

# **The Resurgent India**

**A Monthly National Review**

July 2019



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

*- The Mother*

Year 10

Issue 4

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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

July 2019



## SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

*Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella*

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

Year 10

Issue 4

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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)

# CONTOURS OF THE BJP'S 2019 VICTORY: HOW THE FLAG-BEARERS OF SECULARISM EXPOSED THEMSELVES BEFORE THE ELECTION RESULTS, PART III

The electoral victory of May 23<sup>rd</sup> has opened a new chapter in India's political future. It was phenomenal not merely in terms of the massive numbers with which the BJP won, but also, equally, in terms of the magnitude of rejection that had been dealt to those who had consistently misled the country and continue to do so, through all manner of lies and fabrications. It was not only an embracing of nationalism and Hindutva, but also a clear rejection of 'secularism' – an euphemism for minority appeasement for electoral gains and an ideology pedaled by the Liberals and Leftists of this country as an all sufficient index for measuring a person's or a Party's fitness to rule. This anti-national and anti-Indian (Hindu) culture still continues – as it had been over past 45 years – to significantly pervade the media, academia, politics, judiciary and bureaucracy of this country. Tarek Fatah, a learned Islamic thinker has aptly defined "secularism" as it has been practiced in India. According to him India is a country which has a superior culture. This is the only country where people are taught to hate their great culture. A great effort is made to educate people to eulogise the attackers and invaders who came to destroy this culture. And this foolishness is called secularism.

We hope that such a sick mentality – termed 'secularism' – has outlived its usefulness for most of us. In his post-election victory speech PM Modi promised to take everyone along including these elements who fought the government bitterly over the past five years, not realizing that the obstinate and

hostile nature of such intellectual elements pervading the opposition can never change, and need only to be destroyed. ***An ideology, which has become the direct medium – globally also – through which the hostile forces bent on dividing and destroying the country work in the world, can never be ‘taken along’ or persuaded to change. Such is the nature of this force that it can never be dissuaded from its attempt to hijack and corrupt the minds of the people open to such forces.*** Therefore, the victory in the elections should not make one forget the scale on which the opposing elements launched their attacks and the true nature of what these elements represent.

It is important, once again, to recall this reality, for, the attacks and their true roots and nature stemmed not out of mere political reasons or merely to dislodge the BJP from power, but were aimed at destroying the Indian spirit and culture itself. The opposing elements consisted not merely of the political opposition parties, but also of their army of entrenched intellectuals sitting comfortably in judiciary, media, banking system, bureaucracy, academia, and various other institutions.

While it is true that the campaign of intense negativity picked up pace right before the 2019 elections, let us not forget that no stone had been left unturned over the past 5 years either and there was an immediate blowback after the declaration of the results on May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

## **THE DEPRAVITY OF THE ‘INTELLECTUALS’**

Foremost to take the cake are, perhaps, the political and so-called intellectual classes themselves. It is not without reason that “intellectual” has become a reviled word today.

***As Sri Aurobindo wrote more than hundred years ago in the Bande Mataram, “Hinduism leaves the glorification***

***of intellectuality to those who have never seen God. She is commissioned by Him to speak only of His greatness and majesty and she has so spoken for thousands of years.”*** (CWSA 7, p. 891).

The people who constitute the ‘intellectual’ class had pinned hopes on the Indian electorate – particularly on the “marginalized sections” who were their daily intellectual fodder – for defeating Modi before the election results were declared and they were proven wrong.

Comparing the Prime Minister of India and the President of BJP to mafias, dons and what not, they had clearly stated that the election would be a referendum on whether the nation allows Modi to spread more “poison”. It is one thing to ‘oppose’ and quite another to shoot arrows of venom, uttering words of complete lies and devoid of sense, betraying a desperation to claw back into relevance. This is exactly what the intellectuals and their political, legal and bureaucratic patrons did.

While before the results on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, a number of famous intellectuals and activists could talk about democracy being in danger and fascism being on the rise, but after the results they received a huge blow, when they realized that the very classes on whom they had pinned their hopes – the poor, the Dalits and the lower castes – had voted in large numbers for the BJP.

The U-turn they took was hardly surprising. After May 23<sup>rd</sup>, people like Amartya Sen and other ‘noted’ economists and academics could be seen arguing that Indians were backward, especially North Indians, that is why they chose BJP. People like Ashok Swain and some marginal Congress leader could be seen on television and social media saying that the ‘cow belt’ North Indians hate the Muslims very much and that only people in



Kerala and Tamil Nadu had a 'soul'. They refused to accept the verdict, calling it 'dangerous', comparing it to Hitler's popularity in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s.

For this class, a worse double whammy was that famous, celebrated faces from the opposition camp had lost by a huge margin of votes to new BJP candidates. The 2019 results – in what can only be called a clear-cut message by the National Spirit – saw the flabbergasting loss of “veterans” like former PM HD Deve Gowda in Karnataka, Rahul Gandhi in Amethi, Jyotiraditya Scindia and Digvijay Singh in Madhya Pradesh, Gehlot's son in Rajasthan, Dimple Yadav in UP and many more.

People like Digvijay Singh from the Congress who lost by a margin of more than 3.5 lakh votes to first-timer Sadhvi Pragya Thakur in Bhopal, instead of introspecting why people hate the Congress so much, rather said that elections were a victory of the mentality that reviles MK Gandhi and eulogizes Nathuram Godse. He lost against a campaign that successfully exposed him as a man who regards the Hindus as terrorists and as a man who could be seen smiling in photo ops with the promoters of terrorism like Zakir Naik, who were eulogized and fed with money and esteem during the Congress rule but are wanted and found absconding to other countries under the present administration.

Similarly, Rahul Gandhi too, barely few days after the election results could be seen visiting Muslim-majority Wayanad from where he had won and once again shouting slogans like 'chowkidar chor hai' and attacking Modi in the same vein that he used before the election results.

Same is the story with others who were decimated. Mamata Banerjee refused to accept Modi as the PM before and after the

results and even threatened to slap him, while Mayawati was the first one to say that she and the ‘people’ cannot ‘digest’ the results and that there was something wrong with the EVMs.

Prior to May 23rd, the level of confidence among the opposition camps was so high that they even mustered the guts to dismiss India’s Anti-Satellite (ASAT) test which made India the fourth country in the world to test the technology of bringing down enemy satellites, and, even question the Balakot air-strikes on Pakistani territory in the aftermath of the Pulwama terror attack on an army convoy in Kashmir in February 2019. The strike reportedly killed 300 terrorists, who were active inside terror camps in Pakistan at the time, and was a first for India, showing the strength of the country in dealing with Pakistani terrorism. Yet, politicians like Kejriwal, Congress and Left leaders and Banerjee demanded ‘proof’ of the strikes, sparing not even national security in their hunger for power.

***The Balakot air-strikes by the Indian Air Force on Pakistan deeply affected the national sentiment and psyche, as did the Pulwama terror attack just before the strikes. Both the events infused nationalism among the people with a renewed vigour, which the shameless opposition refused to accept, directly questioning India’s national integrity and honour. The opposition was doing the latter, when it was busy ridiculing and doubting the strikes. What more, in the Congress manifesto, Rahul Gandhi even promised to revoke the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in Kashmir and insinuated that the Indian Army was responsible for human rights violations in Kashmir.***

The Congress seriously thought that advocating an idea like its proposed NYAY scheme of redistribution – which was obviously supported by US economists like Raghuram Rajan and

Kaushik Basu – would hold water with the people. ***It mistakenly thought that Indians can still be convinced by the breadcrumbs of charity and the glorification of poverty that Congress is famous for dishing out. By glorification of poverty, Gandhi thought that people could be diverted from the Balakot strikes or the plank of nationalism that had gripped the country much more than could be seen on the surface.***

The level of poison was brimming over to such an extent that not only before but even after the results, many shameless people from this class suggested that the Pulwama attack on the Indian armed forces was a boon for Modi and that Modi should thank Masood Azhar for this victory. They insidiously indicated that the attack was in BJP's favour, since it gave India an opportunity to bomb Pakistan. ***The fact that these people were not immediately booked for sedition for uttering such dangerous nonsense, which would have been intolerable in any other country, is itself an indicator of how much patience the government has shown with this class. Even men like Kanhaiya Kumar, Umar Khalid and their JNU cohorts who clearly shouted seditious slogans – 'Bharat tere tukde honge' and 'Afzal hum sharminda hain, tere katil zinda hain' – and expressed solidarity with the hanged terrorist Afzal Guru in JNU in 2016, are still roaming freely and standing for elections.*** It is nothing but a travesty of justice and shoddiness and bias of the Delhi High Court that the decision to prosecute Kanhaiya has been delayed till date. In any other country, such slogans would be enough to prosecute a person for treason.

The only aim of this lobby has been to be an agenda to malign India's image globally. They call India 'lynchistan', question the government's tough treatment of terrorists in Kashmir and cast illiterate aspersions on Modi's foreign policy. People like

Harsh Mander – one of the most rabid anti-India intellectuals whose activities surely confirm that he is being funded by Muslim extremist groups – undertook a campaign over two years in the run up to 2019 elections to travel all over the country and document the plight and ‘pain’ of Muslims. For people like him, every time the victim is a Muslim, there is a hue and cry, but for every Muslim, there are more number of Hindus who are targeted and killed by the minority community in places like Bengal and Bareilly. In such cases, they gleefully keep mum. For this lobby, ***Kathua case was sensationalized nationally and globally to any extent and the entire Hindu community, their country and their temples were vilified.*** But the number of rapes that occur in Madrassas or the number of Christian pedophiles who come in news frequently or the crimes committed against Hindus are relegated to back pages of the newspapers or go unreported.

After the elections, when Muslims vandalized and broke idols in a Durga temple in Chandni Chowk, this lobby was silent on ‘intolerance’. When 5-year old Twinkle Sharma was raped and murdered by her Muslim neighbour, there was silence. When hundreds of Muslims wearing skull caps held a massive rally in Malegaon, Surat and Bhopal and attempted in Meerut, against the Jharkhand lynching or when Delhi Muslims set a DTC bus ablaze, there was nothing. Recently, the members of this community threatened to create havoc if Kanwaryias passed through Muslim areas in Bareilly. In Moradabad, Muslim barbers refused to open their shops to Dalits. In Begusarai in Bihar, there has been a rise in Muslim land-grab and atrocities against Dalits and tribals. Recently, NIA booked 10 people for attempting to poison prasad at a temple in the South. Yet, NIA was recently vilified by the opposition and accused of bias. But such incidents – which all reflect a highly communal mentality which transcends

state borders and operates as a united community – never make to the papers or to the ‘wise’ discussions on ‘intolerance’.

***The number of ‘national level’ anti-BJP movements that took place and the anti-BJP protests that occurred in the past five years appear to be mind boggling.*** In retrospect and with level of support with which people brought the BJP back to power, it all looks like an illusion now – a big pictorial and sensational illusion created by a thoroughly sold-out media.

The issues on which the opposition had attacked the BJP were simply outrageous. With the help of media, hyped up issues were created and hyped up where none existed. The opposition realized that the BJP had the support of Dalits and OBCs in the 2014 elections, but thought that it was temporary and half-hearted. What they did not realize was how solid was that support and that it grounded itself not in mere politics but flowed from a deeper impulse towards national unity.

As a result of their gross manipulation and blindness, ***the opposition consistently tried to create a divide in the Hindu society and in the fabric of Indian nationalism, by continuously pitting Dalits, OBCs and lower castes against ‘Hindutva’ and clubbing them with Muslims.*** A section of opposition-sponsored, more specifically Congress-sponsored, self-professed ‘leaders’ were created – such as Jignesh Mevani, Kanhaiya Kumar, Alpesh Thakor, Hardik Patel and Shehla Rashid Shora – to advance this agenda. It all failed miserably of course, but these people remained convinced till the very end that they would corner Modi.

While Kumar and Shora, as a JNU union leaders, had spearheaded an agitation threatening the Indian state of secession for hanging a terrorist called Afzal Guru, the ‘trio’ of

Patel, Mevani and Thakor would often join common cause with them and attempt to corner and blackmail the government by creating issues. They accused the Modi government of being 'fascist' and proclaimed themselves to be crusaders fighting the government. They were the darlings of the media and the intellectuals and had the full force of anti-national elements and resources at their disposal to run their agenda.

They actually thought they were the future youth leaders of Indian politics. The drubbing their leader, Kumar, received from Begusarai in 2019 elections, laid all such ambitions to rest. Since May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019, at least this lobby has not been heard from, having gone underground.

***Their whole focus was on radicalizing the Dalits and the lower castes, bringing them into the Leftist fold and also into the Islamist fold by equating them with the Muslims. Worse, they openly advocated for 'azadi' or separation of Kashmir from India. They had become the darlings of the media.***

Such a suicidal bid – to club Dalits with Muslims – was a ploy that was underhandedly played by all political parties, such as Congress, BSP, SP and RJD and Owaisi's AIMIM, with BSP even liberally distributing tickets to Muslims of all hues including fielding a candidate from Meerut who had supported ISIS terror attacks in France in 2015. ***It has been historical, since there have been attempts to club Dalits and Muslims together and create a constituency out of them since the times of Freedom Struggle. It has never been successful, yet the 'secular' parties have not stopped trying over the last 70 years, to break and fatally divide the Hindus.***

Over the last five years, the opposition had – and continues to do so actively even now – started parroting that 'Dalits,

minorities and Adivasis' are oppressed. Sometimes farmers and poor people in general were added to that category. They were too blinded to see that BJP, after 2014, had become a party with a thoroughly increasing mass base, belonging more to these sections of society than to the rich and the upper castes.

The so-called 'farmers issues' were also added to this agenda. The period over the last five years saw many politically-conspired Dalit and farmer 'rallies', such as the 'Bharat Bandh' called by the Dalit groups in 2018 all over the country and farmer rallies and protests that took place in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. ***The reason they were politically-conspired was clear from the outset. Every time such a farmers rally was taken out, regardless of the numbers, it would be a sea of red – teeming with hundreds of red flags of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), with the farmer groups belonging to CPI (M)'s powerful farmers union.***

Powerful lobbies led by farmer leaders – such as Raju Shetty, who contested and lost from his comfortable stronghold of Hatakangale in Maharashtra in 2019 – vied to anyhow mislead and provoke the common farming masses. Nothing new in that. They have been doing this since the 1960s, when farmer leaders first tasted political success and the power of lobbying for vested interests.

The manner in which Raju Shetty jumped ship to ally with the Congress and NCP in Maharashtra for the 2019 elections and the public spectacle this coalition created in deciding seat-sharing was a racket in itself. The only common point for the coalition was its rabid anti-Modi hatred, which, as it turns out, failed to convince the farmers, leading to Shetty's loss in a constituency that he had always held with ease.

Nationalism trumped these selfish considerations and in the end farmers, Dalits and all the communities that the opposition had banked on to defeat Modi ended up voting as Indians first and foremost. It is ironical that even in constituencies where clashes had taken place between police and farmers, it was the BJP that came back with an overwhelming victory.

A case in point is Mandsaur in Madhya Pradesh, where in 2017, police clashed with and fired on some farmers to control the lawless situation. At that time, Rahul Gandhi and numerous opposition leaders, sensing opportunity, had materialized to shed crocodile tears and blame the BJP. Media was, of course, there all along to mislead the rest of the country. Everyone was proven wrong when BJP won in Mandsaur.

Much more sinister were the ploys of various hues deployed to poison the minds of the Dalits. Initially incidents of Dalit atrocity like Una flogging in Gujarat and Rohith Vemula suicide in Hyderabad were politicized nationally with the willing help of media. ***Later, even more sinister ploys were unearthed. These were happening underground, akin to how terrorists operate. Except that they were infested with intellectual terrorists in place of Islamic terrorists.***

We are referring to the famous gang of ‘urban naxals’, who had been active for several years, but whose activities first came to light in January 2018 when the Bhima Koregaon incident took place in Maharashtra, which saw clashes between Dalits and Marathas, and where an outfit called Elgar Parishad had its representatives make inflammatory speeches to provoke the Dalits. While this was a public event, ***subsequent investigations revealed how a ring of urban naxals were active in various parts of the country. These included the likes of famous academic***



**and journalism names** like Rona Wilson, Sudha Bhardwaj, Gautam Navlakha, Varavara Rao and many others.

***Recent court submissions by Pune police have revealed that Gautam Navlakha worked widely on Kashmir and also had direct links with Kashmiri Hizbul and Hurriyat terrorists, including rabid India-haters like Geelani. Their agenda was clear – one could often find them writing in famous English newspapers and journals, travelling in and out of London to meet subversive elements, spewing venom against Indian state and Hindutva quite openly, while, secretly, they ran and funded dangerous underground networks whose mission was to incite Dalits and others and to destabilize the country.***

They have completely hijacked the higher education system, where, at the B.A. level, their works are thrust upon students to study in universities like Delhi University and Jawaharlal Nehru University.

***They come from the same crop of people who once constituted the unelected, shadowy but all-powerful ‘super Cabinet’ during the two UPA governments viz. the National Advisory Council (NAC) headed by Sonia Gandhi herself and consisting solely of intellectuals and human rights activists.*** They received their power and patronage during the Congress system. When their wings were clipped and country-wide investigations launched after the 2018 Bhima Koregaon incident, the Congress and other opposition parties targeted the government for branding them as ‘anti-national’.

However, shady and shadowy as their activities were, they could not do much to disturb the Dalit mind. Even the Bharat Bandh of 2018 – despite all the violence – ultimately was a damp squib. It later turned out that many of the protestors during

Bharat Bandh had been paid by various political parties and activists to come out and create law and order problems.

Recall how after 2016, we also saw the rise of Dalit leaders like Chadrashekhkar Azad of the 'Bhim Army'. While Azad campaigned against the BJP till 2019, he ended up unwittingly discrediting parties like BSP and SP instead of the BJP, showing how, over the years, BSP has been bogus and selfish about Dalit interests.

It is easy to forget now, but each of these incidents was gleefully buttressed by the media, who, at such times, seemed to have become the spokesperson of the opposition. The manner in which these incidents of protest and violence received overblown coverage in the media – including how much of disproportionate attention was given to the acts and words of Rahul Gandhi – it would seem as if the BJP were staring a total defeat.

While now the whole thing has become cliché, but ***initially when the 'intolerance' gang had first appeared in 2015, it used to make daily headlines. A series of 'eminent' intellectuals, artists and litterateurs had started the practice of returning their national awards – 'award wapsi' – to protest against the 'climate of fear and intolerance' under the Modi government.*** Every single day for a prolonged period of time, there would be somebody or the other returning their awards, writing in the media about how 'fascist' this government was, with the Congress gleefully backing them. Celebrities – among them some Bollywood actors – had started claiming that they no longer felt safe in India.

In 2015 and 2016, this gang thought they had cornered the Modi government, especially after the BJP's defeat in the Bihar assembly elections, and moderate performance in 2016

assembly elections to various states. It was only after the massive and historical victory of the BJP in the 2017 assembly elections in UP, coming right on the heels of Demonetization, that the ‘intolerance gang’ suddenly dispersed and went underground.

Unbelievably, recently, the ‘intolerance gang’ – led by the likes of Ramchandra Guha, Aparna Sen, etc – has re-appeared after the 2019 election results, once again to protest against rising intolerance against Dalits and minorities and this time, protesting against the ‘weaponing of Jai Shree Ram’. But this time they have been put in their place and ridiculed widely for being a complete nuisance and for their political motivations. Congress and other ‘secular’ parties too have kept mum, still not recovered from the 2019 elections defeat. The gang has crawled back into its hole within 2 days, after some vague and fleeting public drama and press conferences.

### **SHEER POLITICAL DRAMA AND COMPLETE EXPOSURE**

The ‘secular’ political parties not only supported the activities of the subversive elements as seen above, but began to actively drum up quite a bit of fake allegations and drama of their own, supported at every step and in every photo op by a faithful media. Certainly, they could not carry out Muslim appeasement to the levels seen before 2014, yet they made active attempts to discredit the nationalistic outreach and campaigning of the BJP.

Of course, despite the best efforts to shed their pro-Islamist tag, one can never forget the huge sea of green flags that graced Rahul Gandhi’s campaign in Kerala’s Wayanad, where the Congress had allied with the Indian Union Muslim League. Initially, Gandhi was more open about his Muslim preferences.

For instance, in 2016, he drew widespread condemnation for having a closed-door meeting with exclusively Muslim intellectuals and representatives to listen to their ‘concerns’. Later, Gandhi became more subtle. This is the same Rahul Gandhi who, in 2009, had, according to leaked cables, told a US diplomat that ‘Hindu terrorism’ was a bigger threat than ‘Islamic terrorism’. The immediate instances of Congress’s appeasement politics are well-known and quite recent.

Recall how Sonia Gandhi had famously visited the Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid, Syed Ahmed Bukhari, one month before the 2014 elections to convey that ‘secular’ votes should not split. Sonia Gandhi had also, in 2006, given an assurance to the illegal Muslim immigrants that Congress will amend the laws to ensure that they are not deported to Bangladesh. According to a leaked US Wikileaks cable, Sonia Gandhi is quoted as saying that, “her party is committed to minority rights and has introduced the Foreigners’ (Tribunals for Assam) Order 2006 under the Foreigners Act. This order will protect illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, making the process for identification of an illegal migrant and possible deportation, too difficult and time-consuming to implement” (Jain 2018).

Not just this, throughout the reign of UPA government, major terrorist outfits and their sponsor, Pakistan, had started operating with impunity, launching one terror attack after another. As soon as it came to power in 2004, the Congress repealed the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), to appease its Muslim vote-bank. Any effort to deal with terrorism was met with opposition by the Congress party.

In Assam, in 2006, after the death of an ULFA militant by the Army, Sonia Gandhi promised to punish the ‘guilty’ – that is, the Indian Army. Similarly, after the famous Batla House

encounter in which Delhi Police killed Indian Mujahideen terrorists in 2005, it was said by Congress's Salman Khurshid that Sonia Gandhi cried for the slain terrorists and the Congress party branded the encounter as fake.

Crucial legislative decisions and even Court orders making Triple Talaq illegal were opposed by the Congress-led Opposition. Incidents like the JNU controversy over shouting anti-India slogans on the campus, as well as incidents in various parts of the country which had Dalit victims – such as Una flogging incident in Gujarat and the Rohith Vemula suicide – were deliberately and falsely manipulated to attempt to club the Dalits and minorities together.

Gandhi used sheer deceit and lies in targeting PM Modi, launching personal attacks as well as senseless and false political ones. Famously, over the past one year, he had resorted to consistently calling the Prime Minister of India a 'chor', his campaign cry becoming 'chowkidar chor hai'. He embarrassed the country by leaving no stone unturned to malign the Rafale deal that India signed with France for the procurement of fighter jets for the Indian Air Force. Despite the fact that national security protocols and agreements – especially in their details – cannot be disclosed publicly and there was a clause in the Rafale deal prohibiting divulging such information, our Opposition became our biggest enemy by insisting on a public disclosure of such details.

The government insisted on a closed-door all-party meeting, but the media and the opposition were too much in thrall to their own agenda to agree. All sensibility was lost. All basic reason and common sense had taken flight. At the height of the Rafale campaign, their sole purpose was to somehow bring about the downfall of the government.

Quoting bogus numbers about how much the deal had benefited Ambani, Gandhi tried his damndest to influence the public. The media – including some sections of French media – was with him all along, along with activists and estranged BJP members from the Vajpayee era, such as Arun Shourie and Yashwant Sinha, supported by perpetually irrational Prashant Bhushan.

However, while Gandhi has mostly been perceived non-seriously by the public at large, much more sinister was the role played by the regional parties in undermining the BJP government at the centre, especially by the TMC ruling in West Bengal.

The TMC's poison of choice was Muslim appeasement. ***Mamata Banerjee has been nicknamed 'Mamata Begum' for a good reason.*** Her chief-ministership saw unabated Muslim appeasement. She would be pictured wearing the Islamic headscarf and attending various Muslim religious ceremonies. Her pictures offering namaz would confidently appear on large public hoardings.

***During her tenure, there was a rise in the number of illegal immigrant Rohingya Muslims in West Bengal and of illegal Bangladeshi Muslims who were allowed to enter and settle. A lot of militant terror outfits like HUJI found a place to stay in West Bengal after there was a crackdown against them by the Hasina government in Bangladesh*** (Mitra, 2017).

In the run up to the 2019 elections, even as the TMC goons were on a spree murdering BJP and RSS workers, Banerjee could be seen campaigning among the Muslims with slogans such as 'jo humse takrayega, chur chur ho jayega.'

It was obvious that confident of her majority vote-bank,

Banerjee was focusing whole-heartedly on the minorities. Not only this, she also earmarked a number of welfare schemes targeted especially for the Muslims and increased the monthly allowance of imams. When there was a conflict of dates between Durga Puja and Muharram, she favoured the latter, till the Kolkata High Court rapped her.

***Never has such brazen minority appeasement been practiced in recent times. Under Banerjee, the TMC had outstripped the standards of the Congress also.*** Under her, incidents of land-grabbing of poor Hindus and brazen behavior by Muslim clerics became rampant, with full support of the government. In the run up to the Lok Sabha elections and more so after the declaration of the results on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, there was persecution of those chanting ‘Jai Shree Ram’ and a virtual killing spree and murders of BJP and RSS workers and supporters.

Much more than Rahul Gandhi or the Congress, it was Mamata Banerjee who – along with regional leaders like Naidu and Kejriwal – appeared to be leading the opposition. The level of this delusional confidence was so high that by the beginning of 2019, Mamata Banerjee had taken charge in leading the opposition.

Not only did she hold an over-hyped rally in Kolkata in mid-January 2019, but also made a public spectacle by sitting on a prolonged and illegal dharna to defend the state police commissioner against the CBI and to obstruct investigation into the Saradha chit fund scam that had occurred under her watch. ***Her party clashed with the CBI in a display in which she was hailed as a freedom crusader and a ‘street fighter’ by the media, for obstructing the work of the central agencies.***

Some time later a similar opposition rally was held in Delhi, spearheaded by Kejriwal, Mamata Banerjee and Chandrababu

Naida. Ostensibly, it was called ‘save democracy’ rally. The Congress and the TMC, in particular, exposed themselves most thoroughly, as did an easily dismissible Chadrababu Naidu of TDP, who had broken away from the NDA. The rest of the regional parties had become too weak and disoriented to launch any major attacks, although SP and BSP were cooking their own meal in UP.

***Yet, by the beginning of 2019, each one of them had started envisioning themselves as a potential Prime Ministerial candidate. Their behaviour was summed up by Modi himself in one of his rallies when he said that all of them are ready to dance wearing their ‘gunghroos’. Indeed, that is exactly how the opposition had started behaving.***

They had been misled into thinking that the Modi regime was losing popularity with the masses. They thought that the so-called ‘issues’ on which they campaigned – rural and farm distress, demonetization, Rafale deal and a host of their other consistent abstract 5-year themes such as ‘rise in intolerance’ etc. were real.

This was despite the fact that there were no signs of rural distress, there was nothing amiss in the Rafale deal and the bogey of intolerance and related issues reeked of fake construction by vested interests. A misperception of such massive proportions was further made possible by the real wave on the ground that everyone – media, politicians and so-called ‘wise’ people – had missed completely.

Their negative campaign was given further boost ever since the BJP lost the state elections in 3 key Hindi heartland states – Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. The opposition thought that finally they had subdued the elephant and now their time had come.



In the months just before the 2019 elections, there was a great intensification of negativity of the past five years. Grand anti-BJP rallies to showcase ‘opposition unity’ were held, such as the one in January 2019 in Kolkata, people like Naidu travelled all over the country with extreme confidence to forge anti-BJP alliances, Priyanka Gandhi had an overrated and over-hyped political debut in Uttar Pradesh, while ***someone like Mayawati who had managed to get only 19 out of 403 assembly seats in the 2017 UP elections declared her intention of being a Prime Ministerial candidate of the opposition.*** They really thought that the BJP was losing badly from various states.

In fact, in the run up to the 2019 elections, the opposition tested all limits of rationality. Everything that Modi did or every decision that he took was decried as being unfair. The Election Commission was constantly receiving opposition allegations of bias. Their most irrational demand was to ban the Electronic Voting Machines – which has gained credence further after the 2019 election results. This was despite the fact that paper trail was used to successfully verify the EVM results after 2019 elections.

## **THE MEDIA AND HOW IT PEDALED FAKE NEWS**

Nothing reflects the role of the media better than a recent incident in London, where a conference on global media freedom was held in middle of July this year. In that conference, there was a face-off between the chief of Prasar Bharti and The Caravan’s Vinod Jose, with the former objecting to Jose maligning India. Jose had made a communally charged presentation on how RSS and BJP have had a long history of violence and ‘religious intolerance’ against Muslims and Dalits and blamed Hindutva teachings.

The bane of the media is the RSS, which has effectively stalled the influence of the media in controlling the people. After the election results were declared, many prominent journalists and Professors – like Apoorvanand from Delhi University who also frequently writes for anti-India portals – pronounced that it was ‘not the EVMs but the minds of the people that have been rigged’, for want of an explanation for what happened on May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Even as the election results were being declared, another Modi-hater, Rana Ayyub – who is a journalist and author of ‘The Gujarat Files’ and who specialized in trying to malign Modi by camouflaging her identity and infiltrating the bureaucratic set-up in Gujarat illegally in an attempt to get something on Modi which would prove his culpability in the 2002 riots – started having a near fit. Her next fit happened few days later when Amit Shah became the Home Minister. On NDTV, the declaration of election results resembled more of a funeral.

Despite this, it is unlikely that the Left-liberal media will ever change. After all, Hindutva-vilification is what many of them have built the whole edifice of their careers on. If this were to go, their livelihood would be lost. It was not without reason that the government decided to cut down advertisements – the lifeblood of the media industry – from some subversive newspapers like The Telegraph, The Hindu and the Times Group.

More than reporting, these portals have become the true mouthpieces of fake and planted news. Nothing showcases this better than the meticulous campaign carried out by the Hindu against the Rafale deal or against the ISKON temple food.

The Hindu’s N. Ram has been famous for his hatred of the BJP and of his closeness to the Left. In fact, it has been revealed that back in the heyday of power he colluded with the Left to prevent the signing of the 2008 India-US nuclear deal.

This time he got into direct confrontation with the government over the Rafale deal, with allegations of illegally accessing secret papers related to the deal. The Hindu ran a daily campaign to malign the deal and meticulously build up a case against it. To buttress Rahul's bogus claims on the deal, the other media houses too ran a relentless campaign of their own. They were united in predicting – or rather, hoping – that Rafale would be Modi's Bofors or 2G.

However, that this grand daily campaign to malign Modi personally and the government could backfire so massively was not known.

Besides Rafale, the media ran a hostile campaign on almost every other issue as well. They gave massive coverage to bogus claims about how minorities were being targeted, how Dalits were being targeted and how "institutions" were being destroyed. Any attempt to crack down on corruption within media houses was met with cries of killing of freedom of speech. For instance, media houses which float outlets like NDTV and The Quint faced the heat of taxmen for cases of money laundering and corruption.

But even these were decried in the name of free speech. That the government should have taken even more tough steps against these media houses is borne out by a recent revelation, where it came to light how our media had unwittingly helped Pakistan in arguing its case against Indian national, Kulbhushan Jadhav, when India and Pakistan were engaged in the case at the International Court of Justice. While the final judgement was in India's favour in a vote by 15-1, it was also revealed that Pakistan had used Indian media outlet, The Quint's portrayal of Jadhav as a 'spy' to bolster its case.

One of standing achievements of the Modi government was how it put the media in its place, although a lot more scope is left. The policy of directly communicating with the people and completely bypassing the media, not giving press conferences and briefings made the media thoroughly irrelevant. Where previous regimes of Manmohan Singh and Atal Bihari Vajpayee had indulged the media no end, the Modi government did the exact opposite.

The effect was positive, since it helped in exposing the media as it rabidly went after the government on every single issue, manufacturing fake news by spreading misinformation and ill-will where there was none. In the run-up to 2019 elections, the media and its opposition political masters did not spare any of the 'institutions' of which they claimed to be protectors. In the run-up to the 2019 elections, the Election Commission had to face muck over every daily irritant.

By the time the elections were underway, people had developed a great distrust of the media. Instead, this traditional media was supplanted by the freer social media, which became the main vehicle for people to expose and get exposed to facts which went deliberately unreported or distorted or underplayed in the newspapers. Social media, in fact, was one of the main reasons for the BJP being able to secure such a massive performance in Bengal in 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

The manner in which the Indian media played a leading role in maligning Indian globally and attempting to poison the minds of the Indians against nationalism and Hindu culture has been on full display. Recently, an organization called Legal Rights Observatory issued notices to some media houses like The Times Group and cautioned them against spreading fake propaganda, since most of cases of being forced to chant 'Jai Shree Ram' they

gleefully report have turned out to be fake in recent days.

Not only do they malign India, but have also directly communalized the situation, with Muslims taking out violent rallies in various cities like Bhopal, Surat etc. all over the country. A Muslim legislator from Telangana, Akbaruddin Owaisi – AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi's brother – even declared that the police should withdraw for just 15 minutes after which the Muslims would be able to show who is the real boss.

Our media thrives on such poison through selective reporting. Their livelihood is based on propagation of victimhood of Indian Muslims abroad. If this were to go, many of them would be sitting 'unemployed' and would be 'permanently unemployable' as has been said of Barkha Dutt in recent times.

The public edifice of deceit and fake news that had been erected to hijack the minds of the people for several years is finally coming crashing down. However, people who have built their entire lives' work on the basis of maligning the country and its culture and religion, will not likely change at least in this lifetime.

Therefore, to win their 'vishwas' or trust as the Prime Minister seemed to want would be a near impossibility and of no use at all. They are best dealt with by action rather than words.

These 'wise' intellectuals will never grasp the movement that is underway, engrossed as they are in villainizing the nation and its political expression in the form of Hindu assertion, this time taking in their nasty sweep the vast sections of society – down to the lowermost strata – who had voted for change. But the resurgence is upon us and the liberals subscribing to secular fanaticism have already lost grasp upon the sections of society

in whose name they attempted to advance the work of the forces that attempt to divide the country.

***As Sri Aurobindo wrote in the context of freedom movement and which is applicable to the present situation, “this immobile state of Hindu society has now begun to pass away and we see the beginning of a profound and incalculable life in the heart of the great organism. Yesterday we hardly needed to reckon with the lower strata of society in our political life; today they are beginning to live, to move, to have a dim inarticulate hope and to grope for air and room. That is a sign of coming social revolution in which neither the conservative forces of society nor the liberal sympathies of the educated few will have much voice. The forces that are being unprisoned, will upheave the whole of our society with a volcanic force and the shape it will take after the eruption is over, does not depend on the wishes or the wisdom of men.” (CWSA 7, p. 904).***

(Concluded)

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# THE IRAN IMBROGLIO: THE US AND ITS WHIMS

The expiry of the sanctions-relief on Iran that had been given to India, China, Russia, European nations and various other partners of Iran has now been fully effected, bringing in its wake economic and political dilemma for these countries who were not just business partners of Iran, but, in some cases like India and China, even had deep historical, political and cultural linkages with the country.

That these ties need to be valued more than giving credence to temporary intimidating behaviour of the US is realized by both India and China. However, China has withstood the US sanctions more strongly than India, simply because China is already engaged in a trade war with the US and could pare down its Iranian oil imports without cutting them off completely. India, on the other hand, is in an unenviable position due to its budding “friendship” with the US and, therefore, not a single Indian company has placed an order for Iranian crude since May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019.

This is no small crisis. India is being pinched hard economically by the US sanctions and is forced to risk its much more valuable historical and geopolitical relationship with Iran. Compared to what India is being forced to concede, the returns are not much.

The US is now engaged in a trade war with India as well, the US has no geopolitical or regional value here and operates through its allies and proxies, the US has failed to be attentive to India in its “Afghan peace talks”, the US is pressuring India to not buy S-400 missile defence system from Russia which is the most advanced of its kind in the world and is priced lower than the comparable US Patriot system, and the US has diplomatically

pressurized India to sign military agreements that may or may not enable it to spy on our military communications networks. The US is also forcing India not to allow Chinese company Huawei into India's 5G telecom trials – a blatant big brother-type of dictate. The US has also taken an extremely public and negative view of India's data localization plans for American e-commerce firms, which prohibits them from storing Indian citizens' data in the US.

This list can further go on, but suffice it to say that US seems to have forced India to concede a lot more and, in return, has given only verbal platitudes about how wonderful and strong the relationship is. The only silver lining is that while India may have conceded to the US in case of Iran and in signing the deals that US has been pressuring us since 2002, but has consistently maintained its positions in the ongoing US-India trade dispute and is also determined to buy S-400 from Russia. ***But the recalcitrance, grossly utilitarian and completely transactional approach of the US makes one wonder what is the exact 'value' of India-US relationship in the long-term and whether we can ever trust the western allies, as we have trusted our historical allies like Iran and Afghanistan.***

Indeed, if there is an example in the present-day world of a country standing up steadily in the face of whimsical, humiliating and irresponsible US threats and pressure, it is Iran. It is not easy to be the biggest adversary of a country that has been regarded as the world's superpower. But Iran has done it – and done it commendably – since 1980. Trump may harbor the delusion that the world starts and ends with the US and that his decree is law, but what he doesn't realize is that ***Iran has battled hardships imposed by the West, not just recently but for the last 40 years.***



It has withstood and is still battling immense economic pressures resulting in high unemployment and slow economic growth, since the West uses a combination of military and economic brutality to make other countries toe its line. Iran is also an example in the study of how to stand on a solid ground without engaging in global jihad, especially against the US and the West, as Sunni terrorists of other Muslim countries have done.

The way that Iran has conducted itself speaks volumes about the integrity, culture and long-term vision alive in the country's blood, and that makes US and its Middle-east allies look like immature, opportunist bullies at best. The attitude is once again reflected in the present crisis facing the country. Evident also is the helplessness of the European countries to do anything to salvage their agreement with Iran, thereby rightly condemning them to a position of scorn and weakness in Iran's eyes.

## **THE PRESENT CRISIS**

Iran is battling an extreme economic crisis and military vulnerability stemming out of the US sanctions re-imposed on it, after Donald Trump withdrew US unilaterally from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) or the nuclear agreement signed by the US, France, Germany, UK, Russia and China with Iran in 2015. For years, Iran had been accused by the West of secretly developing its nuclear weapons programme. The country had denied, maintaining that they were enriching Uranium purely for civilian nuclear energy applications in various research fields, and often citing the 2003 public declaration by its Supreme Leader banning nuclear weapons and declaring them to be against Islam.

This stalemate ended in 2015 after Iran was granted partial sanctions relief in exchange of certain terms and conditions under the JCPOA. The majority of these terms ensured that officers from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regularly visited Iranian nuclear facilities to ensure compliance, that the country destroyed its centrifuges, and that Iran will not enrich Uranium beyond 3.67% and in terms of quantity will limit its enriched stockpile to just 300 kg.

These were foolproof conditions, and by agreeing to them Iran was giving up a lot more than what it was gaining for just partial sanctions relief. Most countries usually enrich Uranium up to 5% level of purity for various civilian applications. The threshold of 3.67% is actually the minimum starting level needed for enriching uranium for application. Anything less than 20% enrichment purity is considered to be 'low-enrichment', but beyond 20% there is danger of converting into weapons-grade Uranium and from 20% level onwards, it begins to be regarded as potential proliferation material. For full-fledged weapons-grade Uranium, 90% enrichment purity is required. However, once a country crosses the 20% enrichment level, it's a fairly quick process to reach the weapons-grade stage.

At the heart of the present face-off with the US are Iran's gradual and calculated steps in breaching the 3.67% enrichment level and exceeding the 300 kg stockpile limit. Both these conditions have been breached by small levels in recent days, although Iran is always emphatic in its promise that the moment the sanctions are lifted, it will go back to the original conditions of the agreement.

However, there is no end in sight to the current conflict. While the US withdrew from JCPOA last year, the reason the Iranian regime was able to battle out the economic consequences

was that US had given its allies, including India, a few months' deadline to phase out Iranian imports and suspend business with Iran. Various financial mechanisms that countries like India and Europe tried to devise, to evade the sanctions, have not really taken off the ground, with the US adopting an absolutely fundamentalist posture on the issue.

That the window of past few months given to these countries to phase out oil imports from Iran could not be successfully utilized for coming up with a joint mechanism to evade US sanctions shows, both, the pervasive power of the US dollar and of the fact that countries took this lightly. India and Iran tried to come up with a currency-exchange mechanism and payment through local banks, but were unable to take it forward. The EU similarly came up with the much-hyped barter system called Instrument for Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) with Iran, but that was an utter failure since it did not include oil, Iran's main commodity, and ended up looking more like a charity aid rather than a business instrument.

The economic problem in which the expiry of sanctions-relief puts countries like India is also not a small one. India is a net oil importer and used to import major part of its oil from Iran, with the Iranian trade conditions – such as free shipping and credit conditions – being much more attractive and with the older Indian refineries much more suited to processing Iranian crude efficiently.

However, since the last year, India has phased out of the Iranian oil import substantially and is importing more from US, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Iraq – countries which do not provide as attractive conditions as Iran. As a result of this change, India's expenditure on oil imports in 2018-19 rose to \$112 billion, up from \$88 billion in 2017-18 (Dadwal & Balachandran, 2019).

Oil imports have a precarious impact on our Current Account Deficit (CAD), with every \$10 per barrel hike in crude oil widening India's CAD by 0.4% (Dadwal & Balachandran, 2019).

Ever since US came into conflict with Venezuela few months back, India also had to stop oil imports from there, thereby squeezing it further. Unfortunately, even though India-Iran venture Chabahar Port is exempted from sanctions, yet business through it is at a standstill since none of the companies want to take a chance with angering the US and Iranian isolation has impacted the port as well. ***The marginalization of Chabahar was visible in the present Indian Budget outlay as well, which was decreased from 150 crore since the last time to just 45 crore this time.***

From every possible angle, the situation is absurd. The world is being dictated by the whims of one country. But even through all of this, Iran has not bent to US pressure. In recent days, ever since the expiry of leeway provided to other countries and the escalation of US-Iran hostilities, US is probably finally getting convinced on the futility of blackmailing Iran. ***The US mistakenly assumed that bullying, trampling on Iran's self-respect and international isolation and humiliation would make the regime bend. This did not happen.***

The US has tried every possible tactic. It grandly stationed its military naval formations in the region. In a bizarre incident some days back, it dispatched its fighter aircraft to attack key Iranian military bases through covert airstrikes. The decision was rescinded just 10 minutes before the strikes and the fighter aircraft forced to turn back. These military escalations have further increased, since Iran has refused to take US and its allies' threats lying down. Iran was also accused of having sabotaged a naval vessel belonging to Saudi Arabia during these days. Also,

in an act of daring and brutal message to the West, Iran also likely sabotaged Japanese naval vessel near the Persian Gulf, on a day and at the exact time when Japanese PM was meeting Iranian leaders.

An embattled Iran increasingly finds itself in international cross-hairs. One of the worst blows came when UK, who had been paying lip service to upholding the JCPOA, backstabbed Iran. UK's royal navy's seizure of an Iranian vessel off the coast of Gibraltar was more of a self-goal, making it evident that the seizure had little legal basis and was done to please the US. Ostensibly, the reason given for seizing the Iranian vessel was that it was illegally transporting oil to Syria in contravention of EU sanctions imposed on the regime of Syria's Assad.

The reasons given appear to be a weak excuse to mask UK's real intentions to help the US, since Iran is neither a part of EU and therefore not bound by any EU sanctions and nor could the UK presumptively assume that the vessel was heading to Syria, without any definitive proof and in the face of denial by Iran. Even in terms of basic international law, it is obvious that UK is on a weak wicket here.

However, the way this conflict between Iran and the West is developing, nothing seems predictable. Iran had already warned of retaliation, which came recently, when the Iranian Revolutionary Guards seized a UK vessel, *Steno Impero*, which was passing near the Strait of Hormuz towards Saudi Arabia. While UK insists that the vessel was in international waters, where it was intercepted by Iran and forced to change its course, Iran denies this. India has found itself in a quandary in both cases. While there were several Indians onboard the Iranian vessel seized by UK, in case of the UK vessel seized by Iran, 18 out of 23 passengers were Indian. While India is negotiating with

Iran for their release, immediate results are very unlikely.

Predictably, the US has announced its intention to station American troops in Saudi Arabia. This spiral is unlikely to end unless a permanent solution is found to the problem. Things have reached such a pass that a war with Iran is not being ruled out either.

## MOTIVATIONS BEHIND CONTAINING IRAN: WEST ASIAN POLITICS

While the French and the Japanese have rushed to contain the damage over the last few days, the US has also realized that it has miscalculated. That is why it is now ‘offering’ to Iran to come to the table for talks – a belated offer which Iran was right to have rejected. With the bulk of preconditions that US has set, it would be futile to negotiate a new nuclear deal with them. Iran cannot simply barter its national honour for the lifting up of economic sanctions.

Iran also realizes that the sole purpose of US in Iran is not nuclear deal, but regime change and, subsequently, to bring Iran under the thumb of the US. Ever since the fall of Shah Pahlavi’s pro-West regime in Iran during the 1979 Iranian Revolution, US and Iran have been enemies. The US embassy in Iran has remained closed ever since and the place has actually become a symbolic memento – full of posters, images etc. – to cultivate anti-American nationalism among the Iranians. ***Iran withstood the pressure and whims of the world’s most powerful country for decades; for in reality, Iran is a deeper cultural powerhouse, with ancient roots that it still honours, than the US, whose material success belongs to the era of modernity.***

Under Trump, what used to be a diffused and covert war with Iran has been brought out in the open. ***What irks the US***

***further about Iran is not just their decades-old enmity, but also the fact of Iran's pervasive influence in West Asia, which will become unstoppable if Iran goes nuclear.*** While US and its allies – Saudi Arabia, Egypt and UAE – have been able to bully their way through regime changes in other countries like Iraq and Libya, and keep countries like Lebanon, Oman and other smaller states firmly in the leash, Iran has proven to be elusive.

Iran is not a West Asian power proper. It pervades Persia and is the gateway to Inner and South Asia. It is separated from West Asian states by the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman, and through its prime position can control the oil shipping and trading routes of the world, majority of which pass through the strait. Therefore, a recalcitrant Iran can pose a lot of problems by blocking or disrupting these shipping lanes.

So far, US has lost face in the various proxy battles that it and its allies have waged against Iran. In the Syrian conflict, the elite Iranian Revolutionary Guards – whom the US recently declared a terrorist group, despite them being the official military of Iran – played a pivotal role in flushing out the Islamic State terrorists. Iran enjoyed an alliance with Syria, Russia and Turkey in the Syrian conflict. On the opposite side were US, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Egypt, who were also ostensibly fighting the Islamic State, but who were instrumental in weakening the fight by arming the Syrian rebels in order to topple Assad's regime. That they were unsuccessful in this venture despite protracted efforts lasting almost 6 years, shows how expertly Iran can beat them.

Besides the Syrian conflict, where the continuing Assad regime dealt a blow to the calculations of the US-Saudi alliance, Iran also emerged successful in the proxy war waged in Yemen, where it had propped up the Houthi rebels against the pro-West Yemeni regime. The rural rebels remained undefeated by brutal

attacks by Saudi-US-UAE alliance. The Yemen war has famously brought lot of ridicule upon the Saudi crown prince and shown the world how resilient Iran can be.

Similarly, in Lebanon and Iraq, Iran exercises pervasive influence through its militant groups like Hezbollah and also through pro-Iran persons who are sitting in important positions of political power in these countries. Despite their calculations and offensive, the Saudi-UAE alliance backed by the West realizes that it was unable to prevent Iran from either deeply infiltrating the political systems of smaller countries or successfully waging proxy military offensive in other countries, thereby defeating them successfully. Iran is also the precise reason why Israel and Saudi Arabia-UAE have come together and the entire struggle for Palestinian independence has fallen on its head, since Iran – who supports Palestinian militant outfit, Hamas – is also Israel's worst enemy.

Yet, curiously enough neither Hamas nor Hezbollah – despite being militant outfits – can be called global terrorists in any sense of the word. They firmly operate with a limited agenda and geography, to fulfill certain objectives. Iran's strongest and only strength against its numerous enemies is proxy warfare through various outfits, at which it has become an expert. Boxed into a corner by sanctions and international isolation, Iran will lose advantage in direct war with the West. On the other hand, terrorist groups tracing their origin to Sunni states, such as al-Qaeda and ISIS are global jihadists outside the control of the political masters who used to patronize them, thereby showing how inept Saudi Arabia and UAE can be when compared to Iran.

The US would do well to remember that majority of al-Qaeda terrorists who struck on 9/11 were of Saudi nationality and not Iranian. Its difficult to recall a single incident of Iranian



terror offensive outside of West Asia. US and others accuse Iran of sponsoring terrorism in West Asia and argue that an Iranian nuclear programme will make it further invincible.

True. But a strong Iran bodes ill for the West and not for countries like India; for, Iran's obstructionism is ensuring that the US is unable to exercise complete influence in an otherwise passive and kowtowing West Asia.

## **IRAN AND INDIA: WHY INDIA SHOULD STAND UP TO THE US**

However, the ultimate US agenda and activities in West Asia might prove to be detrimental to India and the rest of the world. ***US's meddlesome regime changes in the region and its security alliances based on mercantile desire for oil and business proved to be a catalyst in the rise of global jihad. The birth of Sunni terrorists like al-Qaeda and Taliban can directly be attributed to the US and its European allies. US was responsible for the fall of several liberal regimes in Muslim countries, including Afghanistan, only because they were perceived to be Leftist. This was done by presenting jihad and radical political Islam as an alternative.***

India has had to pay dearly for these actions of the US. The rise of extreme jihad in Kashmir after the 1989 was because of the money and confidence Pakistan got from the US and by being a part of the war in Afghanistan. Today, once again US has rendered India impotent because of its stand on Iran. Prior to US's escalated offensive against Iran, India had managed to cultivate a sound strategic triangle of India, Iran and Afghanistan, reaching up to Inner Asian republics like Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and completely bypassing Pakistan.

The same Indo-Iranian Chabahar port whose funding in the

present Indian budget is a paltry 45 crore rupees was the mainstay of India-Iran collaboration. However, after the US sanctions, India has had to cut oil imports from Iran and can see its vision for Central Asia disintegrating before its eyes. With the US vigorously engaging the Taliban to effect its withdrawal from Afghanistan, India has been dealt yet another blow. The process means in any post-US polity, Taliban will have a substantial say in matters. What role Pakistan would play is still not clear, since Pakistan has been engaged by the US in Afghan peace talks due to its closeness to Taliban.

What is, however, clear is that Pakistan is already fishing in troubled waters. It is attempting to cultivate closer ties with both Iran and Afghanistan, trying to replace the partial vacuum created by India's shift towards the US. The recent visit of Imran Khan to Iran and of Afghans to Pakistan show that things may be moving in this direction. In all of this, India – which has been excluded from the Afghan peace talks – has ended up looking like a side ally of the US, resembling a regional Britain or Europe.

***India also faces potential side-effects of these geopolitical incidents in Kashmir. Since last year, there have been reports of attempts by Muslim countries to jostle for a place in Kashmir, trying to make it a playground for competing interests of Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan.***

Last year, India unfavourably viewed the radicalization of Kashmiri Shia Muslims by visiting Iranian clerics, who attempted to incite them to join the global jihadi cause. Prior to that, Iran's Supreme Leader, for the first time, added Kashmir to the list of other causes that Iran supports, such as Palestine. ***But these incidents are still at a very lower level and are more of Iranian warning signals to India rather than something concrete. After all, Iran is an astute player and it is difficult to imagine that***

***India could continue on a happy trip of its own, cultivating closer ties with US and Israel and even Saudi Arabia, without Iran at least sending a veiled warning to India to not forget its neutrality and cross all limits.***

Shias constitute nearly 15% of Kashmiri population and India has taken their support for granted. The worst thing for India, at this stage, would be the start of proxy conflicts between Iran, Saudi Arabia-Pakistan and Turkey in Kashmir. Turkey is aggressively trying to establish its soft power among Kashmiri Muslims, predictably because Erdogan is trying to be the leader of the Muslim world – an outcome which Saudi Arabia is loath to accept.

Fortunately, these conflicts will keep Muslims divided and prevent any kind of geopolitical implications for Kashmir, due to the strength of the Indian security apparatus. However, even these low intensity changes are a cost that India needs to factor into the loss-making deal that the US-Iran hostilities have become for India in the region.

This shift of India towards the US is, indeed, decisive and may prove to be a big negative for India in international politics. It's not clear what India hopes to achieve by diluting its traditional friendships in the region. It already has a painful trade war going on with the US. The Trump administration has withdrawn several trade privileges which used to benefit India, besides slapping tariffs and accusing India of being protectionist. Indeed, India has retaliated in kind in the trade war. But so far, in geopolitics the alliance with the US is proving costly to India and beneficial to the US.

The US is simply trying to use India in two ways. One, in the Indian Ocean politics, it is trying to subsume India into its Pacific

alliances with countries like Japan and Australia in order to contain China. And two, in the Central Asian region, it is trying to cut off India's ties with Iran. Having ensured that India is no longer importing oil from Iran and that Chabahar project has become a dysfunctional squib, the US now wants India to start taking verbal positions against Iran.

In both these objectives, US has a lot to gain. US is not a direct power in the Asian and Indian Ocean region. But India dominates both the regions and India has traditionally been neutral and a stabilizing force that others have looked up to. India has nothing to gain by allowing US to use it this way, since India neither seeks to contain China nor Iran, both of whom are its close allies. In addition, the relationship with the US is costing India its alliances – including with Russia – by inevitably bringing it under the shadow of the West, while historically India has always stood independent.

The US has done little besides attempting to dictate to India to maintain a distance with Russia, Iran and China. The US had the temerity to pressurize India to not let China's Huawei participate in the upcoming 5G trials in the country, to rescind the S-400 deal with Russia, to cut-off completely from Iran and to swallow the unpleasant and unacceptable US's overtures towards Taliban and Pakistan in Afghan talks. What is India getting in return? A couple of security and military agreements, which would bring it further under the US alliance and which are suspect in terms of benefits.

While India is trying its best to withstand US pressure without completely antagonizing an immaturely-disposed US administration, ***this delicate balancing act has resulted in a stalemate of sorts and has ended up by boxing India into a corner, subsumed into dealing with these endless regional***

***irritants, rather than being expansive and wide, and progressing further.***

In recent days, yet another proof that emerged of the unreliability of the US was when it declared the Baloch militants in Pakistan a terror group – an outcome that has pleased Pakistan. This will clip their activities further and provide Pakistan more leeway – and every bit of breathing space given to Pakistan is akin to further terrorism in Kashmir. That the Baloch decision came within two months of listing of Masood Azhar as a global terrorist is also no mere fluke. A favour to India was counter-balanced by a favour to Pakistan. ***Thus, US’s “friendship” is never for free – not just for India, but for anyone. US understands, respects and befriends only the language of power. Indeed, with “friends” like US, India has no need of adversaries.***

It is indeed astounding that the US should even expect India to cut-off relations from Iran comprehensively. A country which struck a cold and long-drawn bargain in listing a nobody like Azhar and that too with so many caveats as to dilute it completely, now expects India to give up all of its cultural and historical alliances for so little.

At this stage, India can ill afford to dilute its critical relationships with Iran and Afghanistan. US withdrawal from Afghanistan through its selfish and self-centered ‘Afghan Peace Process’ may have direct consequences in funneling more Pakistan-backed terror in Kashmir. Recently, the al-Qaeda chief broadcast a message warning India on Kashmir and declaring that Kashmir will be the next target of global jihad.

If this were to happen, India cannot simply depend on some vague goodwill or potential business or formal defence relations with a far off US. It needs close geographical allies like Iran and

Afghanistan to keep the terror nexus in check. It has also been proven repeatedly that US is cold and brutal and it cannot be trusted as a friend. It can occupy a position as a foremost ally, but such a transactional and calculative country will not be able to bear the responsibility and trust of friendship. India would do well to keep its relationship with the US well within clearly drawn limits.



## **The Future Work of India**

*“The recovery of the old spiritual knowledge and experience in all its splendour, depth and fullness is its first, most essential work; the flowing of this spirituality into new forms of philosophy, literature, art, science and critical knowledge is the second; an original dealing with modern problems in the light of the Indian spirit and the endeavour to formulate a greater synthesis of a spiritualised society is the third and most difficult. Its success on these three lines will be the measure of its help to the future of humanity.”*

– Sri Aurobindo

(Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol. 20: p. 15)