

Be not ashamed of thy virtues, honor's a good brooch to wear in a man's hat at all times
Ben Jonson

A Wise Decision

The Centre has taken a wise decision in restoring the old SC/ST Act which it sought to amend by taking away the right of the investigating officer to arrest an accused without preliminary inquiry or prior approval. The Government introduced an amending Bill in Parliament to rescind this power after the Supreme Court had, on March 20, struck down the provision in the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act that allows the arrest of an accused without inquiry or without prior government approval if the accused happened to be a public servant. The apex court said no arrest should be made without a prior probe and approval by an officer of the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police. Now, after restoration of the status quo ante, the accused will not have the right to apply for an anticipatory bail.

Unfortunately, the apex court's opinion came at a time when the dalits (Scheduled Caste people) and the advasis (Scheduled Tribe people) were being subjected to physical torture like flogging, social humiliation, ostracism and even death by lynching. With a general election in the offing, the ruling party dared not antagonize the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe people who constitute respectively 16.6 per cent and 8.6 per cent of the population or roughly one-fourth of the electorate. The advasis have a special grievance. The areas they inhabit have rich mineral resources buried under their land. So they are being systematically evicted from the land that has given them their livelihood and sustained them from time immemorial. They are being ruthlessly evicted and the wealth lying buried under their land looted. After full exploitation of the minerals, those who grabbed their land quit, leaving behind a land that is uncultivable. And the evictees crowd into the already overcrowded cities in search of jobs. The fortunate among them get jobs and become wage labourers. Others just die.

The proposed amendment was also vehemently opposed by the Lok Janshakti Party, a constituent of the ruling National Democratic Alliance holding ministerial portfolios at the Centre. The party threw broad hints that if the SC/ST Act was not returned to its original form, it might have to reconsider its equations with the NDA. This put the BJP under tremendous pressure, because the TDP has already left the NDA and another ally, Nitish Kumar's JD(U) was also making disquieting noises. So the BJP had to retrace its steps and decide in favour of retaining the original Act unchanged. Whatever the reason, it is a wise decision. Better late than never.

Missing link in Kerala lynchings

REFLEX ACTION

Sushil Kutty

Thiruvananthapuram Congress MP Shashi Tharoor survived a lynching in his constituency the other day when vandals attacked his office. He was not present when BJP youth-wing cadre ransacked and threw black oil all over the place. Activist Swami Agnivesh was not as lucky. He was set upon and given a thrashing in Jharkhand. But he, too, survived though he will carry mental scars.

Shashi Tharoor came to Parliament Wednesday. He stood there unscathed and blasted BJP and the Modi government. Tharoor is a dangerous enemy to have. His eloquence can kill no less effectively than a lynch mob. Tuesday, speaking in Trivandrum, Tharoor doubled down on his 'Hindu Pakistan' comment with a slamming 'Hindu Taliban' tag. Wednesday Tharoor stood in the Lok Sabha and demanded an explanation. He mentioned Swami Agnivesh. He also spoke of his near-escape. But he did not say a word on the migrant worker who got lynched in Kollam on suspicion of stealing a hen! Two men, one a Muslim and the other a Hindu, spotted him with "the bird" and thrashed him to near death. He died a couple of days later. Lynching doesn't need a mob. Two men can do it. Lynching is condemning someone to death without trial and executing the death sentence right there and then, on the spot. Shashidhara Kurup, 62, and 27-year-old Asif beat 32-year-old Manik Roy from West Bengal and delivered that kind of instant justice.

But Roy's lynching did not pay any political dividend. A migrant worker gets lynched by two persons, one a Hindu and the other a Muslim, and it goes under the radar. It's a toss whether the news even reached Tharoor's sensitive ears and would he have raised Cain if it was brought to his notice? It's clear though that Roy's killing doesn't serve Tharoor's 'Hindu Pakistan' theory. Migrant workers are dime a dozen in Kerala and if one gets thrown under the bus, there is always another getting off a train at

Ernakulam Junction! The train to 'Shashi Tharoor's Pakistan' comes crammed with hope-high migrant workers from West Bengal. In fact, 'Bengali' is euphemism for 'migrant worker' in God's Own Country, where people have picked up from the Emirati and the Saudi the trait of not doing menial and jobs that require back-breaking work.

The Kerala Sheikhs have their nose-up. According to a news report, so far this year, seven lynchings have taken place in Kerala. Psychiatrists worry at the worrying trend and those dangling at the end of the rope because of this trend included the Dalit, transgender, the migrant worker and the unlucky woman. Those who know Kerala know that the "100% literate progressive" state has never been Eden for people of the lower strata. Roy's death by lynching has not made the news beyond Kerala. And the writer/journalist who gave a clean-chit to Whatsapp in an opinion-piece on Tuesday might crow when told of Roy's lynching because it proves him right - that it's the "Indian" who's to blame and not the messaging app. And it's such a shame that neither Shashidhara Kurup nor Asif is a BJP worker!

That said the BJP is full of idiots, some of them with degrees in Law from American universities, an MBA with Distinction from Harvard Business School! The Union minister who garlands not yet exonerated in the eyes of law court vigilantes. It is as if Mogra are there for the picking and garlands for the making. What a waste of flowers, and life. The Supreme Court has taken notice of the "lynching culture" in the country and has

asked Parliament to enact a new anti-lynching law, one which will have more teeth than the jaded Section 302 and 307 of the IPC. The apex court has laid down a set of steps to be followed in the meantime by the states and police. Ask the average Indian and he will hang his head in disgust. Since when have the Tharoor and Modis and Gandhis taken apex court directives seriously? Any anti-lynching law, if it is enacted at all, will take its own sweet time coming and by then, maybe Modi would have gone and Rahul Gandhi would be Prime Minister if Mayawati doesn't throw a spanner in Gandhi's works! In Kerala, it's not Whatsapp that worries the migrant worker, the Dalit and the transgender. Whatsapp text message can only fool the illiterate and the Malayali can write his name and read newspapers at the corner thattu-kada! What escapes the Malayali is the "missing". Things go missing and the 'Malu' loses his cool. Like the "missing hen" in Roy's case. People in the Kollam locality, where Roy was resident for three years, were aware that a hen had gone missing. But chicken was being sold and Roy bought a live one. That was his undoing. Kurup and Asif did not need an excuse. "This is the hen," they sang in chorus and set upon Roy. The post-mortem report said Manik Roy died of "head injuries". A psychiatrist of Thiruvananthapuram Medical College put it in words even an illiterate would understand: "In mobocracy, there are mainly two kinds of people: one who already has a criminal bent of mind and leads the attack, and the other, who joins the leader". Keeping those words in mind, it's a travesty that Shashi Tharoor has to link lynching to the 'Hindu' and the 'Hindu alone'.

Tags such as 'Hindu Pakistan' and 'Hindu Taliban' do not sound like coming from a person with a doctorate in whatever. Getting caught in the maelstrom is the average graduate and under-graduate. In Kerala, the SSLC, too! (IPA Service)



Children shows fish during cast fishing by cloth net into the flood water after the heavy rain near Vindhyaachal mountain in Mirzapur on Thursday

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		

- ACROSS**
- Outer covering
 - Dash
 - Female deer
 - Female roostcock
 - Minute particle
 - Skip like a goat
 - Tibetan priest
 - Lar
 - Ship's record
 - Tree
 - Uncooked
 - Pleased
 - Unaccompanied
 - Replete
 - Tolerable
 - Female swan
 - Meat dish
 - Harvest
- DOWN**
- Mode of standing
 - Greenish image
 - Wanderer
 - Part of atcoat
 - Land measure
 - And not
 - Waterway
 - Combine
 - Fast pace
 - American alk
 - Thin biscuit
 - Low sand hill
 - Donkey
 - Present

SUDOKU: 2273

		2	6	1	5			
	4	5		7	8			
8				2				
	7			4			8	
4								5
6		1		7				
		4					7	
		9	3		1	4		
1		7		9	2			

Yesterday's Solution 2272

5	6	7	2	1	4	9	3	8
1	9	3	8	6	7	4	2	5
8	4	2	5	9	3	1	6	7
9	7	5	3	4	6	2	8	1
6	8	4	7	2	1	5	9	3
3	2	1	9	5	8	7	4	6
2	3	6	1	7	9	8	5	4
7	5	8	4	3	2	6	1	9
4	1	9	6	8	5	3	7	2

Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 281

M	A	D	F	I	D	G	E	T
A	A	M	E	N	A	L	E	
L	W	T	E	M	P	L	E	
L	I	N	G	E	R	E	S	
I	N	C	U	R	T	A	S	K
I	N	H	O	I	L	I	N	G
U	N	I	S	O	N	M	A	
R	U	N	S	K	I	P	I	
E	N	A	C	T	S	I	N	

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Same old political rhetoric till 2019?

FOCUS

Amulya Ganguli

Indian elections are generally boisterous affairs with the atmosphere of a carnival. However, the chances are that the zing will be absent during the forthcoming state assembly elections and the general election next year.

The excitement will be only when the results are announced even if there is an element of predictability about them. But, prior to that, the festive spirit will be missing during the campaign. The reason is that the government's narrative and the opposition's counter-narrative have been aired and written about so often that they have lost all their novelty. It is easy to foretell, therefore, what the BJP's chief and virtually the party's one and only campaigner, Narendra Modi, will say at his various public rallies.

The Congress will be the main target of his attacks, especially because it is the BJP's primary opponent in the Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh elections. But the points which the prime minister is bound to make while lambasting the party can be said to have become rather stale because of constant repetition. The word

naamdar which Modi first used during the Karnataka elections is likely to be reiterated countless times to berate Rahul Gandhi's illustrious lineage. Along with it, Modi cannot but mention his own kaamdar credentials of being an indefatigable worker. Moreover, while doing so, he in all likelihood will recall his own humble background to pit it against the Congress president's privileged family tree.

Along with dynasty, corruption will be the other stick with which the former Grand Old Party will be beaten. Will these parries and thrusts be effective? Considering that the Congress has managed to win several by-elections in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh recently, it can seem that the electorate has forgiven the party to some extent. After all, it did pay a heavy price in 2014 and, according to the legal notion of double jeopardy, a person (or a party) cannot be convicted of the same offence twice. So, it may be politically imprudent for the BJP to harp on the same theme over and over again not only because it can tend to bore the listener but also because it suggests that the party doesn't have

anything new to say, especially about its achievements. It is obviously because the economy has remained sluggish and the hate crimes have increased that the BJP keeps returning to blaming the Congress for virtually everything that has gone wrong.

If Modi's attacks seem repetitive, the opposition spokespersons, too, will be seen to be going over familiar ground with their references to agrarian distress, joblessness and the insecurity of minorities. Important as these issues are, it is necessary to buttress the references to them with facts and figures as well as heartfelt details about the sufferings of individuals. There aren't many orators in the opposition camp who can do so. Needless to say, politicians have no option but to keep focusing on topics which they think are the most effective weapons in their armoury. For the hapless public at the receiving end, however, especially for the average

person whose interest in politics is not as keen as that of the professional pollsters and media personnel, there will be an element of sameness in the charges and counter-charges which will make the electoral battle appear to be a dull affair. As a result, they will be glad when it is over. The association of monotony for the common man where the elections are concerned may seem odd considering that the forthcoming contests are deemed to be no less consequential than what happened in 1977 when the country was said to have gained its second independence in the wake of the demise of an authoritarian regime.

Recalling 1977 may seem apt considering that Modi's critics have seen shadow of an undeclared emergency during his rule. To them, the personality cult focussing on one leader, the undermining of institutional autonomy, the intimidation of the media, the violence directed against the

minorities and the whipping up of hyper-nationalism are some of the signs of growing authoritarianism. For the opposition, therefore, the ensuing battles may appear to be a do-or-die affair because it is up against a formidable adversary just as the non-Congress parties faced in 1977. There is another similarity. In 1977, too, the opposition was in disarray as at present.

Notwithstanding the repetitive, humdrum nature of the election campaign, therefore, the significance of the contest cannot be denied. Arguably, it is probably just as well that the narratives and counter-narratives are unlikely to be riveting expositions with their pronouncements of ushering in a new India by one group and predictions of doom by the other. As the two sides present their cases with arguments that have been heard many times, the voters will have ample time to ponder over their statements and deliver a considered verdict in the ballot boxes.

As in 1977 and in virtually all the elections, they are likely to make the correct choice by seeing through both rhetoric and claims. (IPA Service)