

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

July 2018



“Let us all work for the Greatness of India.”

- The Mother

Year 9

Issue 4

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SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella

Common name: Indian blanket, Blanket flower, Fire-wheels

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CONTENTS

**Four Years of The Modi Government:
An Assessment 6**

A Declaration

We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

We do not fight against any form of government.

We do not fight against any social class.

We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, Truth, and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.

— The Mother

(Collected works of the Mother 13, p. 124-25)

FOUR YEARS OF THE MODI GOVERNMENT: AN ASSESSMENT

The Modi government has completed four years in office and the 2019 general elections are just round the corner. This is an opportune moment to review the achievements and failures of the present government, which has been unlike any other of the past. It has unleashed a series of reforms based on pure conviction and national interest instead of favouring the status quo or following the established procedures of the past.

When this government initially assumed office and in the first one-and-a-half years of its governance, it was widely touted that its much-hyped policies – like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Jan Dhan Yojana, rural electrification programme, Clean Ganga Mission etc. – were a repackaging of the UPA era policies. There was little truth in this claim because, even when some of the programs were a continuation of the past, they were charged with a new spirit and zeal overflowing from the dedicated heart of the new Prime Minister filled, almost exclusively, with the love for India and its great spiritual culture. However, given the highly corrupt, obscurantist and lethargic nature of the governmental machinery which had been progressively so groomed under the corrupt (so called) secular governments during the past six decades, the new spirit and dispensation at the top failed – in the case of some of the BJP ruled states and even some sections of the Central Government – to penetrate to the lower levels of the administration and can be shown to account for most of the failures of the Modi government.

By showing the gumption and taking the electoral risk to pass two of the most politically sensitive reforms which have been stalled for many years – crackdown on black money via demonetization and the passage of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) – the government

showed that its economic approach was anything but the stagnant approach of the UPA era. For some time now, even the allegations of unemployment and slow economic growth have been effectively countered as the reforms are becoming entrenched within the system.

Notwithstanding the slower-than-hoped-for implementation part, the responsibility of which rests on our unruly and apathetic administration, the vision and its alignment with national interests is unquestionable. And this extends to all areas of the system – the economic, the political, the social, educational & cultural, the scientific, agricultural & environmental and security & foreign policy. Major reforms have occurred in all these areas, which mark a sharp break from the past and signal the government's intent to chart an original and wholesome path.

Reforms in the Political System

Arguably, amongst the most significant reforms are those that can be discerned in the political system. The biggest impact of this government has been on the political process in the country. These reforms did not take the shape of material changes, but occurred at a more subtle level. The extreme polarization and the combined obstruction presented by an Opposition relying solely on falsehoods and dirty politics was pitted against the government, leading to an extreme vitiation of the political process. While none of the politicians could engineer communal riots like before, they left no stone unturned in the effort to form a counter-productive Dalit-Muslim-backward caste axis, in various states. Dalits, in particular, were used as pawns, as seen in the Bharat Bandh engineered before the Karnataka assembly elections.

The judiciary, for the first time in its history, was politicized and vitiated, as seen during the Judges conference of January 12th. The government, which was going ahead full steam, determined to see the conclusion of cases like the Ayodhya dispute, the 1984 riots case

and other cases that would have put the Opposition in a dock, had to contend with political spanners being thrown to slow things down. The outrageous bid, based on imaginary causes, to impeach the Chief Justice by Congress MP Kapil Sibal and company, was nothing but a desperate attempt to avoid judgement on issues that may favour the ruling party in the next elections.

The plight of the judiciary served to give us a lesson on the transitional and utilitarian nature of institutions, and, the futility of talking about justice in a country rife with commercialized and selfish interests. ***Similarly, the debates and controversies surrounding the meaning and interpretation of the Constitution*** – as exemplified through the Ananth Kumar Hegde controversy and the thorough re-reading of BR Ambedkar that took place – ***helped to alert people to fallacies that, in the name of constitutional process and secularism, were rampant during the last few decades. The people are now coming to realize that nothing is fixed and no institutional or political process or ideal – like secularism – is sacrosanct.*** Thus, the dismissal of intellectual heavyweights – and their monopoly over ‘isms’ occurred with rapidity in the past four years of this government. ***For the first time, the nation as a whole questioned the sacrosanct nature of institutions and of even the present Constitution – a major achievement in advancing the awakening of the national psyche that occurred during the course of this government.***

Yes, it is undeniable that a spate of lynching and mob mentality instances have also been witnessed. But those are the end-products of the secular age – the insecurity deep within the common man that the administration and the police system are corrupt and biased and “pseudo secular” or operate on the strings pulled by the higher-ups, and therefore, incapable of delivering justice. These instances, therefore, reflect less irrationality and more a loss of people’s faith in the system of this country. More than anything, they are a brutal

indictment of the extreme utilitarian psychology and the ever-growing corruption of the players in the judicial system.

Over-emphasis on these instances has been the route taken by the opposition forces and media for purely political reasons. These instances are results of narrow localized causes, rather than being indicative of anything larger in the near future. What is of relevance to the 4 years' record of this government is that the citizens have become an active part of the conversation on the political system, taking a keen interest in the destiny of their country.

Despite most of the successive sessions of the Parliament being a complete wash-out since 2014, politics has never been as recharged and as effective as at this time. The questioning of institutions and the changes in the political process have been accompanied by mobilizations on the ground and state elections have become an important field for that. In particular, the Uttar Pradesh elections of 2017, the Karnataka elections, the elections in Tripura, the massive sweep across the North-east, the political sustenance in Kashmir has, time-and-again shown the direction in which the winds are blowing.

Despite the best efforts of the opposition to exploit the Dalit and Other Backward Classes (OBC) as vote-banks, the movement towards national unification and regeneration – spearheaded through the instrumentality of the BJP-RSS – seems irreversible. The challenges mounted by the pseudo secularist lobby have all been met head-on and defeated to a large extent. In tribal areas like Jharkhand and in states across North-east, the RSS which has been working to counter the challenge of religious conversion among the tribal populations saw actual political muscle to help the work along.

One of the biggest success with the Adivasis in recent times can be seen through the changes occurring in the former Maoist area of West Bengal's tribal-dominated Jungle Mahal region, which

consists of four districts – Purulia, Midnapore, Bankura and Jhargram – where the BJP, backed solidly by RSS’s groundwork of the last 50 years, managed to perform extremely well in the recent Panchayat elections. Almost the entire leadership of the Left has shifted en masse to the BJP in the last few years, while TMC’s local units have been beset with corruption, in a region that holds immense symbolic political significance. The results have since had TMC – which has shut down hundreds of RSS’s schools in the region and the state – scurrying to the area to turn things around, launching bloody attacks on BJP cadre and engaging in facile Hindu appeasement to “counter” the BJP, much like what CPI (M) is doing in Kerala.

The fact that secularist and atheist parties like the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) of Kerala, the Congress and the Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal, are reduced to disarray – contradictorily, paying insincere lip-service to the Muslim vote-bank when they can and, otherwise, sponsoring and spearheading the celebration of Hindu festivals, shows that the Hindu bedrock of culture and backbone of this country and its majority religion, has finally begun to count for something. These atheist and hostile parties are prancing about in a series of reactions, as the Modi government is sweeping out the political culture of opportunism – and that does count for the beginning of a big political change. If the momentum is sustained after 2019, these changes will become irreversible.

No other country has, perhaps, seen the silent majority being suppressed and made to feel guilty and inferior as in India during the pre-2014 era. But all that is changing. The progress has reached a stage wherein even the quiet and unassuming religious devotion of southern states like Kerala is battling for self-expression and assertion. These are significant developments which would not have been possible if an enabling environment had not been provided to

Hindu cultural organizations and if the government and Modi, in particular, had not made nationalism the government's topmost constant priority. To understand the import, just contrast the current environment with the scenario before 2014, when leaders from the Congress party had started using the term 'Hindu terrorism' and slapped a number of dubious terrorism charges against Hindu organizations. Now the same party is making a fool of itself, alternately trying to appease Hindus and Muslims.

However, these trends – though substantial – are obstructed and unable to realize their full potential due to deeply entrenched attitudes of selfishness and lethargy amongst the members of the administration and the local political class. Deep divisions amongst the members of state-level leadership – concerned with only their own ambition or trying to outsmart the RSS – pursuit of corrupt means by local politicians and administration, continues to have an alienating effect, despite the work being done by Mr. Modi. The Kerala BJP has been without a leader for the last few months, and, the Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh BJP is torn by infighting and ambitions. This adversely affects the social coalitions built to get people together by an increased outreach to the people. Its results have been visible in periodic by-poll losses suffered by the BJP in local elections in states like UP, Bihar and Rajasthan.

Overconfidence – bordering on arrogance – is, therefore, a weak point of certain leadership rungs of this government. Besides this, the administration is still unchanged and has been entrenched for the last few decades. A case in point is the ongoing national citizens' registration process in Assam in tandem with efforts to give reality to Modi's vision of granting citizenship and refuge to non-Muslim minorities from neighbouring Muslim countries. Narrow and separatist Assamese nationalism prevents it, so that even where Bengali Hindus have actually been able to enter, they have been

harassed by the administration and many have had to return to their original countries like Bangladesh to face persecution there.

This means that even a constitutional reform, grounded in national interest, like the Citizenship Bill, 2016, still remains stuck in the Parliament. And even though, through administrative orders, refuge has begun to be provided to immigrants on religious grounds, the entire process is rife with inefficiency, lack of empathy for those fleeing persecution, and, lack of oneness on religious and nationalistic grounds, mainly due to the apathetic and non-nationalist nature of the administration.

That a grand vision should take such a disabling turn throws cold water on everything and sets things back a couple of years, at least. It reminds us that, despite all the changes, Indians still have a very long way to go to overcome their narrow utilitarian selfishness and to learn to place the nation before their narrow self-interest. In such cases, Modi's vision has remained limited to his good intentions, and has failed to get translated into action.

Cultural and Educational Reforms

While political reforms have seen steady progress under the Modi government, it is in the field of education that this government has worked the hardest. The attempt has been to completely root out the entrenched Leftist system from the higher education sector. The reforms in the educational system have picked up pace during the last one-and-a-half years, ever since the transfer of Smriti Irani from the HRD ministry. Her successor, Mr. Prakash Javadekar, started from the scratch and sought to fulfill the education-related promises originally made by the BJP. In recent times, this has meant a series of reforms at both school-level and higher education level. Many of the mindless policies of the past – aped through the Western imports – have been overturned.

The government has amended the Right to Education Act and created a mechanism for monitoring social programmes such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the much-hyped Class Xth board examination has been reinstated, while the 'no-detention policy' up till Class VIIIth has been scrapped. The experience of parents had proven that these policies encouraged mediocrity among the children. ***It is, however, a myth that superficial measures such as simply letting up the pressure on students will actually promote 'innovative' or 'creative' thinking. The question is not of pressure on students, but of an environment that promotes mediocrity and non-thinking. India cannot become a Japan or a USA, even if that was considered desirable – as it is by most modernised and Westernized intelligentsia – which is very far from being the case when one looks at the spiritual culture and tradition of this country. However, we cannot reproduce here through merely artificial means even this undesirable thing, undesirable because what India needs at this critical juncture of its own and humanity's future is not an education system which is alien to its soul but that which fosters and is in turn fostered by the genius of its deep spiritual culture. Can this alien system succeed even superficially here without doing anything about the culture of mediocrity and inability to think that pervades all levels. The Modi government – in the last one-and-a half years – has been working to bring in a slew of changes which cannot be reasonably expected, as yet, to do more than to restore some vitality on the surface functioning of things in this field. In their attempt at injecting vitality, the universities in other Asian countries have gone way ahead of us. China, Hong Kong and Japan have grown exponentially in this field and are now on the verge of replacing the UK and Australia as the education destination for modern materialistic youth.***

Actually, the system of education that we have managed to

arrive at in India is soulless like in the West and also lifeless unlike in the West. Thus the education provided under the present educational setup in India is both lifeless and soulless. This has brought about an unmitigated disaster in this crucial field which, being at the root of the functioning of all the political, social, economic and administrative machinery of the country, has helped decay to percolate into every possible nook and corner of the psychological structure of the country.

It would be futile to pretend that anything worth much is left in the higher education of today. It is nothing but another field which is a slave to the pervading commercial capitalist economy of today. The most sold-out, in this respect, are the top universities of US and UK. The majority of Indian students – who can afford to – rush ‘abroad’ to study. It would be better to have institutions of respect and eminence – even if only in the Western sense of the term – in India while retaining our integrity, like some other Asian countries have done.

The condition of some of the most famous institutions of learning in India is truly deplorable. Consider the case of the premier Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) – a hotbed of the most anti-national discourses imaginable. One of the singular achievements of this government has been to tame JNU. By imposing compulsory attendance, changing the pattern of appointments, and mandating computer-based entrance exams, already, a beginning has been made to root out the ultra-Left rabid tendencies. Similarly, in the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), the appeasement policies instituted by the Congress in 1981 by declaring a central university a minority institution are now being questioned, forcing it to have a quota system. The question is not of quota here, but of propagating such an inward-looking religious attitude in a central university, simply because a certain political party wanted to appease a community.

Instead of removing religious prejudices, the system encourages them. The same goes for Jamia Milia Islamia university.

Higher education will also be brought directly under the control of the central government, as is revealed in the plans to scrap the University Grants Commission (UGC) and replace it by a Higher Education Commission of India (HECI). The new body will not be empowered to give grants, which will fall under the domain of the HRD ministry or the state universities can look at partial market arrangements. The system is designed to wake everyone up from their slumber and completely minimize the role of the corrupt and tamasic bureaucracy, which had become empowered through the medium of the UGC.

However, within the sphere of education also, certain important promises like modernization of madrassas remain unfulfilled. This is an important area in which the government should have started work, since the madrassas have become a hotbed of anti-national and polarizing instruction – causing even many Muslim countries to shut them down. Their activities can have a disastrous future impact.

In the social sphere, their impact is visible in the rapid-fire spread of hardline, radical Wahhabi Islamic organizations, such as the Popular Front of India (PFI), which has spread its influence beyond Kerala to many other states. While the RSS has left no stone unturned in the social sphere to mobilize the people, the threat from such outfits has also grown due to politics of appeasement and lethargy.

Yet, despite this, and despite the rabid attacks launched by prominent Western and Indian media on the Modi government, blaming it for “Hindu extremism”, radical Islam has not been able to find root in India. Even the *Chinese* media, commented:

“Why does it seem that Muslims in India have remained largely apart from the radicalization that has happened to Muslim groups in

other parts of the world?... In Asia as a whole, Islam forms an arc that includes the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, southern Thailand, southern Myanmar, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Central Asian countries. There are tensions at various degrees at junctions in this arc where it encounters other religions and ethnicity, but a dent exists in the Indian portion of this arc...The lack of Islamic extremists in India has helped determine its role in Asia.” (ET Online, 2017).

This analysis is accurate, as India has indeed broken the arc of Islam and despite the festering problems in states like Jammu and Kashmir, ISIS or other terrorist organizations were unable to find ground in India. ***The main reason for this is India’s strong culture of Sanatana Dharma.***

Social Reform

In the social sphere, the Modi government has initiated several reforms in areas such as labour laws and various social and regulatory schemes. Healthcare has seen particular progress. The prices of medicines and medical implants have been brought down, while the prices of metal stents and biodegradable stents have also been curbed – to the extent of it becoming a touchy issue with the US. Immunization programme – and free medicines through Jan Aushadhi Kendras have also been very popular among people.

Over the last four years, there have also been steady changes in labour laws – an attempt to quietly dismantle the socialist legacy and put into place a more competitive environment, for both labour and industry. Except for a strike or two sponsored by Left-affiliated political trade unions, there has been negligible unrest within the labour class.

Macro policies have been put into place. Besides amendments to the Factories Act, which liberalized the regulations, the government, through the ‘National Employability Enhancement

Mission' (NEEM) has made training mandatory before employment. Rules of permanent employment have also been changed to 'fixed term employment' in all sectors – a particularly big reform – to make things easier for industries and attract more investment. Changing the rules of employment will also keep unionization in check giving a fillip to industry. The regulations were stifling and needed to be made more flexible. ***Recall the horrors of trade union protests and how violently they unfolded in case of Maruti workers case in Manesar or the bloody history of Nandigram and Singur land acquisition projects – no such unrest has been witnessed in the last 4 years.***

Such cases often occur in case of governments that hanker after industrial development and yet cannot help but appease their 'farmer-worker-backward groups and castes' lobby. The Modi government has not shown double standards on these counts, leading to less strife and conflicts, including the ones that have been purely politically engineered.

Despite labour reforms, the promise of land reform – especially amending the land acquisition Act of 2013 – crumbled early on in 2015 itself due to protests, and has not, since, seen any work. This is not necessarily a bad thing – in areas like land acquisition, no matter what central law is passed, the process will always remain heavily discretionary. And since land is a state subject, actions by any central government would just be tokenism. In any case, if there is a dispute between the state and the people, the litigation can drag on for years and the scope of corruption will remain high. This was not a priority item, and rightly so.

However, much progress has been made in other areas. As an important part of its social and labour reforms, the government has passed the landmark Maternity Bill, which allows six months leave to pregnant mothers. The push towards improving the lot of women

has been undeniable under this government. The last four years have witnessed the attempt to realize some landmark legislations like the Triple Talaq Bill – over which there has been much debate through the Supreme Court verdict. It cannot be denied that the government consistently worked, through this, to implement the Uniform Civil Code – the possibility of realization of this Bill had the Muslim-appealing Opposition up in arms against the government, even as Muslim women – including prominent Muslim women activists – were heavily in favour of ending the injustices perpetrated by Muslim men.

The bill, if passed, would have questioned one of the basic tenets of the Indian constitutional process – that of guaranteeing a separate domain of personal laws to minority religions so that they can practice their own legal codes. As the Shah Bano case of 1985 showed, the politics of minority appeasement had made it degenerate into a parallel legal system. The message that the then Rajiv Gandhi government gave was that this arbitrary parallel legal system erected by the Muslim personal laws could not be challenged by even the highest court of this country – since the then government passed legislation to overturn the Supreme Court judgement favouring Shah Bano.

Till date, no political party, other than the BJP, has had the guts to come out and challenge this outrageous anomaly. B.R Ambedkar – whom these regional parties like to quote in constitutional jurisprudence matters – was completely against having personal laws. While he reformed the Hindu social stigmatizing practices through the Uniform Civil Code, he wanted it also imposed on Muslims. But the Congress, till date, has never accepted this.

The most recent reminder of this came in the form of a bold suggestion – a few days ago – by the All India Muslim Personal Law Board that Sharia Courts are parallel systems of justice and can issue

valid fatwas etc. against people. The fact that this is still happening and that the Uniform Civil Code has not yet become a reality, shows that the government has a long way to go to reform Muslim society.

In fact, all social matters have been vitiated to a great extent. Over the last few decades of Congress rule, the entire constitutional jurisprudence has been turned on its head. Much like the father of the Constitution was stabbed in the back on the issue of personal laws, the successive governments of the day also did not let his vision of Dalit integration into Indian mainstream become a reality. ***While the reservation system was always meant to be temporary as originally envisaged, successive political parties have kept the Dalits subjugated by using it as a political weapon. It's already been 70 years. 30 years hence it will be a century. Are we still correcting historical injustices or sustaining a vitiated political ploy of 'secular' parties to keep this country divided? It is vital to recall that after Independence, the Congress had been lobbying to give reservation to Muslims mainly, rather than the Dalits. That it failed in its designs has been a saving grace.***

Reforms addressing contentious issues – of a subverted and perverted system – form the backbone of any social reform programme. All social legislation¹ would be merely facile and ineffective unless the government of the day gets rid of these fundamental perversions. You can introduce all kinds of bills on inclusive housing, financial inclusion and gender empowerment, but how can inclusion really take place if the backbone of the system is based on such deep-rooted divisions? It is to the credit of the ruling

¹ The government has done its bit by introducing a plethora of successful social legislation, whose target-completion rate has performed reasonably well – such as, rural and urban 'Housing for all'; the rural electrification programme and the recent ambitious plan to provide electricity for all, which has performed well; Ujjwala Yojana to provide LPG connections to all households; Swachh Bharat Mission, which has seen a good rate of realization.

government that it recognized these issues and at least tried to work on them while simultaneously introducing facile social legislation. The process has just begun and is absurdly opposed at every step by frequent politically engineered protests. The entrenched interests will not let the status quo of decades change that easily, even though they have caught on to the public mood somewhat and are veering wildly between all kinds of inconsistencies.

That the mentality is still perverted is reflected in Rahul Gandhi's assurance that Congress is a party of the Muslims. Despite all denials, the Urdu magazine which published the statement, stood by its claim. It is reminiscent of Manmohan Singh's earlier allusion that Muslims have the first right to national resources. This shows that there still a long way to go. ***Unless the poisonous system is reformed and social and welfare schemes are preceded by national integration (like in countries like China and Japan), there is very little chance of social legislation for communities like women and Dalits actually succeeding.***

Administration:

While the main obstruction to the success of civic welfare and social policies is the necessity of national unity, the related reason for hiccoughs is administration. ***As former Planning Commission member, NC Saxena, had aptly pointed out, that in the last four years, the only things that have increased in the bureaucracy are ignorance and arrogance*** (Saxena 2018). This is a trend which even the Modi government has not been able to arrest. According to Mr. Saxena, the bureaucracy refuses to come out of its mediocrity and its arrogance prevents it from doing so. Entrenched within the system as liabilities, they have become lethargic and corrupt.

As Mr. Saxena further pointed out, their level of intellectual brilliance, at the most, extends to reading current affairs magazines, and this shows in their conversation and working. That they lack in-

depth knowledge or genuine smartness has been flagged by another retired bureaucrat (Lt. Gen. Shankar 2018), according to whom, ***it was indeed shocking to discover that in the arms procurement section, a former veterinary officer was presiding over arms procurement negotiations with the US, and despite the government recently opening lateral entry mechanisms into many ministries, the Ministry of Defence remains untouched.***

The lateral entry of qualified private sector candidates at joint secretary level is too small a step for a bureaucracy that needs a major overhaul. ***As Mr. Saxena rightly pointed out, having 10 joint secretaries from good background will do nothing to improve the rest of 390 or so inefficient ones languishing in the system. In many cases, like the Ministry of Defence, which is a maze of total corrupt sophistication that even well-meaning politicians have been unable to master, a really good shake-up of the bureaucracy is essential in national interest, to say the least.***

They are, perhaps, the most denationalized lot, having taken the meaning of technocracy to a whole new level and reducing it to mediocracy and corruption. Modi has done his best with them. In a few cases, intermittent and rare results are visible in some states. In Uttarakhand, for instance, some honest officers and administrators refuse to bow to the whims of local BJP and Congress MLAs and have been able to make a change and make people happy. But these are localized and rare trends.

Unless this aspect is improved, the government may come up with all kinds of visionary social programmes and spend a lot of money, but their botched-up implementation and confused planning, will make a mess of things or lead to poor delivery. ***The government's vision and money hardly reach the lowest rungs of people, thanks to intermediaries and corrupt bureaucracy. The contradictions are visible in many of the current welfare schemes also.*** For instance,

the government's flagship rural electrification programme, though a success in terms of number of villages reached, fails to address the question of whether the people are actually getting electricity. Despite connecting houses to the grid and providing free connections, these infrastructural provisions are unable to address the problem of consumption which many can't afford. The same is the case with free LPG connections, but little consumption, and many bank accounts under Jan Dhan Yojana, but mostly inoperative. Schemes like Mudra and Skill India have been botched up by departmental, bureaucratic overlaps and confusions.

The tendency of the bureaucrats handling these programmes has been to merely chase numbers and targets, instead of truly wanting to implement the original vision and purpose. As expected, ***the tendency of the implementers to mechanize everything has kept social welfare programmes at an ordinary and uninspiring level, even though***, complaints of favoritism and bias have drastically come down under this government due to the Modi government's landmark initiation of e-tendering process for government contracts – in the wake of coal scam and spectrum scam in the UPA era.

Similarly, the government has performed very well in another area of chronic corruption and *babudom* viz. infrastructure. It has set into motion a new integrated infrastructure programme covering roads, waterways, airports and railways. With the heavily indebted nature of many large companies involved, the Centre took the responsibility and has also sought to bring down the logistics costs from 14% to about 8%, to make the economy competitive (Sood 2018). The highways have seen a drastic revival by increase in the pace of land acquisition and with the government bearing 40% cost for the developer to start work.

The government has also progressed in developing infrastructure in critical border areas, especially in the LoC and the North-east. Of

special mention is the Zojila tunnel to provide connectivity to Srinagar, Kargil and Leh, which will give a fillip to business and the army. ***By taking ownership of infrastructure and showing immense ambition in making India's transport infrastructure world class*** – through projects like Sagarmala (for ports), Bharatmala (for roads) and regional connectivity for airports – ***the government has turned around the fortunes of a sector historically plagued by intense corruption and crime and hopelessness.***

Environment and Agriculture:

Interestingly, progress has been witnessed in areas with global spill-overs, where diplomats have been more active and where the scope for political corruption is less. Under Modi, India, along with France, has spearheaded the leadership of the International Solar Alliance (ISA), whose headquarters are based in Gurgaon, and has added immense renewable energy capacity, especially in the area of solar energy.

ISA, in particular, is a landmark initiative, since it is not only environmental, but highly political as well. ***For the first time, under Modi, India has come to a stage where it has become one of the major determining powers and contributors to environmental negotiations, unlike previous years, where it merely used to be a major emitter country always on the defensive. ISA means that India has effectively assumed the mantle of leadership of the vast number of Afro-Asian countries and Pacific islands, who, for years, have been begging the developed world to release some finance and technology to meet their climate change targets. Since the ISA 'sunshine countries' plan to raise their own funding by leveraging their advantage in access to solar energy, they will no longer need to rely on the West. Who knows, in future, it might even become more significant than the toothless Paris Agreement on Climate Change.***

India is rapidly changing the rules of global political diplomacy in environment and, domestically, progressing by leaps and bounds, in adding its renewable energy capacity – increasing its renewable energy capacity from 33,791 MW in 2014 to 108,000 MW in 2017. ***There has not been even a single scam or violation of rights, unlike the UPA era, which had a record of bad environmental policies, a poor international image, a major scam under minister Jayanti Natarajan and a heavy violation of rights and suppression of people in areas like Niyamgiri in Odisha. No matter how much Rahul Gandhi pretends to sympathize with the Niyamgiri tribals now, it is undeniable that their mass oppression occurred under a Congress central government and with the involvement of Congress ministers. It is also undeniable that the current government has never tolerated the kind of lawlessness that prevailed during the previous regime.***

Moralistic preachers – especially this new breed of self-certified “climate activists” – will always find ways to protest against something or the other – although, under the NDA government, their protests have been minimal, though they have tried all possible means to spread rumours. For, ***if these “activists” don’t protest, then how will they earn their livelihood? Their main concern is how to make money out of the environment or climate crisis. The more the crisis, the more lucrative become the ways available to make money. The worse the situation gets, the more lucrative environmental projects the NGOs can grab and the more shrill their voice can become.***

It is, perhaps, one of the most significant achievement of the Modi government that a hostile NGO like Greenpeace – funded, as revealed through informal talks with its former employees, by US intelligence agencies – has been banned in India. Their agenda in India was to compromise national interest in the name of

environment. They were being funded from abroad for this. The previous government – among its numerous sins – also mollicoddled such elements. And why not? For them, it was just another opportunity to get another portion of the spoils of corruption.

Despite Modi's significant achievements in the field of environment, the government is being blamed for puerile reasons. Again these self-certified protectors of environment have been raising a hue and cry over issues like lack of transparency in environmental impact assessments. That's really all they could find – a decades-old problem that is faced by every government and where they have no proof of corruption as yet.

It would be better, perhaps, to focus on genuine drawbacks in this field which all circle back to the bureaucracy. India is facing a genuine problem of increasing vulnerability to extreme weather events, in the form of heat waves, rising frequency of droughts, landslides etc., mounting water shortage and increasing inter-state conflicts over water. To deal with them, the government has come up with plans like interlinking of rivers, increasing the forest cover, etc. The objectives are genuine, but the planning is botched. The work of the experts (read: technocrats and bureaucrats) is insincere and unscientific. In many cases it is corrupt. For instance, they would knowingly plant plantations and monoculture crops and pass that off as increase in green cover.

Similarly, the plan for interlinking rivers leaves much to be desired. ***The government's expert advisors have misled it by suggesting that there is something such as surplus water. The water is simply being diverted from one river to another, and that too by constructing barrages and dams which will disturb the flow of water. It is harmful for the ecology.*** Even Bangladesh has raised objections to it – if India transfers water in its basins in such a way, it will impact Bangladesh too, which is a downstream country. Till date,

these issues remain unresolved.

The culpability of administration is especially visible in botching up the Clean Ganga Mission, where nothing has been achieved. It is riddled with corruption, even though it was Modi's flagship programme. The plan was good, the money spent was unimaginably hefty, the implementation was very poor. The next war may be over water, both between and within nations.

Both China and India have used it as a tool in recent times. India has rattled Pakistan with its issues over the Indus Water Treaty and, recently, by inaugurating the Kishanganga hydropower project in Kashmir. ***China has a vision of global interlinking of rivers across the East Asian region, much like how it plans to become the world's electricity supplier. The former plan is already worrying smaller countries with its prospects of change in flow of water, scarcity of water and increased likelihood of disasters due to changes in ecology.***

Water is also an essential part of agricultural. Indian agriculture is particularly water-intensive and we have a large area served by irrigation – one of the major reasons for wastage of water and depletion of ground water. Increasingly, we have been facing an agrarian crisis also, accompanied by a rise in the number of farmer suicides. With the average income of a farming family hovering at around 1700 rupees per month, the trap of indebtedness and poverty has led to increasing farmer suicides – among small and marginal farmers – for the last few decades. It is a systemic problem whose blame cannot be put on any single government. On the other hand, food grain output has been fine and India, despite aggressive overtures from genetic engineering companies, has so far resisted GM crops other than cotton, which has already become a cause of death and worry for those cultivating Bt Cotton.

Intervention from middle men in the supply chain has also led to chronic problems due to which farmers don't get the right price

for their produce. The Modi government has extensively worked on this problem. It is giving a fillip to technology to reduce the role of middlemen. For instance, agri-tech companies are introducing computerized platforms to connect farmers directly to buyers, completely eliminating the role of middle-men. Similarly, programmes like soil health card scheme, linking land records with Aadhar, helping to forecast what crops to plant etc. are some of the ideas of the government. The implementation continues to be a grave issue in a corrupt bureaucratic machinery, leading to hiccoughs in many ambitious plans, and non-materialization of various funds envisioned by the government.

Paradoxically, what gets highlighted in the media are purely political aspects – extensive farmer protests, clashes in areas like Mandsaur, politics over loan waiver and Minimum Support Prices etc. It is little realized that the virulent farmer protests seen during the tenure of Modi government have been politically motivated. ***Farmer lobbies, in this country, have been the strongest political force since the 1980s, since the days of Charan Singh and Tiktait. One should not forget how they are capable of engaging in goonda raj and holding the government to ransom. Today's organizations and farmer leaders hobnob with politicians from ruling or opposition parties, depending who they want to blackmail at a particular point. They are leading a life of easy access to political power, and yet, their main constituency viz. the farmers are suffering. Just like Muslims are used as a vote-bank by secular fronts, so farmers are used as a vote-bank by farmer lobbies.***

Most of the farmer protests have been organized and well-planned. They were spearheaded by Left-wing unions. The hotbed was, paradoxically, states like Madhya Pradesh, where the politicized Mandsaur violence occurred. Madhya Pradesh has been at the forefront of agricultural progress under the BJP-led government of

Shivraj Singh Chouhan, for more than a decade. It has consistently witnessed a 10% year-on-year agricultural growth for the last 12 years. During the last five years, 18% growth in agriculture has been recorded.

The state not only provided all facilities, like power supply, to ensure smooth irrigation, but also encouraged farmers to produce more by offering a premium on the government MSP, leading to a record production of 44 million tonnes of food grain during 2016-17 and a 32% increase in farm incomes during the same year. In order to deal with the problem of price crashes due to high output, the state is actively working on improving farmers' linkages with industry. From the per capita net state domestic product of Rs 15,400 in 2004-05, MP finally breached the Rs 50,000 mark in 2014-15 at current prices (Swarajya 2017).

Thus, overall, agriculture has seen progress under Modi government. Hiccoughs have been due to chronic problems and not because of lack of new programmes or vision on the part of the government.

Science:

India has seen accelerated contribution in the field of science and technology in the last few years, in a number of fields such as space technology, quantum computing, artificial intelligence and developments like breakthroughs in gravitational wave and neutrino research. Since ancient times, India has been a prolific country in the field of science.

Sri Aurobindo has said, "If by nature is meant physical Nature, the plain truth is that no nation before the modern epoch carried scientific research so far and with such signal success as India of ancient times...Indian science came abruptly to a halt somewhere about the thirteenth century and a period of darkness and inactivity

prevented it from proceeding forward or sharing at once in the vast modern development of scientific knowledge.” (CWSA 20: 121-124)

It is this legacy of India’s prolific record as a leader in the field in ancient times that the present government is trying to invoke, encouraging breakthrough innovation, invocation of our lost heritage and an attempt to awake Indian science from the deep slumber that has beset it since ages. The attempt is still very feeble and sporadic and without a guiding light, but has happened nonetheless.

The most populous contributions have been through India’s space programme. India is now a part of an elite club of nations in terms of its space programme. The Mangalyaan Mission or the Mars Orbiter Mission of 2017 made India the fourth country after US, EU and former Soviet Union to reach Mars and the first one to do so in its first attempt. It showed India’s capabilities and rocket launch systems and will be used by the country to study the Martian atmosphere. In the same year, India scripted a new record of sending 104 satellites in a single mission, overtaking Russia’s sending of 37 satellites in 2014 in a single mission. India’s ISRO is also racing with Elon Musk’s Space X, to develop the first reusable rocket. It is projected to take at least nine more years.

Besides India’s space programme, the contribution of Indian scientists and institutions to the LIGO (Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory) project, has propelled India to an important position in the project. It has now been decided that by 2025, the world’s third gravitational wave detector will be built in India – with the other two being in the US – to help pin-point the origin of the gravitational waves, when there is a collision between massive accelerating objects in space. This would be the start of establishing India’s long work to develop a strategy to create the first gravitational wave observatory in the Asia-Pacific region.

Besides the LIGO, another significant and politically fraught achievement under the current government has been to finally clear the way to establish the India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO), despite sustained environmental protests and political campaign against it in Tamil Nadu. Research on ‘ghost particles’ or neutrinos – which are the most prevalent, after the photons, and emerge from the sun and nuclear fission experiments – can give Indian scientific research a big fillip.

In fact, neutrinos were first detected in India in the Kolar gold mine in the early 1960s, in intense competition between Homi Bhabha and an American physicist who had arrived for the same purpose. It was a ‘race’ in which India managed to stand equally a winner at the time. Yet, it did not take long for India to fall behind in the area. The result is that, today, while conferences in neutrino research happen in countries like UK, Indian scientists attend them as guests with mixed feelings, knowing how India discarded her own legacy and leadership in the area.

Decades after the Kolar discovery, neutrino research has languished, due to political calculations by the Tamil Nadu government in connivance with green activists. It was in 2015, however, that the government commissioned the project, braving intense opposition from environmental activists and regional Tamil parties like MDMK.

India is home to potential for lot of original innovations, despite the shackles put by the general public environment’s dismissal of questions of science. For instance, as recently as December 2017, scientists at the Tata Institute for Fundamental Research in Mumbai discovered that the metal Bismuth has properties of a superconductor, challenging the prevailing wisdom and compelling the world scientific community to at least partially revise a four decades old theory of superconductors which won a Nobel Prize in 1972, and which can no

longer apply to Bismuth. Some physicists are hailing the new discovery as being phenomenal, and especially because it came out of India.

It is a fact that, in general, under the current government, serious scientific intent and ambition has been displayed. Physicists have been particularly happy with the government's boost. Quite recently, the government decided to increase the funding for quantum technologies research in India. Few select countries are progressing on their work in these technologies. China is already giving jitters to the US. Besides having developed the world's first quantum satellite, Micius, China is seriously engaged in using this technology for encryption purposes – where data cannot be broken or hacked into at all – giving it a boost in new levels of spying and possessing an ability to wreak havoc on other nations' systems. It had already sent its first 'unbreakable' code from space in 2016.

It is good that the Indian government is taking a keen interest in this technology. As it is, Indian scientists have already admitted to being 10 years behind. Now, ISRO is beginning to take a lead, by launching a programme for quantum experiments using satellite technology. India is also home to some of the world's best scientists who can take India forward in the new technology. Besides the Department of Science and Technology and ISRO, DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organization) and the PMO (Prime Minister's Office) are also providing funding.

As recently as this July, the PM undertook a major restructuring of DRDO with a view to empowering it, to boost indigenization and domestic industry in order to reduce global reliance for military hardware.

India has also, under the present dispensation, taken Artificial Intelligence (AI) quite seriously. Despite India's late entry into the

field, the government has been taking keen interest in it, establishing India's AI programme recently. While it covers a lot of areas, that is usual. It is really in defence that AI matters the most and where the current global arms race is leading, with China seeming to take a lead. India has started working in these areas, in terms of border securing and surveillance, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), cyber operations, intelligence gathering etc.

While the Border Security Force (BSF) is working on AI-enabled integrated border management, the DRDO, in 2018, has 'successfully tested the Rustom 2 UAV, and is developing a "Multi Agent Robotics Framework" (MARF), a system that will enable the Indian Army's many battlefield robots to collaborate with each other on surveillance and reconnaissance. It is also developing Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive (CBRNe) UAVs to detect radiation, as well as Remotely-Operated Vehicles (ROVs) for surveillance and IED disposal' (Ray 2018).

The government is working on extending integrated AI defence applications to not just the army, but also the navy and the air-force. The forces are enthusiastic about it and want to be on par with global players. Last year, Indian government had unveiled a plan to make India an AI innovation centre of the world by 2030. India plans to use its strong base in Information Technology to do so. One thing that's in the mind of the government is that India needs to catch up fast. Unlike traditional defence technologies, where India is a major buyer rather than producer, India hopes to reverse the roles in an AI-era.

However, while an attempt has been made to infuse some life in the Indian science and technology scene under this government, there is a long way to go and the right spirit is still missing. ***Most of the nations – such as, US and now China – who have excelled in the field in present times, have done so by powering their scientific achievements with some kind of nationalistic vision of greatness***

for the country. And in the times to come, when science has begun to play a greater role in almost all spheres of life – food, agriculture, defence/war, micro-surveillance every minute etc. – this nationalistic vision needs to be combined with the action of the higher consciousness and spirit, otherwise the future of humanity, which is at stake, will suffer.

The action of nationalistic greatness and science powered by utilitarianism needs to give way to the action by the spirit for a nationalistic vision to have any meaning and for science to have any survival without self-destruction. This is where India role becomes important.

For the longest time now, India's action in the field has been subjugated, victim to her people's historical complex fostered by centuries of sustained Occidental attack on her rationality and material achievements and her own lost legacy in the field. Thus, while in present times, it is a common sight to see Indians all over the world driving science, innovation and material progress, they do so on behalf of other countries. Unlike the Chinese and Japanese who go out of their countries with an intention to give back and enhance their greatness, the Indians go out with a complexed mindset and operating in a de-nationalized vacuum, giving back little to their country.

The result is a poverty of life in this area, in spite of the brilliance of some of our countrymen. This is despite the fact that ***India alone possesses the secret of spiritual greatness which can be in harmony with material perfection that is necessary to steer the future of science in the new, changing era. The recent era of a nationalistic vision and material progress can no longer power the science of the future, which is increasingly becoming all-pervasive in its applications and reaching dangerous heights in the hands of the utilitarian spirit. Therefore, an action of spiritual consciousness in***

this field has now become a necessity, which India alone is poised to give.

The action, however, is very rudimentary as of now. The current government is completely oblivious of this reality. What has indeed changed under the present government are two main things. First, for the first time, any Indian government realizes the seriousness of the present applications of science and its changing nature and seeks to infuse scientific achievements with a nationalistic vision, to make India a global power in the field. This has never been the intention before, except for Nehru, in this neglected field. And, second, for the first time, there is a searching attempt to claim some of India's past magnificent spiritual legacy of action in the field of science. It is proving to be unsuccessful and leading to attacks and incredulity, due to both the crudity of the attempt and the historical inferiority complex of our countrymen, of several centuries.

But, for the sake of the future of a humanity increasingly powered by science in an all-pervasive manner in its critical aspects of life, it has now become necessary to shift the power from the utilitarian-nationalist spirit which has been active up till now to an unselfish vision and potential for action – inspired by an unselfish and self-giving attitude – which India alone possesses. Even with the present government, there is a long way to go and a lot more self-awakening needed. The recovery of our past spirit and its powering of the future for action in the humanity calls for nothing short of collective national tapasya.

Economy:

In 2014, the present government inherited a corrupt economy whose fundamentals had been completely eroded by the UPA government. On its part, paradoxically, the UPA had inherited an economy in the pink of health by the previous BJP-led NDA government in 2004. When they left office, it was 7.8%. The UPA

could run the excellent inherited economy for a term, buttressed by global factors, and finally pushed it into doldrums starting 2009, its second term.

When the NDA took office in 1998, the gross non-performing assets ratio in public sector banks was 16% (Nageswaran 2014). The UPA inherited an industrial growth of 5.4%, which came down to 4.2% when it left office in 2014. GDP growth in 2004 was 8.2%, driven by strong manufacturing and agriculture. It was 6.9% in 2014. Year-on-year GDP growth was increasing when Manmohan Singh assumed office in 2004, but was falling when Modi took to the helm. This government, thus, inherited nothing but policy paralysis and corruption (Saurav 2017).

It had to take charge of a battered economy and a corrupt, lethargic bureaucracy, with a bad implementation record. It inherited a huge stockpile of bad loans and bank Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) in 2014, which have only gone out of hand due to UPA-era approvals in cases like the Nirav Modi and Vijay Mallaya case. These are just high profile cases. In the entire public banking sector, all the loans that have gone bad have been inherited from the UPA government. The approvals were given by the previous government, while the defaults have happened under the present government. No loans would turn bad in their initial years. Therefore, to suggest that the stockpile of bad loans has gone up would mean that approvals for loans granted a few years back have backfired.

It is, therefore, quite plausible to say that the NPA crisis has been one of the biggest scams of the UPA era, skillfully pushed under the carpet by the Manmohan Singh government and exposed only in the last two years of the previous government. The UPA government went on a borrowing and spending binge, wasting national resources on the likes of a 76,000 crore farm loan waiver in 2008, the massive food subsidies and MNREGA programme and

various other welfare schemes, which could not reach the people and which it did not have the capability to balance with economic wisdom. The government did not have to scrap a single social welfare programme of the UPA era to bring the economy back under control and take it to new heights.

The result of the UPA era was that ***the Indian economy was brutally exploited to the hilt by the UPA government. It is rich for the opposition to raise issues like jobs and ‘hardships’ suffered by people standing in queues to exchange demonetized notes, when the past government had systematically done something so sinister. The manner in which the UPA had destroyed India’s credit culture, with scant regard for national interest, was appalling. If the UPA had got another term, India would have become a failed case like Greece or Italy. The trend since 1998 is clear – the country has seen economic stability during the NDA years and unmitigated national loot during the two successive terms of UPA.***

Unlike the previous government, Modi had a vision for the economy – that India should become a manufacturing powerhouse, that economy should go digital and advanced by rooting out black money, that the process of procurement of big contracts should become transparent to avoid stunts like a CWG, 2G, 3G, Coal scams and so many other scams, that youth should start their own enterprises, including special programmes for the Dalit youth. They were all based on a vision of Indian economic power. And they enabled Modi to personally unveil reforms like demonetization and GST, at a great risk to the traditional BJP vote-banks.

Overcoming traditional political selfishness to work for the country with the right intention has been displayed, especially in an environment of high diversity and complexity, and being fully aware that our apathetic and pathetic bureaucracy will likely botch various stages of the process and that our generally selfish citizenry

will as usual find ways to flout rules and engage in petty corruption. For, in India, corruption has become a habit of survival in order to defy the irrationality and contradictions of the system and the bureaucracy. Our economy is also determined by petty politics – as debates over 15th Finance Commission terms showed, with southern states hankering for more, based on the absurd 1971 population criterion, or as TDP’s blackmail politics over Andhra’s special status showed.

The ruling party could have played safe and kept its vote-bank intact. But it chose not to. Now that the economy is in an excellent shape – the effects of demonetization are over, the GST finally settling down and leading to some positive outcomes – the political atmosphere before 2019 has vitiated everything. It would be a great loss to the people of this country if a repeat of 2004 were to happen – Congress once again inheriting a robust and healthy economy from a BJP government.

The people must realize that despite the hardships faced in the immediate and short-term, the Indian macro-economy now stands on a solid ground. GST has boosted tax revenues, fiscal deficit is well under control, prices are decent, GDP growth is high, employment figures are decent, foreign direct investment inflows have been at a record of \$52.2 billion annually in the last four years (Thakker 2018) and businesses – with some exceptions and with struggles continuing in small and medium size enterprises – are getting accustomed to and benefitting from GST. The high macroeconomic growth of the last four years has not come by making compromises in terms of larger fiscal deficit either – this is remarkable considering that in 2014, the government had inherited a ballooning and out-of-control fiscal deficit on the top of a paralyzed economy.

Certainly, the pains of GST and demonetization were magnified because of poor implementation by the administration, but that

cannot become the basis of dismissing the major policy overhaul itself. And now the reform is well-entrenched within the system. The war on black money is another story. ***Exercises like demonetization, while exemplary in their unifying potential, cannot yield permanent changes, unless there is a fundamental change in the psyche of the people themselves. When the various rungs of beneficiaries for whom the reform is being done – right from bank employees to the common man – are themselves involved in corruption and bypassing of rules, then a reform like demonetization is bound to have its limits. For, the entire intent behind the reform was the assumption of the goodwill of the people, since there were no monitoring or coercive mechanisms introduced by the government to accompany it. It was an exercise based solely on trust. And it was an exercise based on collective participation and equality. It was bound to have its limits in a society that is fundamentally corrupt and utilitarian, and where the disease besieges every single person.***

As for the hardships being faced by small businesses, the major complaint of small businesses has been everyday corruption in government offices. The babus and ministers are claimed to be charging double or triple the amount of bribes than before. ***The reason is simple – the earlier comfortable system of distribution of spoils in a corrupt system – where everyone, from the top to the bottom, was in harmony in the process of giving and taking of the spoils – has been disturbed. While in some directions, the administration has started working in an honest manner, completely disregarding political pressures to execute public works, in other directions, many of the clogs of the same administration have worsened.*** As a result, the common man and small businesses are suffering. This reality is indefensible.

It will continue to be so. It is not a problem of the central

government peeping into every petty government office from the city to the village, but is more because of the lack of an honest civic culture since a long time, lack of a common nationalistic thread which could evoke mutual empathy and ameliorate the culture of deep-rooted corruption which worsens from time-to-time, and holds our businesses hostage and accelerates criminal activities.

Despite the best intentions of the government at the top, the bureaucracy and local ministers are not on board. The vision and intention may be good, but the traditional elements of the system not just remain the same but have worsened. A valuable example of this would be the state of Maharashtra. The bureaucracy and the police in the state have consistently defied Fadnavis and even kept him in dark about important matters. The result is that the good work being done by the government is neither reaching the people nor being communicated to them. Instances like complaints of a Maharashtra Principal Secretary tearing up a letter by the Chief Minister reveal the kind of active opposition Fadnavis is facing from the bureaucracy (Tare 2018). It is only the attempts by the political leadership that are sustaining the success of the government. The bureaucracy has left no stone unturned in challenging the authority of the CM.

If this is the level of arrogance, corruption and lethargy displayed in the administration, then the probabilities of realization of social and economic programmes is indeed very minimal. At the other end, however, the purely macro-economic record – not dependent on the fancies or biases of the bureaucracy – has been excellent. Besides near revolutionary reforms like GST and crackdown on black money in a volatile polity like India where all governments are subjected to some kind of electoral referendum every few months, the government has also passed the landmark Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016. The bill has created a uniform and reliable mechanism to deal with

financial failures in the system. It can act like a balm to distressed credit markets by enabling regulators to identify insolvency at an early stage.

If anything, going by the overall track record and compared to the past, the economy has turned out to be among the strongest points of the present government. It takes a certain goodwill and nationalism to run the economic system, which is deeply influenced by expectations and behavioral and psychological factors. In an era where parameters like GDP have increasingly become measures of deprivation – by measuring quantity of spending, rather than quality of service – welfare cannot be obtained. The problem is a deeper and civilizational one, whose roots lie in the utilitarian spirit of the present system. It is bound to worsen any innovations or improvements – merely materialistic – that are introduced with however good intentions.

India's place in the world:

Four years is, perhaps, too short a time to reverse the position of a country in the comity of nations. Yet, this is precisely what the government did. If the field of economy saw some bold and unthinkable steps, the field of international relations and foreign policy, and its ramifications for internal security, has been even more dynamic. Interlinked by drastic changes occurring the world over and the systematic rebellion against the post-Second World War international order taking place, India's engagement and clear positions have contributed to the new world order in the making.

The biggest achievement of the present government – and one that has set it apart from all previous governments – has been to set right the historical wrongs and misconceptions in India's relationships with various countries, especially China. The informal Wuhan summit that took place in China between Modi and Xi in their personal

goodwill has sharply set India-China relations on a different course. It is now plausible to imagine what China has always insisted on but what Indian hawks have persistently doubted – India and China’s shared cooperation in shaping the Asia-Pacific region and the outcomes of the inevitable Asian century for the rest of the world.

The current Indian government, in general, has developed much closer inter-Asian relationships. Relations with Japan, South Korea and North Korea, and even China, have always been formal, platonic and rather wanting. Indonesia has only now been recovered from cold storage, during the last few months. Apart from a few formal agreements with these countries, India had no clear foreign policy under the previous UPA government. It did not know where it stood with the US and the rest of the West in terms of vision and direction, and it clearly stood nowhere with Asia. But now, the reversal is drastic. India has gained new respect and momentum under the leadership of Modi, who has struck a balance between the West and Asia, but in a meaningful and strong way.

India has shown that while it values its relationship with the West, and would be amenable to upgrading India-US strategic ties, this relationship is purely instrumental, albeit suffused with warmth and friendship. The real closeness and cultural ties of India lie in Asia and with countries such as China. India will also maintain strong ties with Russia – unlike the previous government, under whose unsure watch, old partners like Russia had begun to drift away, in its pursuit of the US. This stand has been made crystal clear.

Even the US – despite its erratic drift under Trump and harsh positions under Nikki Haley – has finally understood this. Which is why the US recently, finally, had to cave in and find a way around its own law – CAATSA (Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions) – to get approval for Indian arms purchases from Russia. Despite immense pressure, India did not give in to US. In a similar

way, India is unlikely to fully give in to US on the issue of Iran sanctions. The recent move by the US to upgrade India's status to a NATO-level trade ally – in effect, clearing the way for high profile defence purchases and offering the kind of scope for India's defence upgradation, never been witnessed before – without any lobbying by India and despite India keeping the US at bay, shows that scales have reversed in the India-US relationship.

While on one side, India is critical to US's ambitions to develop the Indo-Pacific region in a manner that can rival China's Belt and Road Initiative. On the other side, the ongoing massive trade wars between US, China and Europe, shows that China would firmly like India on its side, since the EU would remain beholden to the US given the first opportunity. Pakistan has already become irrelevant, as it gears up to negotiate with the IMF for its 13th and biggest aid package yet and as China begins to have second thoughts about investing in Pakistan. IMF's brutal terms and conditions are likely to decimate the little that remains of Pakistan's economy.

This will considerably impair its capabilities to fund terror in Kashmir in the times to come. Combined with the present government's hard and clear policy in Kashmir and its success in dismantling a soft separatist political party and rendering others unpopular, the contest with the militants and terrorists stands out sharply and in isolation, with no fluid lines or actors in between. In Kashmir, the scenario after four years, has squarely become a good versus evil divide, with little scope of uncertainties – which is why the opposition stands silenced. Far from the chaos that was being predicted by critics, the situation in Kashmir has never been more serious, more deadly or more clear. Terrorists and those in sympathy with them are not being given any relief. In Kashmir, it is the roots that are being targeted.

Arguably, Kashmir has been one of the major internal success

stories of the last four years. India has come a long way from being defensive about human rights and brokering petty coalitions and dialogues with terrorists to deploying such a straight policy as would garner it international support and admiration. Another internal security success is Assam. The recently published National Register of Citizens has been updated for Assam – for the first time since 1951, to identify and deport illegal immigrants. This is a major achievement, and it has come at a time when India’s relations with Bangladesh are the best, with the latter actively collaborating in cracking down on terrorism and insurgencies in states like Tripura and West Bengal. The roots of India’s strong external policy and diplomacy lie, to a great extent, in its successful and hard internal security policy.

Thus, India’s relationships and standing in the world has never been better. It is now amply clear that the future of global unity will not be based on the liberal order of the past – as the backlash against liberal governments all over the world makes clear – but on an initial resurgence of nationalism. The post-War international order was created by an artificial suppression of nationalism and its replacement by a liberal international order in which institutions symbolic of the comity of nations – like the United Nations – eventually came to be based on the hegemony of the United States. There is now a severe backlash against it, as visible in most countries of the West. Almost the whole of eastern Europe now has populist governments who proudly invoke the legacy of the past and curse the age of multiculturalism.

What happened in Germany recently – the manner in which Angela Merkel’s coalition government was brought to the brink of destruction – over the issue of migration, forcing EU to agree to a landmark decision of not letting in illegal immigrants and putting them up at “camps” hosted in another country, shows that the last

bastions of liberalism viz. Germany and France have finally given in. German nationalists are already propagating the discourse that the Nazis and Hitler episode was nothing but a small blip in an otherwise glorious German history and culture and that the country cannot be made to feel guilty or pay homage to monuments of guilt for just one such episode in its history. These arguments are finding a powerful resonance with the masses.

The future of the world is increasingly being shaped by a resurgence of nationalism and a reference to religion and culture. This movement will have to reach its logical conclusion and a spiritual foundation of fraternity must take hold for any future liberal order to make sense. Otherwise liberalism will remain a caricature of all that it professes to be with a brutal, hidden agenda. In this new world, India has a vital role to play. India alone can supply the fountain of spirituality and fraternity that is needed for the future international political system to take root.

Conclusion:

This future role of India is vaguely grasped by the present dispensation. Under the present government there are frequent invocations of India's destined role as a '*vishwaguru*'. But a much more forceful and active turning towards this ideal is needed and a concentration of national energies to work towards India's recognizable destiny.

The best part about the current government is its lack of lethargy. When you are a nationalist at heart, you actively work to not be left behind in all important areas and to make a mark wherever possible. The most visible efforts of the government have been clear in so many sectors – its ambition to have the world's most sophisticated social delivery programmes like Jan Dhan and Modicare, to revolutionize the economy and take steps which no government has

had the courage to take, to make India a country that leads in environment and one that counts for something in Science, and, to have a foreign policy that has now propelled Modi as one of the top statesmen in the world.

There is an endless list of ‘original’ things that one can talk about. India has markedly transformed from a country whose world reputation was one of being a passive protector of its petty, safe and selfish immediate interests – with hands tied at home to the coalition dharma and unwilling to take ownership of anything abroad – to a country that others like US and China are now trying to woo, a country that is now keen to claim ownership, leadership and vision and wants to be an active part of the new changes that are happening.

India is at least 10 years behind in most things. We have now, in the last 4 years, already caught up and outstripped others in areas like renewable energy and space programmes, while we work hard to catch up in others. It is only with courage and ambition and nationalistic vision that this became possible. Whatever happens in 2019 elections, we cannot afford to turn back on these changes – Indians ought to realize that selfish politicians, parroting holy futilities about secularism and other ideas from a century ago are futile and dangerous to the country’s health and global standing in the world.

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The True Spirit of Nationalism in India

“Love has a place in politics, but it is the love for one’s country, for one’s countrymen, for the glory, greatness and happiness of the race, the divine ananda of self-immolation for one’s fellows, the ecstasy of relieving their sufferings, the joy of seeing one’s blood flow for country and freedom, the bliss of union in death with the fathers of the race. The feeling of almost physical delight in the touch of the mother soil, of the winds that blow from Indian seas, of the rivers that stream from Indian hills, in the sight of Indian surroundings, Indian men, Indian women, Indian children, in the hearing of Indian speech, music, poetry, in the familiar sights, sounds, habits, dress, manners of our Indian life, this is the physical root of that love. The pride in our past, the pain of our present, the passion for the future are its trunk and branches. Self-sacrifice, self-forgetfulness, great service and high endurance for the country are its fruit. And the sap which keeps it alive is the realisation of the Motherhood of God in the country, the vision of the Mother, the knowledge of the Mother, the perpetual contemplation, adoration and service of the Mother.”

– Sri Aurobindo

(Collected Works of Sri Aurobindo 7: 1118-19)