, as one of India's most important defence equipment suppliers. In addition, it has proved to be one of the most reliable partners India has on overall security links including intelligence sharing. Commercial ties have widened to span areas such as technology, solar energy and agriculture. Israel is keen on negotiating a free trade agreement with India. Even if merchandise trade between the countries is modest now, the commercial engagement can have far reaching impact in future. During the visit of Israel's President Reuven Rivlin to India in November, steps were taken to tap Israel's experience in water management and agriculture. Israeli technology in these areas is advanced and can play an important role in helping India cope with its challenges.

Modi has brought a sense of purpose to India's engagement with West Asia. He has visited UAE, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Qatar. In each instance it was a stand-alone visit, signifying the importance of bilateral ties. Reports suggest that Modi's visit to Israel will be a stand-alone visit and will not include a visit to Palestine. India's long standing position on Palestine remains unchanged, but it is appropriate to de-hyphenate the relationship. It will be consistent with the growing importance of Israel in India's diplomatic outreach. India's foreign policy should be underpinned by pragmatism even as it sticks to a principled stand consistent with existing positions.

Defence equipment manufacturing is an important strand of NDA's 'Make in India' project. In this context, the two countries must build on the decision to jointly develop a medium range surface-to-air missile which will be manufactured in India. A visit by Modi will not only provide a fillip to new areas of engagement, it will also serve to strengthen ties in areas such as tourism which have vibrant potential. Israel has emerged as an important partner and a trip there by an Indian PM is overdue.



# UP's Blockbuster Drama

The Akhilesh brand is stronger than ever before, but BSP and BJP seem to enjoy the edge

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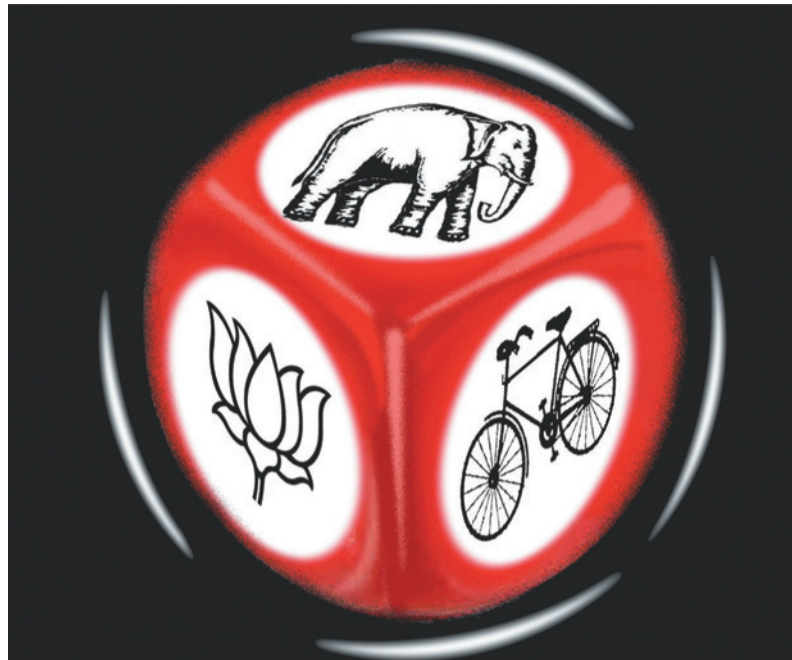
For most of last winter, the media in north India obsessed over an intra-family struggle for total control over a political party. Partly Ramayan, partly Mughal-e-Azam, the blockbuster drama climaxed with chief minister Akhilesh Yadav emerging stronger than ever before. He was much like the protagonist in the Hollywood classic, The Shawshank Redemption, who wades through underground sewers the size of five football fields and comes out clean.

Talking to potential voters while touring eastern Uttar Pradesh last week, one could see that Akhilesh is indeed UP's politician No.1. Youngsters, cutting across castes, viewed him as sincere and forward thinking. But the SP politician's premium brand status doesn't seem to benefit his party's candidates in the state assembly polls. Many might find it tough to escape anti-incumbency - for a variety of reasons.

One, the Yadav family fight forced the party to change its candidates a number of times. Such moves have created disaffection in the ranks and lowered the work-rate of cadres. But the problems of the party, contesting in tandem with Congress this time, are more fundamental.

If the 2012 polls produced the perfect storm in favour of SP, Azamgarh district was its locus where it got 9 out of 10 seats. But this time with BSP getting the support of Rashtriya Ulama Council, a conservative Muslim body that came together in the post-Batla House encounter (2008) days, and with mafia don turned politico Mukhtar Ansari's Qaumi Ekta Dal merging with BSP, Mayawati starts off with a decent Muslim vote base, especially among poorer classes. Even most Shia voters in east UP are with her, albeit not high in numbers.

That doesn't mean Muslims don't favour SP anymore. Many do. But any division of Muslim votes, estimated to be around 19%, works hugely against the SP-Congress combine. Muslims and



Yadavs are the core social bloc of SP - and any decrease in numbers will be injurious to Akhilesh's chances. Having offered 99 seats to Muslims, more than any other major party, BSP has displayed harmony in its words and actions. In most east UP seats, BSP figures among the top two in the race.

Like SP, BJP too has its share of ticket distribution woes. The case is best illustrated by Shyamdev Roy Chaudhari, a seven-time winner from Varanasi South, being shockingly denied a ticket. Worse, a splinter group of rabid right group Hindu Yuva Vahini contested the polls on Shiv Sena tickets.

Every vote it gets, whatever the number, would be one ballot lost for BJP. The 'rebel' issue is likely to hurt BJP and SP more than BSP.

Overall, BSP's ticket distribution has been niftier. After the setback in 2012 UP and a washout in 2014 LS, 2017 is a last chance saloon for the BSP leader and she has preferred winnability over

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everything else, neatly exemplified by the Ansari tie-up. Even in distant Sonbhadra district they are talking about how smartly she bagged Vijay Singh Gond, a seven-time MLA from Duddhi, from SP.

However, BSP's core voter base (a majority of 21% Dalits) is counterbalanced by the support that BJP seems to enjoy among most upper caste voters (about 20%). To create a winning combo of caste and community, both parties have reached out to other social groups in various ways.

BJP largely adopted the 'top down approach' while BSP generally relied on bhaichara rallies and wooing community leaders in a bottom up method.

OBCs are estimated to be 37-38% of UP's population with Yadavs about 8-9%. In 2014 LS, BJP and its allies had romped home with 42% votes and 73 out of 80 seats in UP primarily due to a coalescing of upper caste and non-Yadav OBC voters. It had also made inroads among non-Jat Dalit voters, especially among the young.

In west UP, from all accounts, BJP seems to have lost a chunk of the Jat vote. But in east UP it appears BJP retains a section of non-Yadav OBC votes due to a combination of smart alliances and social engineering. Speaking to Patels (Kurmis) and Rajbhars, one gathers they are likely to vote BJP. Among other OBCs, Koeris and Noniyas are also inclined favourably towards the saffron party.

It seemed demonetisation also had a caste in UP.

Unlike Dalits and Muslims, most upper caste voters justified and praised demonetisation when spoken to. Caste is a shape-shifting, multi-lingual beast; it can speak any language - development or demonetisation - as per its needs. And that's true for every caste.

What could be decisive in this intriguing contest is the role of dozens of small politically unattached caste groups in the state. These unorganised lower OBCs (roughly 15%) have voted or are likely to vote for a party which they feel best promotes their interests. Many among them have lost jobs, been denied wages, or been laid off due to notebandi in rural eastern UP. Many from these caste groups had voted BJP in 2014. A large scale shift could alter the larger outcome.

To conclude, a couple of broader trends are apparent. BSP will grow at the expense of SP and will perform better than it did in 2012 UP polls. The party got 25% votes and 80 seats then. A healthy performance in east UP can make it a contender for the top slot. BJP will fare much better than it did in UP 2012 when it got a mere 15% votes and 47 seats, although its 2014 LS romp looks unlikely.

# Stop The Violence

Time for BJP and CPM to douse the fires in the killing fields of Kerala

Last week the Kerala government strengthened security measures for chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan, on whom a bounty of Rs 1 crore was placed by a RSS functionary in Madhya Pradesh after the revival of violent clashes between CPM and BJP activists in different parts of the state. In a good move, the RSS functionary has since been divested of his duties. Both CPM and BJP leaderships must now intervene to ensure that differences between the two parties find peaceful rather than violent expression.

The fierce conflict between the two political groups originated mainly in the CPM bastion of Kannur in north Kerala in the mid-60s, and has caused the death of around 300 people and severely injured hundreds of others from both sides since then. Though the initial violence is attributed to steady efforts made by RSS and erstwhile Jan Sangh to make inroads into the core areas of huge CPM bases across Kannur district, the conflict gained a momentum of its own. Moreover the killing seems to have intensified in the last year, with more than half a dozen people killed in various parts of the state after the new LDF government took office.

It is time now that national leaders of BJP and CPM forced respective state leaderships to arrive at a settlement rather make it an all India issue and intensify the confrontation as BJP is now trying to do. A great deal of responsibility also devolves on the LDF government which is in power in Kerala now. It must ensure that state police gets a free hand in arresting the culprits, whichever party they belong to. The West Bengal experience should make CPM realise that violence doesn't pay in the long run.



# 'Won't block highways but essential supplies to Delhi will be stuck with so many Jat agitators on the road'

A year after Haryana was racked with violence by Jat agitators demanding OBC status for reservation in government jobs and education, community leaders have reignited their movement, submitting a set of seven demands to the state government. Jat leaders have threatened to block all entry points into Delhi from March 20 if their demands are not met. **Yashpal Malik, president of Akhil Bhartiya Jat Arakshana Sangharsh Samiti, is leading the Jat reservation agitation and spoke to Rohit E David on why Jats want reservation, their mobilisation plans for choking the national capital and their promise of keeping the agitation non-violent this time:**

**■ How do you respond to the Haryana state government's promises so far? Why are you not satisfied by them?**

This movement became violent in 2016. Behind this violent agitation, BJP's cadres had a huge role to play. Later we had a compromise with the state government regarding some demands like: those who were injured in the agitation would get compensation and jobs, all court cases would be withdrawn, no one would be arrested, youngsters behind bars would be released and a reservation bill was to be brought by March 31. The government apparently agreed to these demands and the movement was withdrawn by us. However, none of our demands were met. Thereafter,

Prakash Singh's enquiry committee report into the violence came out and it was clearly mentioned that accused officials should be punished. Now, we have invited all castes to join our agitation since our demands have not been met.

**■ A lot of violence happened last time. Can you assure non-violence in your agitation this time?**

I can guarantee that no violence will happen from our end. Last year, the anarchy took place after the fifth day of protest. BJP workers started attacking lawyers; police officers went inside hostels and beat up youngsters. Over the last one year, we have held various protest rallies where over five lakh people were present. All these rallies were peaceful and you can expect the same this time too. On March 20, I cannot assure you that highways will not be blocked. This will be such a massive movement that on one highway there will be 10,000 tractors and trolleys. We will not stop anything but because of large number of agitators on highways, essential supplies will be stuck.

**■ The Supreme Court mandates no more than 50% reservation. How can Jats get reservation then? Wouldn't it breach constitutional limits set by the court?**

No, we have not asked for more than 50% reservation. We only wanted 27% reservation. However, Haryana government has given us an extra 10% quota. We are not demanding this. The state government is forcefully doing this to create its

own vote bank. We had asked for reservation in Haryana under the Backward Class-B category. The state government after looking at the Supreme Court guidelines tabled a wrong bill in Vidhan Sabha to woo voters. Why doesn't the SC punish those who have made a wrong law? This is Manohar Lal Khattar's policy to curb Jats so much that non-Jats will become their vote bank.

**■ Why do Jats need reservation?**

We need reservation under the provision of the Constitution. In 1953, Kalelkar Commission was formed to give reservation to agricultural communities including Jats. In 1979, Mandal Commission came into being; demanding Jats from Haryana and Punjab get reservation. At the state level, Jats have reservation. However, when we talk about getting the same reservation at the Centre it's not there. So, is there a dual policy in this country? Why can't you give us reservation at the Centre?

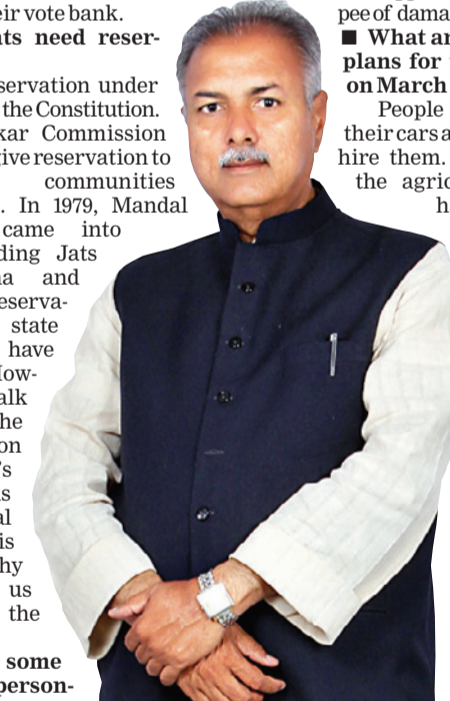
**■ There are some leading Jat person-**

**alities who have appealed to the community not to damage property. Don't you think protests hurt the image of the community?**

This protest has been going on for the past 11 years. We didn't damage anyone's property. It was BJP workers who indulged in violence. Over the last one decade, we have stopped trains - not a single rupee of damage has been done by us.

**■ What are your mobilisation plans for the march on Delhi on March 20?**

People might refuse to give their cars and buses if we want to hire them. We will move using the agricultural vehicles we have. Food, beds and tents will also be with us. From March 20 onwards, we will be on an indefinite strike in Delhi. We will come to Delhi from all directions. We estimate that around 20 lakh Jats will join the protest and we might march towards PM, president and minister's residences. Villagers will provide food to the agitators as they enter from seven borders of Delhi.



# Ivy Log Ejukaysun

The PM preferred HardWork to Harvard, here's how some other US universities can be Indianised

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi has scorned Ivy League pundits who took a dim view of the demonetisation move, saying it is "not Harvard but hard work" that offers a better sense of ground realities. In the spirit of indigenising American education that has turned Harvard University into HardWork University (Mehnat Vishwavidyalaya), here goes the Indianisation of seven other Ivy League institutions:

Yale University to be indigenised as Ye Le Vishwavidyalaya: Loosely translated from Hindi as "Take That!" Ye Le will impart education in the act of give and take, with courses ranging from philanthropy, altruism, and charity, to bribery, extortion and ransom.

Cornell University to be localised to Karnail Vishwavidyalaya: Resisting efforts by Kama Sutra enthusiasts to turn it into Carnal University, Karnail (Hindi for Colone) Vishwavidyalaya will be India's West Point Academy, imparting military education.

Dartmouth College to be Indianised as Daant-math (Don't Scold) Vidyapeet: Here, sharp-tongued professors will teach political operatives rhetoric, polemics, invective, etc so aspiring netas can engage in shrill debates instead of coarse abuse.

Brown University to be indigenised as Brawn University or Bharan (Nourishing) Vishwavidyalaya: Wrestlers, boxers and other practitioners of combat sports will be trained here, fed with copious quantities of desi ghee, milk, honey etc.

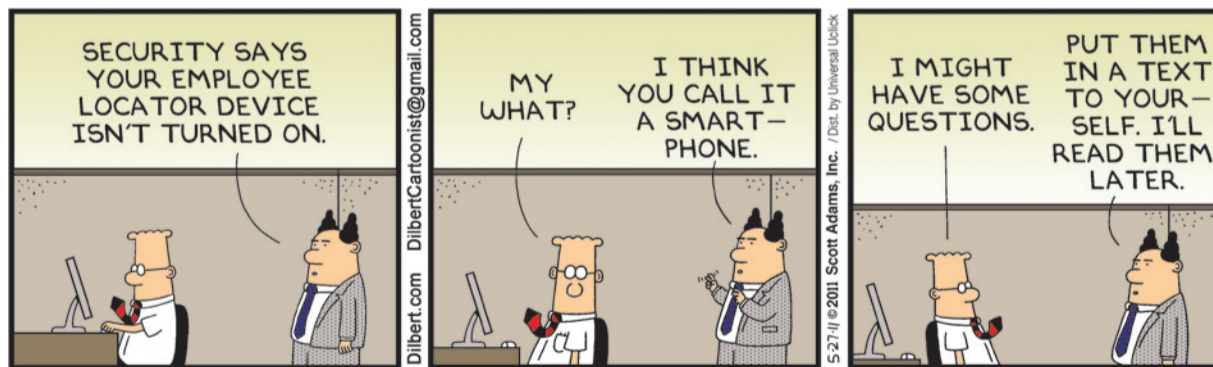
Princeton University to be lifted as Bhaari Yuvaraj Vishwavidyalaya: This school will specialise in teaching dynastic succession in politics, business, films, etc in keeping with the great Indian - and American - tradition.

Columbia University to be adopted as Kalam Bhayya Vishwavidyalaya: Here students will be trained in the lost art of penmanship, calligraphy etc., in fraternal partnership with the last of the Ivy League schools: University of Pennsylvania.

University of Pennsylvania, known in short as UPenn: Also called UPenn in India after great Hindi writer Upendranath Ashk, this desi offshoot will teach creative writing, with courses in fiction and drama.

Since Mumbai University is scouting for campuses in US, there are also the following exciting possibilities of Indianising some well-known US universities: MIT: To be converted to MITwa, which will offer courses in friendship, togetherness, camaraderie, etc. CalTech: To be changed to Kal-Thak, which will offer courses in nostalgia, reminiscence, remorse, etc. And finally (drumroll!) Carnegie Mellon University: To be turned into Karlega/Karlegi Milan Vishwavidyalaya, which will offer courses in courtship and dating.

## dilbert



# Adiyogi - From Religion To Responsibility

Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev

One of the many names associated with Shiva is Triambaka, the three-eyed one. Because of the Third Eye, he perceives "that which is not". "That which is" is physical manifestation - "that which is not" is non-physical. Right now, what you cannot perceive through your five senses is not in your experience. If willing to strive, a human being can see that which is not physical, that is, Shiva. Today, the human aspiration to be something more than what they are right now has put the planet itself in danger. Gathering money, property, relationships or whatever else, may make you feel like you are something more - but only in comparison with someone. But by yourself, nothing of you will be enhanced. Only when your perception is enhanced, will you find yourself an enhanced life.

Source of yoga

Adiyogi - the source of yoga - ought to become an iconic presence in the world so that people understand that only enhancement of perception ultimately enhances life. The 112-foot tall face of Adiyogi was unveiled on Mahashivaratri this year, on February 24. The number is both symbolic and scientifically significant for our existence because he opened up 112 possibilities for human beings to reach their ultimate nature, and there are 112 chakras in the human system with which you can work. This image of Adiyogi will be the largest face on the planet. The idea is not to build one more monument but to use it as a galvanising force to transform the world from a mass of believers to individuals who seek the truth of life and beyond - a shift from religion to responsibility.

All conflicts on the planet - though some would like to project it as good versus evil - is essentially one man's belief versus another man's belief. The moment you believe something, you become blind to everything else. For belief systems to work, you need a flock. If you apply your own intelligence and think for yourself, your belief will collapse. **Seekers, not believers** Believing means assuming certainty about dimensions of which you have no clue. This will give you confidence without clarity, which is disastrous. It is very important today that the next generation is of seekers, not believers; that they do not believe in some imaginary heaven for which they only qualify after death. This is what believing does - it makes you dead sure about things you know nothing about. The most important thing is to build

## Sacredspace

Deep Caring

Instead of getting angry nurture a deep caring and respect for troublemakers because by creating such trying circumstances they provide us with invaluable opportunities to practice tolerance and patience.

The XIV Dalai Lama



the speaking tree

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