

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

BJP creates political crisis in Assam

The BJP's decision to accord citizenship to Hindu immigrants from Bangladesh post 25 March, 1971, has created an acute crisis in Assam. So much so that the Asom Gana Parishad, the coalition partner of the BJP Government in Assam may quit. Under the Assam Accord of 1985, those who had come to Assam from East Pakistan/Bangladesh before March 25, 1971, will be given Indian citizenship, irrespective of their religion – whether they are Hindu or Muslim. Those who entered Assam after March 25, 1971, will be treated as illegal immigrants and deported to Bangladesh. (Whether Bangladesh will accept them is a moot question because the stand of the Bangladesh Government has all along been that no Bangladeshi is illegally living in Assam.)

At the time of the 2014 Lok Sabha elections also, Narendra Modi had repeatedly said that after the BJP comes to power at the Centre, all illegal immigrants from Bangladesh will be deported. But after winning the 2014 elections the BJP's stand on Bangladeshi immigrant question changed totally. The party went back on its promise and decided that the Hindus who have migrated from Bangladesh into Assam post 25.3.1971 will be treated as refugees and given Indian citizenship, while the Muslim immigrants will be deported to Bangladesh. This decision – determining who is an illegal immigrant and who is not on the basis of religion – created strong resentment in Assam. The Citizenship Act is being amended accordingly. Now the people's anger has snowballed into a mass movement which seeks to reverse the decision. The Assamese people think that giving citizenship to Hindu Bengali immigrants will reduce the Assamese people into a minority and create an existential crisis for the 'sons of the soil'.

BJP's coalition partner AGP is one of the organizations which are now spearheading the movement. If the BJP decides to go ahead with its plan of granting citizenship to Bengali Hindu immigrants, Assam will be in the throes of another agitation like the one that rocked the State between 1979 and 1985 and was called off only after the signing of the Assam Accord. What is more, the AGP may quit the Government, creating political instability in Assam as in the 126-member House the BJP has just 60 seats. It is its alliance with the AGP with 14 seats that has enabled it to form the government. If the AGP quits the coalition, the BJP Government in Assam will also collapse. Will the central leadership of the BJP risk that?

RK Nagar victor and AIADMK's future

REFLEX ACTION

Amulya Ganguli

The choice of the people of Tamil Nadu of their favourite politician has not always been easy to fathom, especially by the rest of the country. After MG Ramachandran's death, for instance, the mantle fell on the Tamil lion's mistress, Jayalalithaa, with popular approval after a brief period when his wife, Janaki, was his inheritor.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the voters have chosen TTV Dinakaran, who is the nephew of Jayalalithaa's companion, Sasikala, as the person whom they prefer as Amma's possible successor by handing him a convincing victory in the by-election for the RK Nagar seat, which was held by the former chief minister till her death. Neither Sasikala's incarceration on charges of corruption, nor the allegations against Dinakaran about an attempt to bribe the Election Commission, nor the raids on him and his associates by institutions which are now widely regarded as the centre's "caged parrots", to quote what the Supreme Court said about the CBI, to tarnish Dinakaran's image had an adverse effect on his electoral fortune. What his victory emphasizes is that the masses do not regard either the present chief minister, Edappadi K Palaniswami, or his predecessor, O Panneerselvam, as Amma's legitimate successor – although the former was Sasikala's nominee for the post and had replaced Panneerselvam, who claimed that he had been in touch with Jayalalithaa's soul.

Of the three nonentities involved in the post-Jaya game of thrones – Palaniswami, Panneerselvam and Dinakaran – the last named was a total outsider as he did not belong to any party and contested as an Independent. But now he is in a position to oust both Palaniswami and Panneerselvam and take over the AIADMK with the familiar trick of the floor-crossing by the Aya Rams and Gaya Rams of present-day Tamil Nadu. Dinakaran has set

a time limit of three months before the toppling takes place. It is not impossible that such a takeover will give a boost to a refashioned AIADMK, thereby dashing its perpetual foe, the DMK's hope that MGR's and Jaya's party will fade away and that the DMK will once again be the undisputed No. 1 in the state. Its reduction, however, to the third position in the RK Nagar contest after Dinakaran and the AIADMK shows that the judiciary's exonerating of Anidimthi Raja and Kanimozhi in the 2G scam has not helped the DMK. It appears that it will continue to be an uphill task for it in view of M Karunanidhi's ill-health and the inability of MK Stalin to measure up to his father's stature.

Although the BJP has received fewer votes than the symbol for NOTA or "None of the Above", the party may now consider edging closer to Dinakaran, asking him to forget the nearly 200 raids that were carried out by the income-tax department on the premises of Sasikala's aides, including Dinakaran, which the latter had described as acts of political vendetta.

Since sections in the BJP, like Subramanian Swamy, lean upon the DMK as secessionist and anti-Hindu, the AIADMK has been seen as the BJP's natural ally – Jayalalithaa was a supporter of Atal Behari Vajpayee's government – and a Dinakaran-led AIADMK may play the same role. As a party with hardly any influence in Tamil

Nadu, the BJP will be pleased to have the backing of a new, popular leader although whether he will be interested in the BJP after its lacklustre showing in Gujarat is open to question. The BJP itself will have to brush off the allegations of opportunism because of its ties with an outfit with close links to the jailed Sasikala. Whatever the outcome of these political permutations and combinations, the fact that Tamil Nadu will be in the midst of considerable flux in the foreseeable future is obvious, not least because Dinakaran is an untested element in big-time politics despite having been an MP and an MLA. How he will shape up, therefore, especially with Sasikala breathing down his neck even from behind the bars, cannot be said for certain.

What is certain is that Tamil Nadu has been left with no prominent figures in active politics. The nonagenarian Karunanidhi has virtually retired, leaving no one to whom the people can look to for guidance and inspiration. After years under dominant leaders like K. Kamaraj, CN Annadurai, Karunanidhi, MGR and Jayalalithaa, the state has suddenly become a virtual orphan.

Dinakaran's rise may have also paid to the tentative efforts which were being made by the two aging film stars, Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan, to test the political waters in the hope that they will be able to fill the vacuum created by Jayalalithaa's unexpected death. Now, they will probably have second thoughts, especially Rajinikanth who was showing an interest in the BJP. Since the BJP will undoubtedly be interested more in Dinakaran than in Rajinikanth, the latter will have to bide his time till a more opportune moment, while Kamal Haasan will wonder about the political worth of both the DMK and the Congress, the parties closer to his heart than the AIADMK and the BJP. (IPA)



Buddhist devotees taking selfie in front of the Great statue of Lord Buddha in Bodhgaya on foggy morning of Sunday.

Pakistan: Through the looking glass

FOCUS

Sushil Kutty

"It's a great huge game of chess that's being played – all over the world – if this is the world at all, you know." – Lewis Carroll

Where were they? What place was this? The flight from Dubai, and then here they were – the wife and mother of Kulbhushan Jadhav abducted by Pakistan and sentenced to death for "spying" – in an SUV, to where? What were they thinking when they said "humanitarian gesture"? As it turned out, it was a huge game of chess being played out in Pakistan, it was Christmas and the 41st birthday anniversary of the father of Pakistan Qaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. And "Pakistan permits the meeting of wife and mother of Commander Jadhav with him, as a humanitarian gesture, on the birthday of the Father of the nation." Qaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, "tweeted Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammad Faisal, full of words.

The SUV rounded corners and shot straight lines in Islamabad to the Foreign Office, where the world media waited. Jadhav's mother, Avanti and wife, Chetankul went through the door into the Agha Shahi Block of the Foreign Ministry building and stepped right into the mad-mad Looking Glass World of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. This was crazy, like: "But I don't want to go among mad people," Alice remarked. "Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat. "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad." "How do you know I'm mad?" said Alice. "You must be," said the Cat, "or you wouldn't have come here."

The "humanitarian gesture" was a publicity stunt. Something anything to present to the International Court of Justice in January 2018. Some Queen's Counsel's quirky idea to make a "grand gesture" and then it will be, "off with his head!" Things are getting "curiouser and curiouser" in Pakistan. Avanti and Chetankul looked through the looking glass at their White Knight on the other side of the Don't Touch Me Glass.

Orders were only to talk in English. Ailah Rehman Kartia Ha was all talk and thunder. Eyes bored into them: A video camera on a tripod, a CCTV camera high on the wall. And a woman foreign service officer to keep an eye on them. There was a wall clock on the other side of the glass. Telephones on both sides of the glass were taped to the mantle as if they would take off on their own. Where to? Insecure Pakistanis. Mad Hatters in a funk.

If they had known this was what Pakistan's "humanitarian gesture" meant, they might not have come. They were in a strange parallel world. In the twilight zone, where all the men looked like Johnny Depp in the movie Alice in Wonderland. The Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman Mohammad Faisal was Humpty Dumpty, full of

words and nothing of substance. And the woman foreign officer in the shipping container – was she the evil Red Queen? They were pawns, the wife and mother of Jadhav. Maybe Jadhav, too. And pawns unlike King and Queen cannot see their positions on the chessboard. Inside the Glass Room, it was surreal, if only they could walk through the Looking Glass. The shipping container was salvaged two days before to make a symmetrical room-shape to place Pakistan's 'catch' of the century in. The Pakistani Mad Hatters made a spectacle of Chetankul and Avanti. And then they made a spectacle of themselves. Humpty Dumpty Mohammad Faisal sat on a wall and droned about India's face of terror, the deadly spy Kulbhushan Jadhav, who could be at three places at the same time. A

short video statement of Jadhav thanked Pakistan for allowing him to "meet" his mother and wife. But the time at the bottom of the screen said it was recorded before Jadhav "met" Avanti and Chetankul through the looking glass. Shameless critics the Pakistanis were. A medical report obtained from a German doctor in Dubai made no sense to Delhi docs. Pakistan's "humanitarian gesture" stank of nervous gulf. The Pakistanis live in a fantasy world, in an inversion of reality: A Glass World where all preconceived notions of language and manners and the way the world worked went for a toss. Where ordinary people were pawns, which can move only one square at a time.

On Monday, Pakistani newspaper Dawn said Indian author Pankaj Pandey was eyeing Pakistani actor Fawad Khan to play lead role in the movie adaptation of his book Love Curry. Like Lewis Carroll said, "Life, what is it but a dream?" But on Monday two women saw through the looking glass the nightmare that Pakistan was and will be. (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	

- ACROSS**
- 1 Thunder god
 - 4 Lose colour
 - 8 Make brown
 - 9 Leave out
 - 10 Journey
 - 11 Play
 - 12 Quote
 - 14 Mouse-coloured
 - 15 Tree
 - 17 Small deer
 - 19 Gratitude
 - 21 August
 - 23 Wanderer
 - 26 Flasure
 - 27 Baking chamber
 - 28 No score
 - 29 Hospital room
 - 30 Heavy substance
- DOWN**
- 1 Stuffed laugh
 - 2 Of the ear
 - 3 Swift
 - 4 In favour of
 - 5 Astound
 - 6 Obscure
 - 7 Greek letter
 - 11 Strong fabric
 - 13 Private teacher
 - 16 Dissolved
 - 18 Young eel
 - 22 African river
 - 23 Argue
 - 24 Sigs
 - 25 Conclude

SUDOKU: 2071

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

Yesterday's Solution 2070

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

Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 079

C	U	T	M	E	N	T	O	R
A	P	E	X	I	N	E	R	A
L	P	S	I	N	N	E	D	
M	I	S	S	A	L	O	A	
N	U	E	R	R	O	R		
I	N	T	E	R	U	D		
D	I	O	V	E	R	D	O	
L	E	A	G	U	E	O	P	
E	R	R	G	E	R	M	E	
D	E	A	L	E	R	P	E	N

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