

# **The Resurgent India**

**A Monthly National Review**

**November 2019**



***“Let us all work for the Greatness of India.”***  
***– The Mother***

**Year 10**

**Issue 8**

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**email:** sadlecijn@gmail.com, info@resurgentindia.org, URL : [www.resurgentindia.org](http://www.resurgentindia.org)

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**Editor : Ms. Garima Sharma**, B-45, Batra Colony, Village Bharatpur, P.O. Kaushal Ganj, Bilaspur Distt. Rampur (U.P)

# THE RESURGENT INDIA

## A Monthly National Review

November 2019



### SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

*Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella*

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

Year 10

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## 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, Vol. 13, pp. 124-25)

# **THE AYODHYA VERDICT: EVIDENCE AND LEGAL REASONING UNDERPINNED BY HINDU STRUGGLE**

The landmark Supreme Court verdict in the Ayodhya dispute marks a watershed for our country. In a unanimous verdict, a five-judge bench of the Court ruled that the disputed land belonged to Ram Lalla. The 2.77 acre piece of disputed land will see the construction of a Ram temple, while a piece of 5 acre land will be allotted elsewhere in Ayodhya for the construction of a mosque. The verdict caps 27 years of festering dispute ever since the Babri Masjid was brought down on December 6, 1992.

Prior to that, the entire legal dispute is at least a century and a half old, dating back to 1856, while the psychological and religious claim of the Hindus has been there since centuries, persisting unabated even after the Babri Masjid was constructed over the Ram temple in 1528, with the Hindus continuing to offer worship despite all obstructions.

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DISPUTE**

The Supreme Court, in its verdict, has treated the entire dispute as a property dispute between three parties – Ram Lalla Virajman (who has been represented by various Hindu litigants during the last few decades), Nirmohi Akhara and UP Sunni Waqf Board – basing its judgement on evidence and records available rather than on questions of faith. Towards the end of the judgement, there was an addendum which elaborated on the faith of the Hindus and of the significance of Lord Rama in not just Hindu, but the entire Indian history and culture, including references to Him in Islamic literature as Imam-e-hind. This was,

however, an unsigned addendum and was not factored into the judgement.

The legal dispute began when, in 1858, an FIR was filed against a group of Nihang Sikhs, who had written ‘Ram’ everywhere on the walls inside the Babri mosque and also performed havan and puja there. They also installed a chabutra there. This was the first testified, recorded legal evidence that the Hindus had staked claim to the temple.

Prior to that, records of Hindu worship at the site and of the significance of the Janmabhoomi for Hindus are available through gazetteer’s records and travelogues which – while providing ample corroborating evidence of links between Rama and Ayodhya – have not been taken into account in the civil legal dispute.

After the tensions in 1858, the British administration decided to divide the mosque site into inner and outer courtyards, with the inner courtyard housing the mosque and the outer courtyard being the site where the Hindus were allowed to worship. In 1885, a Mahant filed a court case asking for a temple to be built in the mosque’s outer courtyard. This was dismissed.

The next turning point came in 1934, when communal riots took place between the Hindus and the Muslims in Ayodhya and a part of the mosque was damaged and later, rebuilt by the Britishers. After that, the issue was revived once again soon after Independence in 1949. On the night of 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1949, idols of Lord Rama and Sita devi appeared mysteriously inside the inner dome of the masjid. Prior to this, non-stop Ram Charit Manas was being recited by the Hindus in the locality near the site for nine days.

The incident of 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1949 was investigated and the masjid was locked and blocked from all worship, but the shrines were not removed. This was a significant step in solidifying the Hindu claim to the property and blocking the Muslim claim.

Between 1949 and 1989, a series of lawsuits were filed in courts by Hindus to be allowed to worship at the site. Claims began to be staked by Muslims from 1961 onwards to remove the shrines. ***The claims by the Hindus were always on a stronger footing since 1950, when restricted worship was allowed at the site, and, in 1986, the locks were broken and unrestricted worship was permitted.***

Legal developments from 1949:

1950	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gopal Singh Visharad of Hindu Mahasabha files a suit for the right to pray and conduct pooja in the inner courtyard. This was allowed by a civil court. Since then, restricted worship has been permitted at the site.</li><li>• Parmhans Ramchandra Das filed a similar suit.</li></ul>
1959	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nirmohi Akhara filed a suit to takeover the management of the site from the receiver appointed by the state government after the December 1949 events.</li></ul>
1961	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sunni Central Waqf Board filed a case for removal of idols and a handing over of the mosque to the Muslims.</li></ul>
1986	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An appeal was filed with Faizabad district court seeking for the opening of locks and darshan of the idols found inside the disputed structure. This was a turning point in the Ayodhya dispute.</li></ul>
1989	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Suit filed on behalf of Ram Lalla Virajman (deemed to be a legal minor) so that the site can be handed over for the construction of a Ram temple.</li></ul>

1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Places of Worship Act, 1991 promulgated – it states that existing religious structures as of 15 August 1947 cannot be altered. But the Ayodhya site does not come within its ambit, since there was already a legal dispute around it.</li> </ul>
1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Babri mosque was razed and a temporary, makeshift temple was erected near the site.</li> </ul>
1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allahabad High Court held, in response to a petition, that every Hindu has the right to worship at the place believed to be the birthplace of Lord Ram.</li> <li>Centre acquires 67 acre area within and around the disputed site and also sends a reference to the Supreme Court to determine whether there was a temple prior to the construction of the Babri masjid.</li> </ul>
2002-2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allahabad High Court starts hearing the case in 2002 and delivers the judgement in 2010, dividing the land between the three disputing parties.</li> <li>In 2003, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) had carried out excavations at the site. According to ASI, there is a massive non-Islamic structure, dating to 12<sup>th</sup> c, below the mosque and items of Hindu pilgrimage.</li> </ul>
2011-2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2011, the case is admitted in the Supreme Court.</li> <li>In 2019, the Supreme Court rules that the disputed area belongs to Ram Lalla Virajman for the construction of a Ram temple, while a mosque will be constructed elsewhere in Ayodhya.</li> </ul>

As the brief timeline of the above events shows, the year 1986 turned the legal case decisively in favour of the Hindus. Unrestricted worship was allowed and the locks of the mosque were broken.

It was also due to the political movement that had begun to grow in strength since the 1980s. *The emergence of the Ramjanmabhoomi movement, during the 1980s, as a national issue had mobilized the Hindu psyche in an unimaginable way. The Ramjanmabhoomi movement was the first large-scale mass movement of national consolidation in Independent India, in a society which was beginning to decay under the corrupt and degenerate burden of divisive ideological forces of Naxalism, caste divisions, Left politics and socialist-secular culture.*

It was co-terminus with the rise of the BJP as a political party in the Hindi heartland. Throughout the 1980s, the mobilization around the Ayodhya issue occurred on a massive scale, forcing even the ruling Congress of the time to defer to the sentiments of the majority community, with Rajiv Gandhi being instrumental in allowing the opening of the locks of the Babri Masjid.

Simultaneously, archaeological and historical debates, during the 1970s and 80s, had also started lending credence to the fact that the masjid was constructed by a foreign invader over a temple. During 1976-77, BB Lal and his team had carried out excavations at Ayodhya at the disputed site, as part of a project called 'Archeology of Ramayana Sites', which not only revealed that there was a settlement at the site dating to 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, but also the presence of a temple at the disputed site underneath the mosque, whose pillars had been used to provide support to the mosque. This framework of BB Lal was used as the basis of the 2003 ASI report as well.

Occurring at a time when the Leftist historians were ruling the research and policy circles in India and sitting in all the prime positions of power, systematic efforts were made by these politically-motivated historians to discredit the archeological findings. One such effort was the ‘Historians Report of 1991’ which attempted to baselessly disregard all scientific evidence at Ayodhya. ***Significantly, in the final 2019 judgement, the Supreme Court dismissed the Historians’ Report as mere ‘opinion’ while upholding the ASI findings as ‘scientific’.***

In the present judgement, the Court also held that, “the mosque in dispute was constructed up on the foundation of the pre-existing structure. The construction of the mosque has taken place in such a manner as to obviate an independent foundation by utilizing the walls of the pre-existing structure...” (The Sunday Express, 2019). The Court had also upheld that this pre-existing structure dated back to 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and was of Hindu religious nature. However, the Court left open the question of whether the mosque was constructed by demolishing the temple.

Besides the work of the ASI, some historians like Meenakshi Jain have also dealt with the question of historicity of Ramayana extensively, corroborating her findings with a vast array of literary, epigraphic and archeological evidence. In an interview, she recently said that, “In the 12th century, three important temples were built in honour of Ram and each had an inscription that we are creating this temple in honour of Ram. Two of those are still there, in Madhya Pradesh, and the third was the temple in Ayodhya at the disputed structure from which the inscription fell from the walls of the Masjid in 1992.” (Pandita, 2019).

But what is interesting is that ***the masjid party, which had so many so-called eminent Leftist historians of the country***

*supporting their case for the last 30 years, has not been able to submit a single piece of evidence to show that anything Islamic existed below the Babri masjid, since the ASI excavations of 2003 were carried out under strict supervision of third parties. Indeed, the main modus operandi of the masjid parties have been to simply decimate or attempt to discredit, with baseless allegations and opinions, the vast amount of evidence and records submitted by the mandir parties. Not just foreigner travelogues, but also medieval records dating to Akbar's correspondences with Ayodhya priests, literary evidence, ASI reports etc. all provide ample evidence for the clear existence of a mandir below the masjid.*

In the light of the legal developments since 1950, the archeological work since 1970s, historical evidence from time-to-time, and the political-cultural mass mobilization undertaken by the BJP to rouse the Indian public during the 1980s, the strength of the Hindu case was already on a strong footing.

Through these ASI findings and various other evidence submitted by the Hindus to the Supreme Court, the Court was able to arrive at a legal reasoning based on a balance of probabilities.

## THE LEGAL REASONING IN THE PRESENT CASE

Considering that the Muslim parties had little by the way of evidence on their side, their main argument was that they were entitled to the disputed property by the way of 'adverse possession'. Now, the theory of adverse possession implies that a party which has taken control of a property and has been utilizing that property for an unimpeded length of time, becomes the de facto settler on that property and should not be displaced. It is also called 'squatters rights'.

*The Muslims stated that they were entitled to the disputed structure through ‘adverse possession’, by the virtue of their “long, exclusive and continuous possession” from the time the mosque was built to the time it was desecrated* (Sheriff, 2019).

*This also turned out to be a very weak footing on which to base the masjid case. It was clear from all available colonial era and prior historical records that the Muslims were never in unimpeded possession of the disputed property. Their claims to the masjid were always contested by the Hindus.* Legal evidence and FIRs lodged since 1858 show that. Moreover, as the Court has noted, prior to 1857, there is proof of Hindus offering worship at the site, whereas the evidence of Muslims offering namaz at the site was available only after 1857. Therefore, the Muslim claims that they were in adverse possession were demolished.

According to the Court, “The concept of adverse possession contemplates a hostile possession i.e., a possession which is expressly or impliedly in denial of the title of the true owner. Possession to be adverse must be possession by a person, who does not acknowledge others’ rights but denies them...To prove title to the land by adverse possession it is not sufficient to show that some acts of possession have been done...In other words, the possession must be actual, visible, exclusive, hostile and continued during the time necessary to create a bar under the statute of limitation...*Dr Dhavan (counsel for the Muslim parties) repeatedly asserted that Muslims were obstructed in their offering worship at the mosque as a result of the illegalities of the Hindus. Dr Dhavan refers to the incidents which took place in 1856-7, 1934 and 1949...The events which are associated with each of the above incidents constitute indicators in the ultimate finding that in spite of the existence*

*of the structure of the mosque, possession as asserted by the Muslims cannot be regarded as meeting the threshold required for discharging the burden of a case of adverse possession”* (Sheriff, 2019).

*On the other hand, the Hindus were always in clear, exclusive and unimpeded legal possession of the outer courtyard, and have always laid their claim to the inner courtyard as well and offered worship there, braving all communal obstacles and confrontations. Legally, this made the Hindu claim to the title stronger.*

Some Leftist legal commentators have suggested that the Court was inconsistent in applying the strict standards of exclusive possession to the Muslim party, but not to the Hindus. These are baseless conjectural arguments and they fail to grasp the simple point that the *Hindus never claimed adverse possession, to begin with. They claimed the entire unit – inner and outer courtyard – in a single uniform piece of property.*

The Supreme Court had accepted this and done away with the artificial barrier between inner and outer courtyard constructed by the British purely for the sake of law and order. *The British jurisprudence of the time never even went into the mandir-masjid questions or questions of justice. Like the Allahabad High Court injunction of 2010, the British too divided the property into two halves between Hindus and Muslims just to maintain order and peace of mind – a solution, based on partition of property, which made no sense given the religious sensitivities in the dispute.*

As the British Judicial Commissioner W Young had stated in 1886 about the birthplace of Lord Rama, “his spot is situated within the precinct of the grounds surrounding a mosque erected some 350 years ago owing to the bigotry and tyranny of the

emperor who purposely chose this holy spot, according to Hindu legend, as the site of his mosque. ...The Executive Authorities have persistently refused these encroachments and absolutely forbid any alteration of the status quo.....I think this is a very wise and proper procedure on their part and I am further of the opinion that the Civil Courts have properly dismissed the plaintiffs claim" (Malik, 2019).

Despite the practical injunction to maintain status quo, even the colonial era view shows something significant and obvious viz. that the mosque was constructed due to the 'bigotry and tyranny of the emperor who purposely chose this holy spot.'

During the British time, the reason stated for not allowing the mandir to be constructed in the outer courtyard was purely law and order and nothing else – it had no debate about who rightfully owned the property, and, neither was it given on the basis of the fact that the mosque was built by a foreign invader on a centuries old temple.

Despite the fact that justice has been dispensed 491 years after the mosque was constructed on one of the most sacred Hindu sites, we have seen how a series of political and cultural events and legal developments since the colonial era have worked to solidify a strong Hindu claim to the disputed property.

## **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LORD RAMA FOR INDIA**

In this entire judgement – though treated on the basis of pure evidence and legal arguments as a property dispute – it is significant that the point which most bolsters the Hindu claims to site is that they persisted in their strong faith and in offering worship at a disputed mosque site, despite all kinds of obstructions and the communal violence that has taken place for decades.

Today, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) has expressed unhappiness with the verdict and filed a review petition, while intellectuals and Muslim activists have alleged that the implication of the Court rejecting the Muslim claim to adverse possession – on the ground that their adverse possession was not hostile or exclusive – is that Muslims were wrong in having ‘allowed’ Hindus to offer worship at the site. Nothing could be more preposterous. Hindus, as accepted as evidence by the Court, have been offering worship much before 1857. They did not stop attempting to breach the inner courtyard also, despite Muslim objections and a hostile British government which had given the inner courtyard to Muslims. ***Communal riots took place at the site, clashes occurred since the British period, the Britishers came and went and even ‘secular’ governments came and went, even locking up the site. But through all of this, the Hindus continued their worship.***

Indeed, the singular point here is that Hindus have continued their efforts to worship at this sacred birthplace of Lord Rama despite all obstacles placed in their way by the Muslim community and by various adverse governments. The Hindus were not worshipping at the site because the Muslims ‘allowed’ them to, but in spite of the latter. This should have been the most obvious point that should have emerged out of the entire conflict-ridden story of Ayodhya dispute. Yet, for various intellectuals and for Muslims to peddle this lie and for the public to accept it, would be most preposterous.

It was the faith of Hindus and their fight for the janmasthaan that has culminated in the current verdict. Time was also ripe. A major reason for delay was the political obstacles thrown in by successive governments over the last 27 years, for the fear of losing minority vote-banks. Indeed, not many

devotees would have expected the verdict to come in their lifetime.

The deeper significance of this development is the awakening and resurgence of India in the light of the Aryan spirit that seemed to have been deserting us – a bolstering of our national character and national strength through a stronger assertion of India's civilizational faith and principles.

The influence of Ramayana in our civilization has been a living reality for centuries. *According to Sri Aurobindo, "The work of Valmiki has been an agent of almost incalculable power in the moulding of the cultural mind of India: it has presented to it to be loved and imitated in figures like Rama and Sita, made so divinely and with such a revelation of reality as to become objects of enduring cult and worship, or like Hanuman, Lakshmana, Bharata the living human image of its ethical ideals; it has fashioned much of what is best and sweetest in the national character, and it has evoked and fixed in it those finer and exquisite yet firm soul-tones and that more delicate humanity of temperament which are a more valuable thing than the formal outsides of virtue and conduct."* (SABCL 14, 1972, p. 290).

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## **AIR POLLUTION IN DELHI: A VAPID APPROACH TO A SERIOUS PROBLEM**

The problem of air pollution in Delhi has scaled new heights this season. Air pollution is a palpable and immediate manifestation of the severe environmental crisis the country is facing. For far too long, this environmental crisis has been an invisible and slow genocidal killer, but now its effects are out in the open. Since 2015-16, the Delhi air pollution in the winter season has become a near emergency issue. Every winter, for the last few years, Delhi becomes a ‘gas chamber’, Air Quality Index levels scale extremely severe heights of pollution and this time a health emergency was declared as well.

But a frivolous discourse around this issue is masking the real causes of the problem viz. the short-term, selfish utilitarian lifestyle and consumption choices we have made, our mode of living as well as our extractive and relentless economic mode of production. In the pursuit of GDP, jobs, social status and so-called glorified metropolitan culture, we have taken upon ourselves this problem by the complete decimation of our environment, of which air pollution is only one part.

### **THE CURRENT EMERGENCY IN DELHI**

In recent years, Delhi has frequently begun to feature as the most polluted city in the world, usually during the winter season. According to a report released in March this year, 7 out of the 10 most polluted cities in the world were in India, as per pollution levels measured by PM 2.5 pollutant concentrations (ET Online, 2019). This early November, Delhi broke all records as it continued to be in the ‘hazardous’ range of air pollution for nine consecutive days, with such a prolonged spell of pollution

never been seen before since public records began (Livemint, 2019).

Air Quality Index (AQI) range	Interpretation
0-50	Good
51-100	Moderate
101-200	Poor
201-300	Unhealthy
301-400	Severe
401-500	Hazardous

Source: AQI India (2019)

The pollution levels in Delhi were so severe that on some days they even breached the AQI charts, trending above the level of 500, and touching ranges between 700-900 in some places.

Every winter season most of the blame for pollution is placed on crop burning in Punjab and Haryana. Both the states sow, transplant and harvest rice or paddy between June to October/November months.<sup>1</sup> As soon as October is nearing its

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<sup>1</sup> As per a 2009 law passed in Punjab assembly, the date of sowing rice will be notified by the government. This legislation is related to conserving sub-soil/ground water, since rice requires extensive amount of water, resulting in water crisis. The very fact that states like Punjab and Haryana began to grow paddy in the first place is itself a result of post-Green Revolution era of fertilizers, chemicals and unparalleled production.

As a result of implementation of this 2009 law, the date of sowing has been postponed to middle of July, so that during the peak summer season, the state does not face water shortages. As a result, the date of harvesting also gets postponed to late October-early November.

When crop burning begins to take place during this time, the flow of

end and the Rabi season begins, the fields have to be cleared for the next wheat crop. Since the time gap – between the harvesting of paddy and sowing of wheat – has become shorter over the years, farmers do not have enough time or technology to do something about the left-over rice stalk or stubble. Thanks to the use of pesticides and fertilizers, the length of the stalk and its hardness in texture has also increased, it cannot be fed to the cattle or dumped and there is no easy way to get rid of it except through crop burning.

Even technologies like ‘Happy seeder’ – a machine which simultaneously gets rid of rice stubble even as it automatically sows wheat – has not worked out, because of its costs and also because its performance on the ground has been full of poor quality issues. Various other solutions like converting this left-over stalk to ethanol are also prohibitively expensive and cannot work unless the government and companies are fully embedded and a whole new market/supply chain is created for rice stubble.

The reason there have been such extensive debates on what to do about the rice stubble is because during the months of October-November, crop burning becomes one of the major seasonal factors contributing to pollution in Delhi-NCR. However, ***stubble burning occurs for 15-20 days and during that time pollution touches peak levels and only during the days when it is burnt, stubble burning contributes about 30-40% to Delhi pollution. Other than that, as a whole, the contribution of stubble burning to Delhi air pollution is only about 4-5%*** (Jain, 2018). This year during the days of crop burning, the share of stubble burning to Delhi’s air pollution touched the highest-ever level at 46% (PTI, 2019).

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wind is towards Delhi. Also, during winter the dissipation of polluted air is much less and the pollution settles down, creating a virtual gas chamber kind of effect, with the atmosphere trapping all the polluted air.

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*This clearly means that the seasonal factor of stubble burning has made visible and obvious a problem that would otherwise have remained an invisible killer, and, would have otherwise given us a convenient excuse to continue as usual by ignoring the problem. The sheer condition of the Delhi-NCR during the few days of stubble burning is such that visibility becomes low and one can literally smell and taste the polluted air palpably. No amount of data and theoretical warnings/predictions can compare with the real sensory experience when it is upon us.*

*But the real culprits of the long-term effect of pollution are the polluting industrial setup, and, the unmitigated population and vehicle growth in the city.* To continue to blame a phenomenon which lasts 15-20 days and has actually opened our eyes to the pollution problem should not become an excuse to ignore the polluting economy that has made the pollution problem a near-permanent feature all the year round in Delhi.

## THE ENDLESS GREED

In the current discourse on air pollution that is prevailing today, what stands out clearly is not only the tendency to skirt the root causes and give frivolous suggestions, but also to derive as much selfish political mileage as possible out of this environmental crisis. *In recent times, the severity of pollution that has engulfed Delhi-NCR making survival itself a question stands out in stark contrast to the huge advertisements put out by the Delhi government with insincere claims and self-congratulations about how much they have reduced the Delhi pollution* (with no reference to monthly or yearly average baselines, so as to make numbers look impressive and fool the public).

Vast areas of Delhi have concentrated pockets of heaps of huge mountains of stinking landfills, water quality is bad and now pollution has become a life-threatening crisis. ***At a time when breathing Delhi's air is being compared to smoking 40 cigarettes a day, it is ironical that the Delhi government should be in a self-congratulatory mode over controlling pollution.***

Piecemeal measures like 'odd-even' vehicle plying scheme was implemented for some days with much pomp and grandeur. Theoretical measures about changing institutions and policies were spoken about. For some time, the Supreme Court-established Environmental Pollution Control Authority (EPCA) mandated new strict measures under Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) – such as time-limits for operating diesel generators, temporarily shutting down polluting coal-based thermal power plants etc. New vehicle registrations standards were mandated – from BS-IV to BS-VI – and supply chains for electric vehicles are being spoken about.

To give an added verbal backbone and limelight to these measures, the courts and the National Green Tribunal (NGT) would periodically make tough statements – including strictures on banning firecrackers around Diwali – berating the government for its inaction and lamenting the loss of human lives.

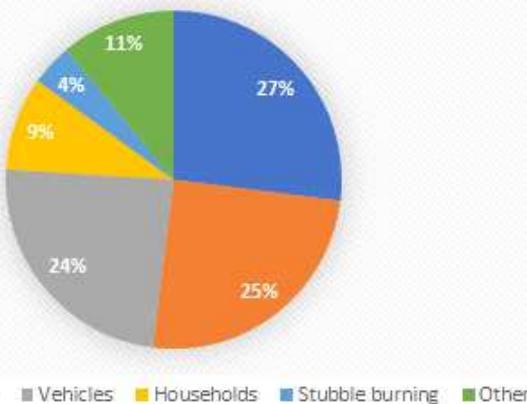
***But through all of this talk of practical and theoretical wisdom, the real backbone of the polluting economy which has contributed to this pollution in the first place has remained untouched. It is worth questioning if it is simply sufficient to undertake temporary minimalistic measures every season when winter is around the corner – an attitude which is akin to pushing the real issue under the carpet, so that the system does not change.***

In Delhi alone, the total number of vehicles has increased from 4.2 million in 2004 to 11 million by March 2018 (Raman & Mukerjee, 2019). These vehicles are responsible for about 41% of the total pollution in Delhi (Livemint, 2019). The massive growth in the number of vehicles on the road has coupled with the attraction of Delhi – as with other big metropolitan cities like Mumbai – as the hub of the modern service economy of India.

Its attraction of jobs and its material vitality has made it a prime attraction for skilled migrants from small towns, who can very well afford a middle-class lifestyle. The population of NCR increased from 16.6 million in 2001 to 46 million in 2011 – a nearly 11% annual growth rate, coupled with the rise in fast food industry, construction activities, thermal power plants and various other polluting industries (Raman & Mukerjee, 2019).

Source: Jain (2018)

## Contribution to PM 10



Source: Jain (2018)

This hub of economic activity, incentivized by perverse consumption choices, have contributed not just to air pollution, but also to overall environmental, moral and psychological degradation.

Today, Delhi – a symbol of sheer and excessive vitalistic materialism and crude competitiveness which makes it indistinguishable from any other foreign metropolis like London – is staring at an alarming future. Not only has an issue like pollution now made survival a major question in Delhi, but the illusion of the present economic system has also landed the prospects of jobs in a crisis situation, since the below par and sub-standard quality of youth – despite, or rather, in proportion to their high degrees – being produced by the present system is being rejected by the market.

But *this vitalistic fetish for the fulfillment of desires, ambitions, comforts and material wants is all that Delhi had*

***begun to symbolize during the last two decades. The pollution and environmental crisis that has engulfed so many cities in the country today is a result of our consumption and production choices which are further fully supported and subsidized by vote-bank politics.***

Any basic attempt to deal with environmental problems are thwarted by powerful lobbies who bring their own vote-banks. For instance, in recent months, farmers in various states (especially Haryana) went on a defiant path, insisting that the only solution to the productivity crisis in agriculture was to plant more Genetically Modified (GM) crops. Lobbies of farmers and scientists are carefully cultivated by big multinationals to bring in supposed policy changes – such as creation of a GM food market – which would ultimately run contrary to collective interest. For governments – however well-intentioned – to stand up to such lobbies is extremely difficult in a so-called democratic political setup.

In a democratic setup – especially one like India – where the next election is all that matters, what we usually end up with is helpless frivolous rhetoric on environmental problems like pollution, public gimmicks or else short-term measures like ‘odd-even scheme’ which are of no use if implemented for just 10 days for the sake of appeasing the public. But due to the strong corporate and social lobbies, it is impossible to bring in changes in national interest, since any such change will finish off some lobby or the other. The recent hue and cry over falling automobile sales is a case in point. Despite the fact that we have nearly exhausted the household capacity for holding automobiles, there was still a big backlash that a market like India should be slipping away from the clutches of a particular industry.

In the case of Delhi and rest of India, we find it difficult to permanently shut down polluting thermal power plants or doing something about their inefficiency and outdated processes which lead to more pollution. In Delhi, at the worst levels of pollution, the GRAP this time talks about temporarily halting their operations and regulating the timing of diesel generators for just some days. These are such temporary token measures that they cannot be counted on to have any impact

Contrast this with China's approach to air pollution. China may not be a democracy in the sense of a modern multi-party system with thousands of lobbies tearing the government apart in various directions and each wanting a piece of flesh for itself. But it is certainly more systematic, cultured and able to work in the national interest than most other countries, which do not even know how to define their national interest. China has been able to reduce its air pollution levels by shutting down polluting and inefficient industries and coal-based power plants.

***But in India, such attempts have failed and require much more effort and resources, a lot of which is likely to go into corruption at lower levels. We justify this inaction and production of substandard output by the name of economic growth and development, and, decorate its vicious process of competition by the name of democracy.*** With such a cornered approach, India will always find itself a victim of, both, trade imbalances as well as environmental disasters, since no decisive action can be made possible without harming some vested group or industry.

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## STATE ELECTION RESULTS: SELFISH MODERN DEMOCRACY VERSUS RISING NATIONAL UNITY

Political developments in recent times have taken unpredictable and contrary turns, exposing the superficiality of the electoral process and of Parliamentary democracy – a trend increasingly being witnessed in elections all over the world. A few years back it would not have been possible to imagine that government-formation would become such a grave challenge after elections. Yet, this is precisely what is happening. Countries like Israel and Spain or populist referendums like Brexit show how Parliamentary democracy is beginning to collapse under the weight of its own machinations.

India is no stranger to the travesties of this system of modern democracy – a system based not on the expression of popular will, but on the cultivation of carefully nurtured vote-banks and coalition-stitching that can help in retaining power. Not just this, but the compulsions of vote-banks dictate the whole ideology and most of the decisions of the parties. In such a democracy, it is not national interest, but competition between organized selfish interests that prevails. Not a single party in India is immune to this mode of functioning in our Parliamentary democracy.

The just concluded state assembly elections in India are a case in point. Recent elections in Haryana and Maharashtra have seen a rampant play of vote-bank dynamics, divided along caste lines, that had made government formation in both the states complicated – more so in the case of Maharashtra.

## A DIVIDED MANDATE

### *Haryana Elections:*

Legislative elections in the 90-member Haryana assembly saw a fractured mandate. While BJP emerged as the single largest party with 40 seats, it fell short of the majority mark. Congress won 31 seats, while Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) of Dushyant Chautala won 10 seats.

Performance of Major Parties in Haryana:

	Seat share (2014)	Seat share (2019)	Seat share (2014)	Seat share (2019)
<b>BJP</b>	47	40	33.2%	36.5%
<b>Congress</b>	15	31	20.5%	28%
<b>JJP</b>		10		14.8%

Significantly, despite the downfall in seats, BJP's vote share increased from 2014, while Congress's seat share and vote share, both, increased. The key to BJP's politics in Haryana, since 2014, when it swept the state elections, has been to consolidate the non-Jat votes. While Jats – forming a critical base of parties like INLD and now, JJP, and Congress – form around 20-25% of the state's population and have enjoyed considerable political clout due to their landowning status, BJP, by floating Khattar – a Punjabi non-Jat Khatri – has been attempting to shore up its support base among intermediate OBC castes such as Valmikis and Dhanaks (Alexander & Padmanabhan, 2019).

For the BJP this time, the spoiler in Haryana elections were the Jat and Dalit voting patterns. While Jats went against the BJP, the latter retained its share in the 17 Scheduled Caste (SC) reserved seats, but could not make new inroads. Instead Congress ended up making heavy gains in various reserved seats due to the fall of the INLD on these seats. Congress increased its vote share in these seats from 25% in 2014 to 30.3% in 2019, while BJP's vote share remained at 33%. While Congress won 7 of these seats, BJP won 5 and JJP won 4, with 1 going to an independent. INLD's loss became Congress's gain instead of BJP's, partly because of the anger of Dera Sacha Sauda clan which has vast sections of Dalit followers.

As far as Jat votes are concerned, there was a clear anti-BJP mobilization among Jats. There was no instance of Jat votes getting scattered, and, very deliberately, they went either with the JJP or with the Congress in various seats. The fact that the voter turnout was depressed (from 76.1% in 2014 to 68.5% in 2019) and that Jat mobilization was extremely strong and acrimonious indicates that absentee voters may have been BJP's vote-base, besides the fact that turnout was low in the constituencies that BJP won (Verniers, 2019).

### ***Maharashtra Elections:***

In Maharashtra, similar pattern was seen, although it was also mediated by various other local factors. In the 288-member Maharashtra assembly, the NDA, consisting then of BJP-Shiv Sena combine, had won 161 seats, with BJP winning 105 seats and Shiv Sena winning 56 seats. However, the strike rate of BJP was better this time – at around 70%, since in 2014, it had contested 260 seats and won 122, while in 2019, it had contested 150

seats and won 105. On the other hand, in 2014, Shiv Sena had contested 282 seats and won 63, while in 2019, it had contested 124 seats and won 56, with a strike rate of around 45%. The NCP made considerable gains, while Congress's performance was lackluster.

#### Performance of Main Parties in Maharashtra:

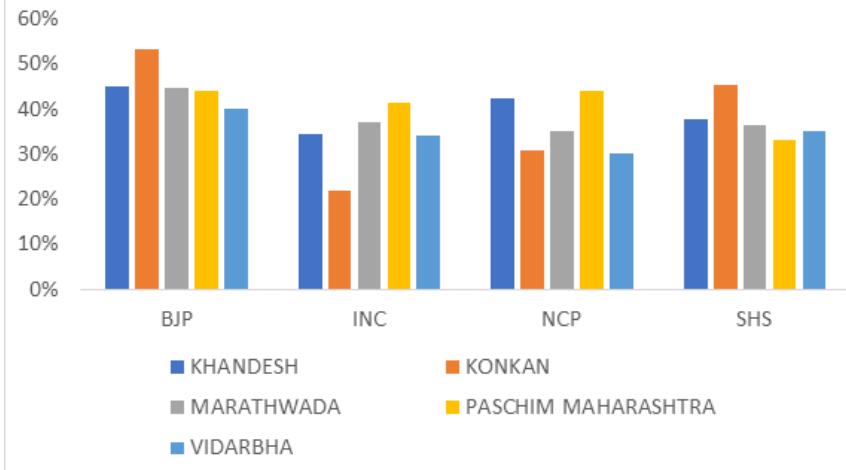
	Seat share (2014)	Seat share (2019)	Seat share (2014)	Seat share (2019)
BJP	122	105/150	27.8%	25.7%
Shiv Sena	63	56/124	19.3%	16.4%
NCP	41	54/121	17.2%	16.7%
Congress	42	44/147	18%	15.9%

Despite the set-back, BJP still has the largest seat share and vote share, and all four main political parties saw a decline in the vote share from 2014. When we look at vote-share in the seats contested, then BJP stands at 44.5%, followed by Shiv Sena and NCP at 38.3% each and finally followed by Congress at 32.7%, with the results showing that BJP has improved its vote share per seat contested quite significantly since 2014 (Vernier, 2019).

Also, there was a lower turnout in Maharashtra elections this time – 3 percentage points lower than in 2014 (Vernier, 2019).

The BJP did not perform well in the Vidarbha region, which it had previously swept in 2014 assembly election and in 2019 general election. The NCP continued to rule the roost in its traditional sugar belt stronghold of Pune and South-Nashik.

**Sub-regional Vote Share (seats contested) of Main Parties  
in Maharashtra State Assembly Elections 2019**  
*Source: TCPD - Indian Elections Dataset*



Source: Vernier (2019)

The regional division of vote-shares show that BJP has performed well across all regions, compared to other three parties. In Khandesh and western Maharashtra, NCP gave it a neck-to-neck fight. Despite the fact that Konkan and Mumbai are Shiv Sena strongholds, BJP performed the best in that region. In Vidarbha, Congress gave a good fight to BJP in the latter's stronghold.

The regional and overall vote-shares show how fragmented the polity in Maharashtra actually is. There were also several smaller radical Dalit and Buddhist political parties in the fray and several independents, who cut into BJP votes, although, as usual, Prakash Ambedkar's Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) and AIMIM<sup>1</sup> played a spoiler for Congress-NCP. Indeed, in this

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<sup>1</sup> It may have cut into the Muslim votes of Congress. This time, 304 Muslim candidates contested, out of which only 17 ran on the tickets of

election, one out of four voters opted for a party other than these four main parties (Vernier, 2019).

## **PUTTING MAHARASHTRA IN PERSPECTIVE**

Despite the fact that BJP had fairly strong chances of winning more comprehensively, with the 2019 general election exercising a positive impact, the Maharashtra election has come as a dampener to the party. In a city like Nagpur, which is the hometown of Devendra Fadnavis and the epicenter of RSS leadership, the BJP was left struggling and saw a considerable decline from 2014.

Similarly, some post-poll surveys also indicate that the BJP may have lost some support from amongst its core constituencies viz. young, middle-class and OBC voters – losing around 18% of the vote from OBCs compared to 2019 election (Ranjan, 2019).

This is significant, as BJP's politics in Maharashtra (as in other states like Haryana and UP) has been based on stitching a Hindutva social coalition excluding the dominant castes, like Marathas (Maharashtra), Jats (Haryana), Patidars (Gujarat), and Yadavs and Jatav Dalits (UP). This means intermediary castes – sometimes even more than SCs – have become pivotal guardians of the Hindu consolidation movement.

These castes have been ignored or disempowered by dominant intermediary castes, which had made it possible for BJP to virtually bring together all sections of Hindu society across all castes except the dominant intermediate castes. However, BJP, yet kept up its outreach to dominant castes also. Notwithstanding the Haryana exception this time due to local

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four main parties – Congress fielded 11, NCP fielded 4, Shiv Sena fielded 2 and BJP fielded zero Muslim candidates (Vernier, 2019). In Maharashtra, BJP was the only party to have fielded zero Muslim candidates.

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factors, there is absolutely no doubt that Jats have undergone great saffronization since 2014.

For these non-dominant intermediate castes to get disenchanted with the party will be a setback for sure – a setback which might re-open old caste fault-lines and the kind of poisonous, selfish politics in which a dominant caste like Jat (in Haryana) or Yadav (in UP) would unabashedly ally with Muslim vote-banks and keep the Hindu majority suppressed and divided.

The BJP movement since 2014 has firmly changed this old style politics, and it is unlikely that two state elections will break the new social changes and coalitions that have come. Local factors, low voter turn-out and the cutting into BJP votes by independents have complicated the picture somewhat. Maratha consolidation may be yet another factor, but then, Marathas have hardly gone with BJP or Congress, preferring NCP and Shiv Sena. In Maharashtra, the pull of regional Maratha identity is stronger compared to other states – which is why BJP has heavily relied on the 26-27% OBC Hindu vote-base in the state.

It has been rather difficult to bring Marathi chauvinism and pan-India cultural nationalism onto the same page. This time, even Shivaji's direct descendent, Uday Bhonsale, fighting on a BJP ticket lost badly. BJP's attempts to woo Marathas – through the momentous decision on reservation, and by invoking cultural icons like Savarkar and Shivaji – too have failed.

This shows that *despite six progressive years in which national awakening has been witnessed, the dangers of reversion to old ways are still very much there. Six years of a nationalistic central government – that has achieved nearly all that it had promised – cannot so easily wipe out 60 years of unmitigated vote-bank and appeasement politics that has*

***become deeply entrenched in the psyche of our system, as well as in the psyche of our politicians.***

Navigating the social and political field in Maharashtra can be exceedingly tough in the light of these complications. The drama that ensued after the elections – between the four main parties – shows that opportunism and selfish greed alone are the handmaidens of modern-day democracy.

In the light of the results of this election, where BJP was far ahead in its own capacity, it was not only galling that Shiv Sena would resort to open blackmail in the quest for power, but also that it would easily break a 30-year long alliance based on Hindutva and start appeasing the secular parties. In particular, personal visits made to Sonia Gandhi and the manner in which Sena made all efforts to bow to Congress – the only real loser in this election – has put all their claims on Hindu issues to shame.

As far as the BJP's role in the post-election developments is concerned, the picture is still hazy. The reason why BJP would suddenly form a 3-day government by taking a secretive oath and the events in the intervening night of 22-23 November, cannot be explained with any certainty.

However, here are the points that we can be sure about:

One, BJP – on the insistence of RSS – has tried till the very end to give space to Sena and encourage it to come back. Short of the over-the-top demand of a rotating CM post, all other plump offers were made – all the good ministries as well as Deputy CM post. For a party like Sena, whose record in the BMCs has been riddled with corruption and who has been a friend of real estate sharks, these offers should have sufficed. But now Sena – in the NCP-Sena-Congress alliance – just has the CM post, while all the good posts have gone to NCP and Congress.

Second, it has now been confirmed that till the very end, not only was BJP banking on Sena coming around, but was also conducting parallel negotiations with the NCP – both Ajit Pawar and Sharad Pawar. Sharad Pawar had even asked that Union Agricultural Ministry be given to Supriya Sule and that Fadnavis<sup>2</sup> not be made the CM. Both demands were rejected by BJP.

Third, since the Sena-NCP-Congress talks began, it had frequently been reported that the alliance is all for scrapping the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project, ostensibly in the interest of diverting funds to the farmers.

In the light of these developments, it is evident – and has been reported through unofficial sources – that Fadnavis may have taken oath not to become the CM, but to thwart the designs of the upcoming alliance to corner money in a cash-rich state like Maharashtra. Already, Congress – deprived of funds – has been dreaming of cornering more money. All three parties – Sena, NCP and Congress – are known faces of corruption. The bullet train project is a 50:50 partnership between centre and two states viz. Gujarat and Maharashtra. Maharashtra controls 25% of the funds. The alliance had already declared its intention to siphon these funds for ‘farmer welfare’ – in reality, it could mean siphoning these funds for enriching their own coffers.

This would prevent the alliance – especially the Congress – from appropriating these funds in the name of farmers. Ajit Pawar was not taken into confidence, but he played his own

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<sup>2</sup> Fadnavis was not only a Brahmin CM in a Maratha-dominated polity, but also the second CM since Vasant Rao Naik to complete a full 5-year term. Sharad Pawar’s politics of Maratha chauvinism is well-known, as well as his attempts to show down the Brahmins, in an attempt to root caste-based politics. In this sense, NCP has more in common with Sena than with Congress.

game. By helping the BJP, he has secured himself from being hounded by investigative agencies and gone back to the NCP, where, in any case, Supriya Sule was adamant on taking over the party leadership.

While some unofficial accounts – including a statement by BJP minister, Ananth Hegde of Karnataka – have, thus, stated openly in the public domain that Fadnavis became an 80-hour CM in order to transfer bullet train project funds to the central funds so as to prevent their misuse by the Congress, ***Fadnavis himself has rejected these claims. Therefore, there can be no official confirmation of Fadnavis's actions in the public domain – reasons best known to the BJP only.***

After the early morning oath-taking of Fadnavis was complete, it had become evident, after some hours, that the whole thing was really a hoax, as the NCP MLAs whose signatures Ajit Pawar had obtained denied supporting BJP and went back to Sharad Pawar. At the same time, cases against Ajit Pawar were closed, while Fadnavis busied himself with official business for the 3 days that he was the CM. ***Even with basic common sense it should be clear that BJP would never shoot itself in the foot by perpetuating what it already knew was a hoax – unless there is another emergency reason for it, and these are reasons that can never be confirmed for sure.*** It would have made more sense for BJP to wait for 6 months or 1 year – the alliance would have fallen and events played out like in Karnataka.

Whatever be the real story, the entire episode has played out like a calculated game. In the end, the alliance may have gained power, but have suffered a dent in their financial planning – especially on bullet train project. Interestingly, even though Congress was the biggest loser of the Maharashtra election, it has thrown no mean tantrums in government formation, making

sure that Sena bends backwards to please it and also that it is purged of all remaining Hindutva elements.

It is difficult to imagine on what basis Sena will seek votes in the next election – certainly not on the plank of Hindutva, which has been left to the BJP. It may seek votes in the same of regressive Maratha caste politics and become just as invisible and insignificant as BSP has become in UP or it may disappear further on its own. It is being speculated that Congress has dented its ‘secular’ image by allying with Sena – an intellectual farce. The Muslims will be as ready to now vote for Sena as for any other non-BJP party that bashes Hindutva political ideology. It is a boon that AIMIM and VBA have become active in Maharashtra – they have been the biggest obstacles to Congress’s attempts to consolidate its minority and radical Dalit vote-bank.

In the long-term, political changes in Maharashtra portend an era where BJP may come into its own, free from the suffocating and corrupt shackles of the Sena. For BJP, there is ample field for social coalition-building across Hindu society that it started doing in 2014, but for Sena and others, it’s the end of road. They will have to – as they have done – confine themselves to Maratha and minority pockets.

The movement that was started towards changing the politics and society of the country is now irreversible, since it targets not the outer body politic (which keeps changing) but the fundamental national character and psyche (which endures). Minor local setbacks in state elections are unlikely to prove an obstacle to this trend. It is not the receding and advancing political map of Hindutva that matters as much as its permanently expanding cultural influence in all corners of the country and the world at large.

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## SOME IMPORTANT HIGHLIGHTS:

### WHAT STANDS OUT IN THE NATIONAL CRIME RECORDS BUREAU (NCRB) DATA:

- Crime data for 2017 was released in October 2019 by NCRB. Two categories, in particular, stand out:
  - For the first time, data under **SC/ST Atrocities Act** (exclusively, without invoking any other sections of IPC) has been published. About 55% of crimes against Dalits under the Atrocities Act and 52% of the crimes against tribals under the same Act are constituted of ‘Intentionally Insult or Intimidate with Intent to Humiliate’ (Tiwary, 2019).
  - Another interesting category was **corruption**. Under this, while cases of ‘trap’ (exposing lower level officials red-handedly taking a bribe) have risen by almost 100% in 2017 over 2016, the cases involving ‘criminal misconduct’ (in which bribes are hardly in cash) have fallen sharply by 70% over 2016. Overall, there has been a 20% decline in corruption cases in 2017 over 2016 (Tiwary, 2019).

Thus, the lower level corruption of local bureaucracy has become a rising threat, even as the government has been successful in purging higher level corruption. The process of reining in the bureaucrats is still going on.

At a review meeting in October, PM Modi castigated the bureaucrats saying that, “Apne mere paanch saal barbad kiye hai, main apko agle paanch saal barbad nahin karne doonga” (Gupta, 2019).

## SRI LANKA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS:

- Presidential elections in Sri Lanka have given a decisive victory to Gotabaya Rajapaksa (political party: Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna), with a 52% vote share. He was up against Sajith Premdasa (political party: United National Party). While Gotabaya winning on a conservative plank won with the help of a massive Sinhala Buddhist majority vote in his favour, Premdasa got major votes from Tamil and Muslim minorities concentrated in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka.
- The Easter terror attacks on Sri Lanka this year decisively changed the national atmosphere. Gotabaya's major plank was campaigning on providing national security. He was also able to criticize the dismal record of the previous liberal-secular oriented government – a government which was bowing down under Western pressure, not only immersing itself in guilt over the Lankan civil war, but also completely downgrading or dismantling all security infrastructure and intelligence cells that had been put in place by the earlier Rajapaksa regime.
- Gotabaya is known not only as the younger brother of the former Sri Lankan President, Mahinda Rajapaksa, but also as the man who was directly in charge of wiping out the LTTE from Sri Lanka. Being the defence secretary during the period of the civil war, Gotabaya directly commanded ruthless operations, secret executions and various encounters and abductions that had unleashed a reign of terror among the separatists.
- Understandably, for this image, he did not get any minority votes at all, including the Muslim ones.

- As far as relations with India are concerned, it must be noted that over the last 3 years, a lot of misunderstandings have been straightened out between India and the Rajapaksa clan. In

2015, when Mahinda Rajapaksa had lost the elections, he directly blamed India (taking RAW's name) for interfering in the elections. India was, at the time, agitated with the mushrooming Chinese infrastructure projects in Lanka (such as the Hambantota port) and India viewed the Rajapaksas as being close to China.

- However, India has also come a long way since 2015. For one, the India-China relationship has, through stages, acquired such an unparalleled level of understanding, depth and maturity that all outer rhetoric – even the occasional exchange of barbs – has become inconsequential. Therefore, ***the China factor is not likely to play out in India-Lanka relations as it used to.***

- The second aspect here is that, over the last 2-3 years, parallel to improvement in India-China relations, even the Gotabaya camp has nurtured strong ties with India, while sitting in the Opposition, and India has reciprocated. After winning the elections, India will be the first country Gotabaya will visit in late November. ***After winning, Gotabaya also gave a statement saying that while China is Lanka's 'trade partner', India is like a 'close relative'.***

- These developments show that India-China-Lanka relations are set to proceed more smoothly. There is also the common enemy in the form of terrorism, which has become a priority for Lanka after the Easter attacks and for which it is already seeking to strengthen security cooperation with India. ***In addition, the links between India's RSS and the Buddhist outfit, Bodu Bala Sena are also strong.***

- The only slightly uncomfortable development was India's reminder to Lanka, soon after election results, to work on the 'reconciliation' process viz. the reconciliation and justice for

Tamils after the civil war. It is one thing for western countries to make a pariah out of Lanka (their sudden interest about Tamil human rights has got to do with their selfish obsession with teaching Rajapaksas' a lesson for becoming close to China), but ***India should not blindly ape the West.*** Lecturing on human rights at a time when there is a strong government in Lanka, which shares ideological affinity with India's ruling party, may divert the two sides from other important issues. Appearing to play the interfering big brother without any aim in sight is not very appealing. And this is precisely what the Tamil question entails.

### **THE BOLIVIAN CRISIS:**

- The ongoing crisis in Bolivia – a country with more than 75% Catholics, but divided along race lines between whites and indigenes – has been taking on a complicated form.
- On October 20, elections were held in which Evo Morales, the incumbent President – also, the first indigenous leader – belonging to the Left-wing Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) party, won.
- However, the international Western media, the Organization of American States (OAS) and countries like the US and Canada, decried the elections as a fraud perpetrated by Mr. Morales.
- Morales was forced to step down and has taken refuge in Mexico.
- While the typical Western assertions against Morales are that he was becoming an authoritarian dictator, the picture is complicated, both, by the series of events that make his ouster resemble a foreign-mediated coup as well as the fact that despite concentration of power, he continued to enjoy some level of popularity.

- The main charge of the West was that the counting of results was interrupted – an assertion which is not true, as the official counting went on uninterrupted, while only the counting of results by a private firm came to a halt after it had declared nearly 83% of the results. Yet, another charge was that preliminary results were going against Morales and a turnaround came only later – a charge complicated by the fact that Morales enjoys widespread support in rural areas, whose counting is done later.
  - Despite the fact that Morales heeded these charges and made the mistake of inviting an international audit of elections – an audit, mediated by the Western bloc, whose results should have been obvious – and even called for fresh elections, he was “advised” by the army to step down.
  - He escaped in the nick of time, as within a few hours, his palace was ransacked and his supporters and party members arrested.
  - The reason this coup has evoked mixed reactions is that, while he had begun to consolidate power since 2016, he still enjoyed popular support. After assuming office in 2005, he was able to reduce poverty, inequality and bring about palpable changes. This perhaps, is reflected in the show of a widespread discontent among people resulting in violence and death of a good number of people following Morales’ exit to Mexico.
  - However, these changes were never complete. He never got along with the United States – a country which has a legacy of coups in Latin America – and global corporations always managed to exercise corrupt influence in the resource-rich Bolivian apparatus. Once the commodities boom of the 2000s decade was over, discontent began to set in, even as Morales

tried to become permanent by doing away with Presidential term limits.

- None of what Morales may have done compares with the way in which bigger dictators have managed to hold onto power in much worse national conditions – but with the support of powerful countries.
  - The protests that erupted against Morales after elections were, interestingly, led by urban whites. Their mainstay slogan was not based on democracy or dictatorship, but was “Bolivia belongs to Christ”, even as all indigenous flags and symbols were violently torn off.
  - Therefore, while the immediate pretext for the Bolivia coup may have been ‘democracy’ – a weak reason, since Morales was still a popular leader, albeit with authoritarian inclinations – the real reason is the interference by the West, afraid of losing influence, which further played on exacerbating the racial divides within Bolivia.
  - The Bolivian example soundly shows us once again what an illusion democracy is. If one were to define democracy, based on the recent example, the only definition that comes to mind is that of a system where organized selfish competing interests – both internal and foreign – jostle to get their pound of flesh out of a country.

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*“Man has created a system of civilisation which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilise and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites. For no greater seeing mind, no intuitive soul of knowledge has yet come to his surface of consciousness which could make this basic fullness of life a condition for the free growth of something that exceeded it.”*

– Sri Aurobindo

(Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol. 22, p. 1090)