

**The difference between a moral man and a man of honour is that the latter regrets a discreditable act, even when it has worked and he has not been caught.**  
—H. L. Mencken

## Justice delayed but delivered

One more false godman has got his just deserts. Asaram Bapu has been convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment for raping a minor girl five years ago. The family of the victim had to wage a relentless battle against the law enforcing machinery from the very beginning. The police were non-cooperating. The administration was non-cooperating. Most political heavyweights were not sympathetic to either the victim or her family which was persistently threatened and pressurized to withdraw the case. One of the witnesses was murdered. Others were harassed. It is sheer grit and an indomitable spirit to secure justice, whatever the cost that kept the family battling for so long. As has been seen in the case of other false godmen, this impostor, too, had a very large following, so much so that the verdict had to be delivered within the jail and an enormous police bandobust had to be made to prevent a repetition of the widespread lawlessness that was witnessed in Harviana after the conviction of another false godman, Baba Ram Rahim.

It is not only the ordinary run-of-the-mill people who come under the spell of such Babas. They latter claim as their disciples political leaders, businessmen and even police officers. That makes such cases heavily tilted against the victims and their families from the beginning. No doubt, this is not the end of the Asaram Bapu case. The convict will go in appeal to the higher court, as his lawyers and bhakts have already said. These criminals masquerading as godmen exploit the bhakti of their gullible devotees to acquire huge property and cash and carry on a thoroughly irreligious life behind the smokescreen of spirituality. They exploit women, including minor girls who are treated as slaves. In the case of Baba Ram Rahim it came to light that even men were used to derive sadistic pleasure. Some were emasculated. Some were murdered and their bodies quietly disposed of. Huge quantities of arms and ammunition were also recovered by the police from Baba Ram Rahim's dera.

What is necessary is a social campaign against such false godmen and expose their dishonesty and the life of luxury and licentiousness they lead. Real godmen like Ramakrishna Paramhansa live a simple life. They shun worldly goods. They are averse to material wealth and company of women (kamini kanchan tyag). What they preach goes straight to the heart of the people, even the unlettered. The time has now come to take legislative measures against such criminals who masquerade as sadhus.

# Management of notes and coins

## REFLEX ACTION

Gyan Pathak

Indians have been suffering in the grinding mill of Modi's monetary policy misadventure for one-and-half years, which began in November 2016 with the announcement of demonetization. Mismanagement of currency notes and coins created a severe "cash crunch" on the one hand, and excessive supply of coins in the market has created the problem of plenty on the other. There are no takers for the smaller coin of Re 1 denomination in several parts of the country. Government policies, Reserve Bank of India, and other banks are responsible for this. They also have failed to check the menace of counterfeit notes and coins, the entry of which in the banking system has broken all the records in 2017.

In recent months, millions of ATMs in several states were dispensing notes only for a few hours, and thousands of them remained dry for several days. The reported reason was short supply of Rs 2000 notes from the Reserve Bank of India to the banks. The machines were mostly supplying notes of lower denomination exhausting their capacity within a few hours. This sudden outbreak of the "Cash Crunch" has put people in great difficulty. The government blamed "hoarders" and "political conspirators" for this in a bid to conceal their own mismanagement.

This highly disturbing reality has been damaging the economy and is potentially more damaging in the future, but the Modi government has been totally unconcerned about the problems of the common people. At the time of demonetization, neither the government nor the RBI was fully prepared to provide money even in smaller doses. This situation remained for over two or three months. The process of re-monetisation was very slow, which continued until June-July 2017. It slowed the economic growth, resulting in great hardship to the poor and the working class, many of whom went jobless. The two major objectives — unearthing of black money, and checking the menace of counterfeit notes — have miserably failed according to the latest reports.

Millions of ATMs were recalibrated to make new slots for the new notes of Rs 2000 and Rs 500, and to remove old slots for old illegalised notes of Rs 1000 and Rs 500. However, within a few months Rs 2000 notes started disappearing from the market triggering a rumour that the government would soon discontinue the Rs 2000 notes. The issue even surfaced in Parliament, but the Ministry of Finance denied any such move. A game was being played by the government to push cashless transactions and digitalisation in what was termed as a move towards a "cashless economy". Cash flow into the economy has been regulated since then in favour of the 'game'.

Even RBI was reported to have decided to cut down printing of new Rs 2000 notes in June 2017. A shortage of Rs 2,000 notes was thus created not only by the hoarders, but also by the RBI. It is because of this that there has never been a time after demonetization when ATM operators were not grappling with cash shortage. Even in July last year several bankers and ATM service providers said there had been a sharp drop in the number of Rs 2,000 notes in circulation. Supply of new notes from the central bank had plummeted, which smacked of a deliberate strategy to restrict the flow of Rs 2000 notes. Millions of ATMs were recalibrated for placing more Rs 500 notes in place of Rs 2000 notes. This fact proves that something has been done deliberately.

Preference for cash over digital transaction is the

way of life for most Indians. The government, even by creating artificial shortage of cash, could not change this preference.

Officials took people for granted and perhaps forgot about an alternative monetization plan in case their push to cashless economy failed. Even if people are keeping more cash in their home, all of them cannot be accused as 'hoarders'. People need cash and they have been losing faith in the banking system in the wake of the latest bank crisis. The government policy that only Rs 1 lakh deposits is insured in banks has made people suspicious of the government's intention. They are wondering as to what will happen if they would be denied their own money deposited with banks, or they would be allowed to withdraw only in small doses at the time when they need it most. Currency withdrawals have therefore gone up to 1.4 trillion during January-March 2018 up from 1.1 trillion in the corresponding period of 2016. The figure of 2017 was much less because of rationing of withdrawal after demonetization, and is therefore not comparable.

In the beginning of the second week of this month, the level of cash, according to the central bank, was close to the pre-demonetisation level at Rs 18.4 lakh crore. But in terms of cash-to-GDP ratio, it was still lower at 10.9 percent compared to 12 percent before the note ban. Cash in hand with banks, which comprises cash supplied by the RBI, from which banks stock up their ATMs with currency notes, fell to around Rs 604.8 billion as of March 30, from Rs 710 billion at the end of December 2017.

There are also other problems with banks. Most of the banks refuse to deposit notes of smaller denominations and coins. Surplus quantities of coins are lying with shopkeeper, vendors, and even common people. Banks have been pushing coins and notes of smaller denominations in the market, but they are not easily taking them back from depositors. (IPA)



A woman looks at a Congolese soldier from the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (AFRC) outside Namoya, Maniema Province, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo-REUTERS

## Angst against BJP-Is the party aware of it

Close on the heels of an open letter written to Narendra Modi by 49 former bureaucrats about the "terrifying state of affairs" in India, has come yet another missive by as many as 637 academics in India and abroad who have voiced a similar concern.

Not only that, they have underlined the "profoundly distasteful efforts of rationalization and the deflection and diversion that have been so much in evidence in the reactions of your party's spokespersons in the media". The reference was apparently to a BJP spokesperson's characterization of the opposition's allegations of rape as a part of a campaign which focussed on different issues on different occasions, crying "minority, minority" at one time or "Dalit, Dalit" on another and "women, women" on a third.

The outrage of the former bureaucrats and the scholars belonging to Ivy League universities such as Harvard, New York, Brown, Columbia and the IITs followed the rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl in Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir and the rape of a 17-year-old in Unnao, Uttar Pradesh.

However, a pro-BJP Hindi newspaper rejected the charges of rape on the grounds that they were intended to defame the Hindus in classic example of disseminating fake news, forcing the police to reiterate that the girl was indeed sexually assaulted. A Union minister, too, has said that rapes cannot be stopped in so large a country.

The participation by two BJP ministers of Jammu and Kashmir in a rally in support of the accused was another example of the "deflection and diversion" noted by the academics, causing an uproar which persuaded the party to ask them to resign. However, there were also demonstrations by a section of lawyers in favour of the accused.

But the world sees these tragedies in a different light. Apart from the letters of the former bureaucrats and academics, shock and revision about the "broken body of a little girl", as the latter have said, have been voiced by the UN secretary general, Antonio Guterres, and the IMF chief, Christine Lagarde, who has urged Modi

## FOCUS

Amulya Ganguli

to pay greater attention to women's safety.

What is noteworthy about these expressions of grief is that they have come from what can be regarded as the middle class and the upper echelons of society who have been vocal about their support for Modi in India and abroad and had voted for him in large numbers in 2014.

For the BJP, therefore, the possible alienation of this group is worrisome at a time when the Dalits are perceived to be drifting away from the party to join the Muslims who are not known to be supporters of the BJP any way. Substantial sections of these groups — the middle class, the Dalits and the Muslims — stood by Modi in 2014 because of their faith in his promise of rapid and inclusive development.

While the absence of growth in a manner which was expected is believed to have led to the erosion of

support for the BJP among the Dalits and Muslims apart from the atrocities which they have experienced at the hands of the saffron brigade, the middle class has largely stood by the party as

However, two aspects of the letters written to the Prime Minister, and especially the one by the academics, need to be noted. These are, first, the larger number of signatories and, secondly, the sharpness of tone.

This wasn't so in the letter written in 2017 by 65 ex-bureaucrats who expressed a "sense of deep disquiet at what has been happening in India", unlike the latest letter from the bureaucrats which has spoken of the "terrifying state of affairs" in the country.

Evidently, the anger and anguish are deepening, which does not bode well for the government as it cannot dismiss all the angst as the feelings of the so-called Lutyns crowd which is out of

touch with the people. Nor can such expressions of discontent be brushed aside as "manufactured protests", as finance minister Arun Jaitley did when a section of the intelligentsia began to return their awards in 2015 in protest against the growing intolerance in society.

It is possible that there is now a greater realization in the BJP about the prevailing dissatisfaction than in the days of the "award wapsi gang", as the saffron camp mockingly called the returnees, when the BJP believed that the protests were being organized by those associated with the previous government who were unwilling to accept Modi's rise to power.

This realization must have been accentuated by the worldwide notice that has been taken of the rape horrors with the New York Times being particularly scathing in its criticism. With the elections due in Karnataka in less than a month, the BJP must be considerably worried about the alienation from the party of the middle class and other social groups because of its dark record in Jammu and Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh where it is in power. (IPA)

Conventional Crossword									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40

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|------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>ACROSS</b>          | <b>DOWN</b>        |
| 1 Church service       | 1 Planet           |
| 4 Infatuate            | 2 Copy             |
| 9 Liable               | 3 Scene of action  |
| 11 Fondness            | 5 Chooses by vote  |
| 12 Kingdom             | 6 Part of a tale   |
| 13 Dash                | 7 Egg-shaped       |
| 14 Sea                 | 8 Failed destroyer |
| 16 Happening           | 10 Pale yellow     |
| 17 Get up              | 11 Wanderer        |
| 21 Mountain lake       | 12 Igniter         |
| 23 Decorated a cake    | 13 Bird of prey    |
| 26 Projecting corner   | 20 Prolonged pain  |
| 28 S. American ostrich | 22 Scottish dance  |
| 29 Permit              | 24 Wagers          |
| 30 Vends               | 27 Limb            |
| 31 Seeks charity       |                    |

S U D O K U : 2181									
		2	1	4	3				
	4				6				
1	5		3						
		6	3	5					
5	3		1	2					
7	2		3						
		5		6	1				
	8			5					
1	6	4	7						

Yesterday's Solution 2180									
4	9	5	2	1	6	7	8	3	
7	6	8	9	4	3	5	1	2	
3	1	2	7	5	8	6	4	9	
8	7	3	4	6	1	9	2	5	
9	4	6	5	3	2	1	7	8	
5	2	1	8	7	9	4	3	6	
6	3	7	1	2	5	8	9	4	
1	5	9	3	8	4	2	6	7	
2	8	4	6	9	7	3	5	1	

Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 189									
G	O	O	D	B	E	S	E	T	
I	V			R	A	V	E		
S	P	E	D	R	A	V	E	N	
T	N	A	V	E	E	N	D		
S				R	I	N	G	S	
S	V	E	N	A	L				
O	B	I	E	L	A	N	O		
C	R	O	P	S		D	O		
K	A	L	E			U	L		
S	T	A	G	E		E	N	V	

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