

A nation is a society united by delusions about its ancestry and by common hatred of its neighbors
William Ralph Inge

DeMo days are back again

Quite mysteriously, teller machines of banks (ATMs) in many a select States have suddenly gone 'dry'. There is no cash in them. The Authorities seem clueless and confused. Some say that this being a festive season, 'suddenly' there was a huge rush for cash which was not expected. Pray, why? Every one knows that this is the beginning of the Indian New Year, known and observed differently in different States - Naba Barsha in Bengal, Bihu in Assam, Puthandu in Chennai, Vaishakhi in north India and so on and so forth. So, what was the 'suddenness' about it for which the Authorities were not prepared? The Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shrivraj Singh Chouhan has done one better - he has thrown dark hints that the teller machines go 'dry' as a 'conspiracy' without throwing any light on who the conspirators are and what the object of the conspiracy is. When all the levers of power are with the ruling party, who could pull off such a conspiracy all of a sudden?

There are no answers to these questions as there cannot be. Meanwhile the almost forgotten picture of long queues before banks and ATMs which became a common sight for weeks after the demonization of December 8, 2016, have come back again. The ailing Finance Minister has assured the country that there is enough stock of currency notes with the Reserve Bank of India. If so, why was this crisis allowed to develop? Why the teller machines were not fully stocked? The people have been told that a huge number of 500-rupee notes is being printed. This, again, shows an alarming lack of commonsense. What the common people mostly need are not five hundred rupee or higher denomination notes but 100-rupee and 200-rupee notes. Notes of these denominations are not available in sufficient numbers even in banks. The clerks insist that the clients accept as many high denomination notes as possible.

What the people particularly resent is their helplessness to withdraw their own hard-earned and tax-paid money for no fault of theirs. Patients needing immediate hospitalization or families where marriages are about to take place are being made victims of the cash crunch. People's faith in the entire banking system is being eroded. In the wake of demonization, the Prime Minister said he was trying to bring in the age of cashless economy. Perhaps now he is thinking of a moneyless economy. Meanwhile, the demonization days are back again.

Desperate bid to regain lost ground

REFLEX ACTION

Arun Srivastava

Prime Minister Narendra Modi made two important statements on a single day that too within a couple of hours; he accused the Congress of killing democracy by not allowing parliament to function even for a day and second, he accused the Opposition, especially the Congress of disintegrating the society by fanning communal tension.

On a day the BJP government was trying to invoke the Gandhian message, curiously Modi was being projected as the new Gandhi of modern India, striving to resuscitate as the New India. When he snatched the power from Congress in 2014 he had promised to provide a new dimension to the growth of the country. But his statement amounts to admitting that he has failed miserably and trying hard to pass the buck. What is implicit from the statement is that the people must not expect a miracle from him in view of the Congress's divisive politics. Indian parliament has been witness to disruption of the house proceedings for more than 10 years. It would not be out of place to say that the BJP patriarch L K Advani invented and institutionalised the method. After he lost the race to become the prime minister in 2009, Advani had invented this mechanism to insinuate and defame Dr Manmohan Singh. He resorted to boycotting the house almost every day. Now the Congress has been following in the footsteps of Advani.

Citing this, of course, is not intended to justify the Congress action. But behind the façade of blaming Congress the BJP cannot absolve itself of the present mess. It is quite surprising how Modi could resort to fasting for absolving himself of the sin he has been responsible for. As the prime minister, he should have ensured, as was alleged by Advani when Dr Singh was the prime minister, that the opposition would not have got the opportunity to create ruckus in the house. It reflected his lack of political acumen to meet the challenges.

Modi began the day-long fast on Thursday in protest against the washout of parliament proceedings during both legs of the budget session.

BJP president Amit Shah fasted in poll-bound Karnataka. Probably Modi must not have resorted to the Gandhian method if Congress president Rahul Gandhi had not gone on hunger strike on 9 April. Gandhi had sat on fast to protest against Dalit atrocities and acts of communal violence that have seen a flare up across the country.

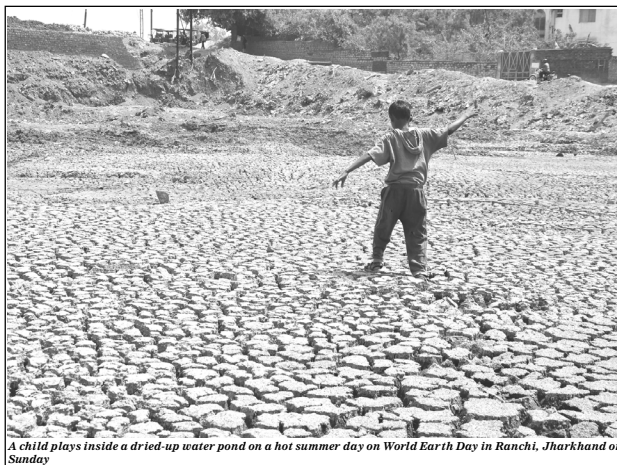
Though Gandhi cited the Unnao rape incident as the better case for the prime minister to observe a fast "over atrocities against women, failed law and order and increasing anarchy under the BJP's watch", Modi projected his fast to be against the Congress attempt to disrupt the functioning of the house. He accused Congress of resorting to divisive politics and announced BJP's hunger strike as a protest. Notwithstanding the fact that the entire second leg of the budget session was a complete washout without discussion due to protests by the opposition parties on various issues, Modi resorted to the fast simply for countering the Congress move. It obviously implied that Modi is not sure of his moves and actions and has come to realise that his popularity was on the wane. It is beyond comprehension why a prime minister, who claims to enjoy overwhelming support of the people, should opt for such an action. The only plausible reason is down the line he has come to comprehend that he was losing the ground.

To be fair to the Congress, the charges of Congress engineering communalism or fanning communal passion is a blatant lie. BJP taking recourse to worst type of communalism is clearly visible in West Bengal. A party committed to Hindutva and Hinduism was seen depicting revolver and pistol at the Ram Navami rallies on March 25. These rallies are held to propagate

the ideals of Hinduism. But the BJP leaders used the occasion to demonstrate the communal strength of the Hindus. And this was done on the pretext that chief minister Mamata Banerjee was pampering Muslims. Rahul said, "The atmosphere that has been created in the country, it is due to the ideology of BJP. BJP's ideology is to divide the country, crush the Dalits, tribals, minorities... We are against the ideology of the BJP. And we will defeat them in the 2019 elections". Already on a down swing, notwithstanding winning the Tripura assembly election, the party cannot fully rely on the charisma of Modi. The RSS has already started finding fault with him and his style of functioning. The primary reason for the RSS turning his criticism is the inability of Modi to provide cover to the RSS violent actions against minorities. The RSS leaders were hopeful that Modi government would facilitate them with congenial atmosphere to spread and expand and accomplish their task of turning India into a Hindu Rashtra.

Though the saffron leaders outrightly deny that the coming together of the opposition parties was a challenge to their dominance, the fact remains that they feel quite shaken. Amit Shah using abusive language against the opposition leaders is the indicator of his nervousness. Shah compared the coming together of the opposition leaders to a bunch of animals who come together to save their lives when flood hits their abode.

The saffron leaders were mistaken in assuming that once violence is perpetrated on the Dalits and minorities, they will fall in line. This assumption of the BJP backfired. They never expected that they would assert their identity and retaliate. Ever since the April 2 all-India strike called by Dalit outfits, politics has taken a turn, political system has been talking about atrocities and discriminations against Dalits and minorities. The BJP leaders have even been accusing the opposition parties of instigating the Dalits and inciting violence. With 2019 elections coming closer, this kind of clashes will escalate. (IPA)



A child plays inside a dried-up water pond on a hot summer day on World Earth Day in Ranchi, Jharkhand on Sunday

Dangerous myths in treating diseases

Way back in history when the knowledge of causation of illness and remedy was primitive, cause of disease was attributed to some divine powers. The same powers were looked for salvage. With the passage of time the human race tried to find the causes responsible for poor health in surroundings and thus they searched for remedy also in nature.

This led to the development of various systems of medicine in different parts of the world. Modern system of medicine advanced further in scientific manner through intensive research to find pathogenesis of disease and thus developed medical or surgical treatment in a holistic manner. This broke several prevailing myths and beliefs. But despite all these developments and modern technological innovations, there are lots of myths about healthcare in our society. Some of these are being perpetuated in an organised manner.

Mumps is a viral infection of salivary glands caused by Paramyxovirus where the patient develops painful and tender swelling of cheeks or below the mandible. It is a self-limiting disorder and gets cured with time. It has no specific treatment and is thus managed symptomatically

through supportive measures. But even the highly educated families invariably visit a 'Ghumar', the earthen pot maker in the hope that with his blessings or his tricks the disease will be gone soon. Similar is true for Chicken Pox or 'Chhoti Mata' where they worship the goddess and hope that the divine power of the goddess will heal the disease.

An interesting case is of Bells Palsy, where the patient develops paralysis of one side of the face. Most of these patients recover with some supportive measures and medical treatment. But here too people visit the faith healers. There are some 'Babas' who have cleverly understood this and are wickedly utilizing it for their vested interests. Some of them keep a convex lens and ask the person with Bells Palsy to stand in the sun. Then they focus sun light with convex lens on the neck of the patient. This causes burn on the skin.

The burn takes almost three weeks to heal and during this period the Bells Palsy also recovers. These Babas are believed to hold power for divine blessings. Syphilis, a sexually transmitted disease, is another disease which, in some parts of the country is thought to be caused by "consuming

milk with Jalebli". Likewise A person having epileptic fit is made to smell the shoe in the belief that she/he would get rid of the attack of epilepsy. Such myths delay the treatment and many a times sickness increases beyond any treatment which could have been possible otherwise if it had been done on time.

Worst is when some such healers claim to treat malignant diseases. Poor patients fall prey to them in the belief that they would cure them. But by the time they realize their mistake and see no recovery insight in the hands of these faith healers, the disease has progressed to incurable stage. These are criminal acts which cannot be condoned.

Propaganda of uses of cow urine is another hoax. Inquiries from the Guru Angad Dev University of Veterinary Sciences Ludhiana and from animal husbandry department government of India have not revealed any benefit of cow urine for human health. But still this continues whether in form of drinking or

FOCUS

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of people and spread obscurantism. It is for the medical bodies, rationalist societies and right thinking people with scientific outlook to question these.

People like Mahesh Chand Sharma, now a retired Rajasthan High Court judge, saying that female peacock gives birth not because of mating but because it licks the tears which flow out of eyes of peacock has to be countered outrightly. That to talk that ancient India had surgical skills advanced enough to transplant elephant head on human body is only befudding people by exploiting their beliefs. Modernity cannot be achieved through medieval ideas. Health of our people, particularly of the women and children cannot be left to be exploited by people with irrational ideas. We are well aware how womenfolk are witch hunted on the pretext of madness while this could have been treated through psychiatric treatment and counseling.

There has to be a concerted effort to develop a healthy India through scientific outlook. Otherwise health of vast majority of our poor population will continue to be exploited through false beliefs and myths in healthcare. (IPA)

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