

Bharat Mata ki Jai: The genesis and relevance of the debate



Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/motherchild-healthcare-improves-thanks-to-icds/article7635215.ece>

In This Issue

COVER STORY:

- Bharat Mata ki Jai: The genesis and relevance of the debate

HEADLINE OF THE WEEK:

- Hate Speech Record Increases Election Victory Chances 30 percent
- Tweaks in MGNREGA to Woo Rural Elite

SECTION 1: GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

- **Politics and Governance:** Cynical Use of President's Rule Exposes the BJP's Desperation
- **Government:** Enforcement of PF Norms to be with Labour Ministry; Paswan Bats for Laser Printing of Customer Information on Water Bottles
- **Education:** The State Must Keep its Hands off the Campuses
- **Health:** Why are Children Still Getting Paralysed by the Polio Virus?; Cigarettes are not India's Real Tobacco Problem
- **Transport:** Airlines Question Fuel Price Hike, Cite Drop in Crude Rates
- **Law and Justice:** Parliamentary Panel Push for Tribal Judicial System

SECTION 2: SOCIETY

- **Casteism:** Haryana Cabinet Approves Jat Reservation Bill
- **Gender:** Gender Inequality in Well-being in India

SECTION 3: INDIA AND WORLD

- **India in the World:** India's Place in the Sun: The International Solar Alliance

SECTION 4: OPINIONS/ BOOKS

- **Opinions:** BJP Can Get Off; The New Mandarins

Lead Essay

Bharat Mata ki Jai: The genesis and relevance of the debate

The debate over the slogan ‘Bharat Mata ki Jai’ has re-contextualised the approaches towards nationalism in our public discourse. It has brought into the mainstream the contestation of secular discourses with religious nationalism. Uniting all political parties across the spectrum in condemning a Muslim MLA’s refusal to chant ‘Bharat Mata ki Jai’ in the Maharashtra assembly, the debate reveals the fissures within the secular political coalition led by the Congress party. The upshot is that it has started a process of re-interpretation of the historical narratives which reconfigures present-day political power relations. This will deeply disenfranchise the communities that became political stakeholders through secular politics.

Changing historical narratives

The genealogy of the slogan ‘Bharat Mata ki Jai’ can be traced to India’s freedom struggle. Even though the symbol acquired diffuse meanings across a range of communicative mediums and broadly unquestioned legitimacy in people’s psychology, the genesis of the slogan is underpinned by the rationale of revolutionary nationalism of the time. The characterizations of the slogan ensured that it became more than a symbol. Encompassing a war cry for the liberation of the territory and an imagination of the personification of nationhood, the slogan acquired its own narratives and counter-narratives in the popular psyche.

The early origins of the image of Bharat Mata can be traced to the *Unabimsa Purana* (*‘The Nineteenth Purana’*) by Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay, published in 1866, where Bharat Mata personifies the sacrificial figure of an Aryan widow.¹ The Aryan characteristics of Bharat Mata, to a great extent, delinked the symbolism from religious connotations, since in the Hindu culture, the term ‘Aryan’ is defined qualitatively instead of religiously. The transition from this qualitative, abstract symbolism to more explicitly nationalist overtones found resonance in Kiran Chandra Bandyopadhyay’s play, *Bharat Mata*, performed in 1873.² Ultimately, it was with Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay’s famous hymn, *Vande Mataram*, to the nation as the Goddess that saw the beginning of mass-based political mobilization around the imagination of Bharat Mata. The hymn was a part of the novel *Anand Math* that centred around the Sanyasi rebellion and the Bengal famine of the 1770s,³ which, through its polarizing depiction of history and nationhood ended up alienating the Muslims.

As Carl Olson writes,

“Although not the first author to emphasize the mother for political purposes, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838-94) transforms Bharat Mata into a fully fledged Hindu goddess and symbol of India who is experiencing difficult times; her children are indifferent to her sufferings, and they need to awaken to the dire conditions and act.”⁴

The social-political divide

What was novel about these depictions of Bharat Mata was not simply their relation to nationhood, but to regional, particularly Bengali, nationhood. When it emerged, its rise was confined to the context of regional cultural geography, the liberation struggle against the colonial rule and the first stirrings of the project of politicisation. Prior to that, the relationship of the Indian populace with its colonial rulers was defined, mainly, by issues of social reform, shaded with religious overtones. It was with the rise of the symbolism of Bharat Mata that the nation as a political project began to be imagined, with the Bharat Mata traversing grounds which were both benign and revolutionary.

¹ Jha 2016.

² Ibid.

³ Chishti 2016.

⁴ Daniyal 2016.

Lead Essay

On the one hand, thinkers like Sri Aurobindo, BG Tilak and Bipan Chandra Pal espoused a personification of Bharat Mata in their works, imagining her as a living cultural force that was being stifled by the colonial rule. For them, the resolution of the clear-cut divide between political freedom and social reform was to be found in the achievement of political freedom first, after which the liberated nation would be able to shape its own social structures.

On the other hand, thinkers like Nehru and Gandhi who clearly considered social reform as being critical to an independent nation's fortunes did not personify India culturally, but as a manifestation of its people. As Nehru famously remarked in *The Discovery of India*,

“When I went to public meetings, I was welcomed by chants of *Bharat Mata ki Jai*. I ask, who is Bharat Mata? The people in front of me gaped at me in surprise...the hills, rivers, forests, agriculture here, income received from it and people living on this land... There is a common thread binding all of them together... Bharat Mata. To say 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' is to hail all these people... They are the sons of this Bharat Mata.”⁵

The precedence Nehru gave to social reform is clearly brought out in his following remarks,

“Does the beautiful lady of our imaginations represent the bare-bodied and bent workers in the fields and factories? Or the small group of those who have from ages past crushed the masses and exploited them, imposed cruel customs on them and made many of them even untouchable?”⁶

It is, thus, clear that contestations over the meaning of Bharat Mata have been rooted in our anti-colonial genealogy. However, the debate, at the time, was mainly between the Bengal revolutionaries and the Congress nationalists. Formations like the RSS's precursor, the Hindu Mahasabha, had no role to play at that time. The image of Bharat Mata espoused by the revolutionaries was that of a mother suffering, enduring and beneficent, albeit exclusive of other religions and based on Hindu symbolisms. However, it never assumed the modern militant meanings that it has today.

The current context

In the current context, the rise of the RSS after the 1960s and the parallel emergence of the BJP's precursor, the Jan Sangh, gave a new context to issues like cow protection, relationship with the minorities and the meaning of secularism and nationalism. Unlike the nationalism practised by freedom movement revolutionaries, the RSS nationalism, along with its image of Bharat Mata has parallels with the European fascist model of nationalism. Even its organisation, discipline, the homogeneity it seeks to impose internally and externally, and, the modes of expression and communication that it inculcates among its 'trainees' belies the pluralism and diversity that characterised the Indian society and culture. As historian Irfan Habib recently pointed out, “Bharat Mata has nothing to do with India's ancient or medieval past. It is a European import. Notions of motherland and fatherland were talked about in Europe.”⁷

Yet this notion has become an inextricable part of the majoritarian idea of India. The RSS, whose role was miniscule during the freedom movement, has brought into the national imagination a militant image of Bharat Mata, since the 1960s. This reached its zenith during the 1980s mobilizations conducted by the saffron outfit and culminated in the Babri Masjid demolition during the early 1990s.

Such an imagination has palpable implications for the Muslim community, with the social-political divide that marked the contextualisation of political nationalism during the freedom struggle now appearing transposed onto the present context.

In the present context, where there is no colonial 'other' to fight against, the nationalistic imagination of the RSS has espoused the process of othering the minority communities. Incriminatingly, but to a lesser extent, even the secular

⁵ Upadhye 2016.

⁶ Gaur 2016.

⁷ Pathak 2016.

Lead Essay

political parties need to be held responsible. While the secular political parties gave them political voice over the decades, there has been rising discontent over their material conditions. Marked by exclusive institutionalism, partial and discriminating access to high-paying jobs and little improvement in their material conditions as highlighted by the Sachar Committee report of 2006, the Muslim community now harbours a deep sense of distrust for all major political parties and merely rely on choosing ‘the lesser of the two evils’ every election. Their economic condition, as documented by the report, is far worse than that of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and they have miniscule presence in government institutions like the bureaucracy, despite constituting a substantial chunk of the country’s population. The approximate figure of Muslims in the elite civil services stands shockingly low at two-three per cent. The majority of Muslims are not even eligible for these posts as very few of them are university graduates, with only about 5% of Muslims in the country having successfully completed university education.⁸ The political representation of the community is very low at 6 to 8 percent, even though its population is more than 14%.⁹

Thus, clearly, symbolic recognition is happening at the cost of material redistribution. And our entire political machinery is party to the process. The current issue wherein the debate has been focused on proving one’s patriotism by chanting ‘Bharat Mata ki Jai’ further fortifies the barriers of (non)recognition that have held the community back for so long and prevented their integration into a space where they can become equal stakeholders.

The way forward

The state of the debate on this issue shows that we have not really progressed beyond the social-political divide that was advocated by the nationalists during the freedom struggle, where the political sometimes became a mask for social injustices. Today too, despite the political voice the community has received due to secular politics, its representation and outcomes in terms of material welfare continue to be low. Given this, advocating the image of Bharat Mata as an exclusive form of nationalism has several implications for the country:

First, it becomes a mask for potential injustices towards the disenfranchised communities. Given the exclusivist history and genesis of the symbol, rooted in Hindutva nationalism, why should the Muslims be forced to chant the slogan to prove their patriotism? As the statements by several Muslim leaders suggested, the significance of slogans like ‘Jai Hind’ and ‘Inquilab Zindabad’ is not controversial and does not belie the spirit of plural nationalism in India.

Second, even if the image of Bharat Mata was not an import from European inspired nationalism and were not rooted in exclusivist Hindutva imagination, would it still be acceptable to legitimise the use of force to instil a feeling of nationalism in a particular community? There are several problems with this proposition. It not only condones the practise of violence which belies the tradition of ahimsa encouraged by the strong Gandhian strand of the freedom movement, but also falsifies the democratic approach towards the treatment of minorities by institutionalizing majoritarian violence against them.

Finally, the issue should be seen as an indictment of the current government’s failure to deliver on its promise of ‘vikas’ or development. While it was already under fire for incidents like the Dadri lynching, the assassination of rationalists and its subversive stand against JNU, its record in terms of delivery of social sector development schemes has also seen more grey areas than expected. Sectors like health and education have lagged behind with subversive proposals to lease them to private players and change their pro-poor orientation and no news on when their respective national policies will be finalized. Under such conditions, the vacuum created by the lack of state action on the development front is, as expected, fast being populated with forces fomenting social conflict and unrest.

⁸ Fatmi 2016.

⁹ Fatmi 2016.

Lead Essay

With the government unable to deal with its plethora of failed promises, the current controversy, like many others before it, has served as a ripe ground for diverting attention from the social failure and enabling the government to exercise its muscle power on a minority community. Secular political parties would do well to not fall for the ploy.

Bibliography

- Chishti, Seema. *The Indian Express*. March 28, 2016. <http://indianexpress.com/article/explained/a-mothers-worship-why-some-muslims-find-it-difficult-to-say-bharat-mata-ki-jai/> (accessed March 28, 2016).
- Daniyal, Shoaib. *Scroll.in*. March 17, 2016. <http://scroll.in/article/805247/history-lessons-how-bharat-mata-became-the-code-word-for-a-theocratic-hindu-state> (accessed March 27, 2016).
- Fatmi, Mohammad Behzad. *DailyO*. February 14, 2016. <http://www.dailyo.in/politics/indian-muslims-islam-hindutva-rss-congress-bjp-secularism-amu-jamia-millia-islamia/story/1/9000.html> (accessed March 28, 2016).
- Gaur, Abhilash. *The Times of India*. March 21, 2016. <http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/paperweight/if-you-cant-stand-kanhaiyas-view-of-bharat-mata-try-nehru/> (accessed March 27, 2016).
- Jha, Sadan. *The Indian Express*. March 18, 2016. <http://indianexpress.com/article/blogs/a-history-of-bharat-mata-and-why-we-need-to-draw-a-parallel-with-the-national-anthem/> (accessed March 26, 2016).
- Pathak, Vikas. *The Hindu*. March 29, 2016. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/idea-of-bharat-mata-is-european-import-irfan-habib/article8406275.ece> (accessed March 29, 2016).
- Upadhye, Keshav. *Firstpost*. March 18, 2016. <http://www.firstpost.com/india/bharat-mata-ki-jai-controversy-patriotism-should-be-in-your-blood-writes-keshav-upadhye-2683098.html> (accessed March 27, 2016).

Prepared By:
Garima Sharma

Headlines

Hate Speech Record Increases Election Victory Chances 30 percent

(Manoj K, *India Spend*, March 28, 2016)

Candidates with hate-speech cases against them have a 30% greater chance of winning elections, according to an analysis of self-disclosed crime records of candidates who have contested various elections nationwide over the last 12 years. To put these data in perspective, candidates with no criminal cases boost their victory chances to only 10%, half that of candidates with criminal cases of any kind. As many as 70 members of Parliament (MPs) and members of legislative assemblies (MLAs) have hate-speech cases pending against them, according to their own disclosures to the Election Commission (EC) of India.

Read More: <http://www.indiaspend.com/cover-story/hate-speech-record-increases-election-victory-chances-30-42521>

Date Accessed: 28.3.2016

Tweaks in MGNREGA to Woo Rural Elite

(Chetan Chauhan, *Hindustan Times*, March 19, 2016)

In order, woo rural elite the NITI Aayog in a recent occasional paper suggested providing farm labour under MGNREGA. According to proposal, In the peak season, farmers may be permitted to hire workers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) by paying 75% of the wages, with the balance paid by the government. “This would lead to a more productive use of labour while spreading MGNREGA wages over more workdays,” the draft of the paper says.

Read more: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/tweaks-in-mgnrega-may-help-ease-farm-and-labour-crisis/story-anhUyUehX1DCT2if8j2x3J.html>

Date Accessed: 27.03.2016

Economy

Budget 2016: Behind the Symbolism

(The Economic and Political Weekly, March 5, 2016)

In the ultimate analysis, whether or not Budget 2016 can claim to have some semblance of being people-friendly will depend on the implementation of two new schemes. One is the scheme to provide five crore households below the poverty line (BPL) with LPGs within five years and to support them with the initial cost of an LPG connection. The other is a new health insurance scheme to provide up to Rs 1.30 lakh of cover, again to BPL families. The first has an allocation of Rs 2,000 crore for 2016–17 and the second may well be handed over to private insurance and private hospital chains to implement.

Read More: <http://www.epw.in/journal/2016/10/editorials/budget-2016-behind-symbolism.html>

Date Accessed: 14.3.2016

Ramifications of Budget 2016-17

(Parthasarathi Shome, The Business Standard, March 15, 2016)

The Budget has placed too little emphasis on tax reform or tax revenue sources of financing. The tax structure is worse today than on 28 February. Of the heavy emphasis on non-tax revenue, many have insufficient basis within the 2016-17 timeframe. The apparently benign objective of a shift towards the farmer does not stand on firm ground. The big question remains why government missed a genuine opportunity for working out a viable roadmap for fundamental reform bring individuals and business into confidence by presenting a meaningful social contract, and then adhering to it.

Read More: http://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/parthasarathi-shome-ramifications-of-budget-2016-17-116031501325_1.html

Date Accessed: 16.3.2016

Governance & Development

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

Cynical Use of President's Rule Exposes the BJP's Desperation

(MK Venu, *The Wire*, March 28, 2016)

The BJP has decided to take a political risk by dismissing an elected government, the way it did in Arunachal Pradesh. It appears that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP party president Amit Shah have adopted a conscious and cynical strategy of wreaking havoc on a regular basis in the main opposition camp, even if it flies in the face of constitutional propriety. In a way, both of them are thinking in unconventional terms that do not fall into the pattern of received political wisdom.

The BJP seems confident that it can constantly change goalposts and control the political narrative. The party seems emboldened in this respect by its own assessment that it has gained from recent debate generated on the nature of nationalism India must adopt. Of course, all such political assessments will have to be validated by about half a dozen state elections over the next one year, culminating in the all important Uttar Pradesh polls. The trend so far is that the BJP is losing, on average, about 5 percentage points from its Lok Sabha vote share in every state election since.

It is possible that the BJP leadership has internalised this reality and is attempting something wildly different, not hitherto attempted in Indian politics. It appears to have decided that it will play totally disruptive politics on the ground, even if it militates against constitutional morality. There is a clear pattern emerging in the way the Centre has dealt with Arunachal Pradesh and Utrakhand. In both places, the Centre had the option of letting a conventional floor test happen to decide the majority in the assembly. But it chose not to do so, on one pretext or other. In the process, the Centre is also seriously damaging institutional processes. This is the biggest danger our polity faces today.

Read More: <http://thewire.in/2016/03/28/cynical-use-of-presidents-rule-exposes-the-bjps-desperation-26262/>

Date Accessed: 28.03.2016

GOVERNMENT

Enforcement of PF Norms to be with Labour Ministry

(Mahendra Singh, *Times of India*, March 25, 2016)

"The government has now decided to hand over the mandate of strict enforcement of provident fund norms covering close to 150 entities to the labour ministry. The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), which has around eight crore subscribers, reports to the labour ministry, which has been a bone of contention with North Block officials for a long time. The move came after it was detected that in case of some top colleges, for instance, the annual payout is much lower than the interest rate offered by EPFO."

Read more: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Enforcement-of-PF-norms-to-be-with-labour-ministry/articleshow/51557480.cms>

Date Accessed: 27.03.2016

Paswan Bats for Laser Printing of Customer Information on Water Bottles

(Dipak K Dash, *The Times of India*, March 27, 2016)

In a move to prevent sale of counterfeit products, particularly drinking water bottles, the government wants to make laser printing of labels compulsory. Moreover, the government has started the process of making the letters on labels bigger to make them more consumer-friendly.

"I strongly feel all the labels in the bottles should be laser printed. Anyone can use wrappers of a reputed company to sell fake water bottles. The name of the manufacturer, manufacturing and best before use dates must be printed on bottles," consumer affairs minister Ram Vilas paswan said just before the summer season.

Governance & Development

Read More: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/Paswan-bats-for-laser-printing-of-customer-info-on-water-bottles/articleshow/51576143.cms>

Date Accessed: 28.03.2016

EDUCATION

The State Must Keep its Hands off the Campuses

(*Hindustan Times*, March 27, 2016)

A university should be a place of light, of liberty, and of learning, said former British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli. This beautiful thought is usually the guiding force when universities are set up, but that spirit is at risk of being lost forever from the campuses in India, thanks to sectarian politics and spineless university administrators.

In these cases, university administrators have over-reacted to issues that could have been tackled in the campus. Instead of lending an ear to the aggrieved students, they opted to listen to political directives, leading to protests. This protests-arrests-protests could become a never-ending cycle in India's campuses unless administrators realise that a university has to be a just and an egalitarian space, and that they must let a thousand flowers bloom.

Read More: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/editorials/the-state-must-keep-its-hands-off-the-campuses/story-GZpDRochg1PULu6EtUHwuI.html>

Date Accessed: 28.03.2016

HEALTH

Why are Children Still Getting Paralysed by the Polio Virus?

(*Menaka Rao, The Scroll*, March 22, 2016)

While we are free of polio in the strictest sense, it is not that children aren't suffering from paralysis. As per the National Polio Surveillance data, while the polio cases have become zero (not counting vaccine-derived polio cases), the number of non-polio acute flaccid paralysis cases have increased substantially. Some studies say there's a link between non-polio AFP and the increasing doses of Oral Polio Vaccine.

Read More: <http://scroll.in/article/803485/if-india-is-polio-free-why-are-children-still-getting-paralysed-by-the-polio-virus>

Date Accessed: 22.3.2016

Cigarettes are not India's Real Tobacco Problem

(*The Livemint*, March 25, 2016)

Most Indians, who smoke, smoke a much cheaper, unfiltered product called a bidi. Popular among the poor—a pack can cost as little as 10 cents—bidis in 2009 accounted for 85% of smoked tobacco in India. Bidis have lower tobacco content than cigarettes, but more nicotine, tar and carbon monoxide. Stick for stick, they're deadlier. Yet successive governments have shied away from discouraging bidi smoking. The new law requires warning labels on only one side of bidi packs. And bidis are barely taxed.

Read More: <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/fJd5FfooY7bowz04tI4E2K/Cigarettes-arent-Indias-real-tobacco-problem.html>

Date Accessed: 28.3.2016

Governance & Development

TRANSPORT

Airlines Question Fuel Price Hike, Cite Drop in Crude Rates

(Somesh Jha, *The Hindu*, March 28, 2016)

Four major domestic airlines have escalated their protest over the 12 per cent increase in aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices effected this month, refusing to pay the revised prices and seeking a Rs. 2,500-crore refund from oil marketing companies for failing to pass on the benefits of falling crude oil prices since 2014.

Aviation fuel costs account for over 40 per cent of an airline's cost of operations, and hence an increase or decrease in ATF prices has an impact on air fares.

The airlines argued that average crude prices declined 69 per cent from April 2014 to February 2016, and during this period, the exchange rate went up by 12.7 per cent. It said the ATF prices should have been 25 per cent lower than Rs. 34,284 a kilolitre (in Mumbai) announced in February 2016.

"The difference of Rs. 8,650 a kilolitre has been pocketed by oil companies as it is a case of profiteering. According to our estimates, the annual ATF bill for airlines is around Rs. 10,000 crore," the promoters said, and this translated to a higher cost of Rs. 300 a ticket for passengers.

Read More: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/airlines-question-fuel-price-hike-cite-drop-in-crude-rates/article8402780.ece?homepage=true>

Date Accessed: 28.03.2016

LAW AND JUSTICE

Parliamentary Panel Push for Tribal Judicial System

(*The Shillong Times*, March 28, 2016)

"A new twist to the ongoing tug of war between the tribal justice systems vis-à-vis the regular one in the Northeastern states, particularly in Meghalaya, a Parliamentary Standing Committee has thrown its weight behind the former claiming it to be cost effective, less time consuming and simple procedure. The report of the department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice in its 18th report on 'Synergy between Tribal Justice System and Regular Justice System of the Country' was submitted in the Parliament during the just concluded Budget session. The objective of the report is to bring synergy between the tribal justice systems in the Northeastern states with the regular justice system of the country, said the committee consisting of ten Rajya Sabha and twenty Lok Sabha members."

Read more: <http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2016/03/28/parliamentary-panel-push-for-tribal-judicial-system/#ZuV3smjLxCMADi3.99>

Date Accessed: 28.03.2016

Society

CASTEISM

Haryana Cabinet Approves Jat Reservation Bill

(The Indian Express, March 28, 2016)

The Haryana Cabinet Monday passed a Bill to provide reservation in government jobs and education to Jats who had set an April 3 deadline for their demand to be met following their violent agitation last month. The draft Bill on reservation to Jats and four other castes was cleared at a Cabinet meeting under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar here, official sources said.

The BJP government had assured that it would bring the Bill in the ongoing Budget session. Jat leaders had announced that no protest would be held till April 3 if the state government got the Bill passed before that. The Bill proposes reservation for Jats and four other castes — Jat Sikhs, Rors, Bishnois and Tyagis — by creating a new classification in the Backward Classes category, sources said.

Read More: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/jat-reservation-bill-haryana-cabinet-assembly/>

Date Accessed: 28.03.2016

GENDER

Gender Inequality in Well-being in India

(Anindita Sengupta, The Economic and Political Weekly, March 26, 2016)

Significant differences between states were found in terms of well-being and wealth indices. Overall, women were found to be far behind men in terms of well-being. The well-being of women was found to decline with age and when they were in larger families, unlike men. While upper-caste women were not found to be doing significantly better than Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe women, upper-caste men were better off. And the women in the northern mountainous regions were found to be doing better than women in the Indo-Gangetic plains. However, the well-being of both men and women was found to be significantly related to the wealth they possessed.

Read More: <http://www.epw.in/journal/2016/13/special-articles/gender-inequality-well-being-india.html#sthash.QVsmRtDJ.dpuf>

Date Accessed: 28.3.2016

Opinions / Books

INDIA IN THE WORLD

India's Place in the Sun: The International Solar Alliance

(Raymond E. Vickery, *The Diplomat*, March 23, 2016)

India's leadership in establishing the International Solar Alliance (ISA) which was launched at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris last fall, is a part of New Delhi's big bet on solar. The ISA could have significant geopolitical implications. Most developing nations are like India: blessed with an abundance of sunshine, but cursed by a lack of electrical power. India's leadership on solar may provide a way for it to surge to the head of the pack on energy and the environment. However, the ultimate success of India's big bet on solar will require additional research, available financing, and viable solar projects that will tie together the aforementioned research and financing to benefit consumers.

Within this context, Modi took the lead in organizing the International Solar Alliance. However, the question remains as to exactly what the International Solar Alliance will do. ISA and India can stand at the nexus between the increased research pledged by the Mission Innovation countries and the financing announced by the Breakthrough Energy Coalition. Solar technology needs to be adapted to the conditions and economic realities of India and other ISA developing countries. Commercially viable solar enterprises should be developed and should adapt the new technologies and relate them to available financing. Without these enterprises, new technology is unlikely to be disbursed at the village level on an economically sustainable basis. The challenge is not so much the availability of funds as it is the creation of projects worthy of investment. The ISA can be instrumental in meeting this challenge.

Read More: <http://thediplomat.com/2016/03/indias-place-in-the-sun-the-international-solar-alliance/>

Date Accessed: 28.03.2016

Opinions / Books

OPINIONS

BJP Can Get Off

(Mitali Saran, *The Business Standard*, March 25, 2016)

India is currently suffering from boiling frog syndrome — the BJP is turning the heat up steadily, while everyone in the pot sticks their fingers in their ears, closes their eyes, and prays to the GDP, choosing not to notice they're being boiled alive. The RSS and the BJP have somehow confused themselves and large numbers of people into thinking that when they say something, it somehow magically becomes relevant and true. It doesn't. The nationalism narrative is the fakest, lowest, most ideas-free ploy in the world, and none of us should play.

Read More: http://www.business-standard.com/article/beyond-business/mitali-saran-here-s-where-the-bjp-can-get-off-116032500289_1.html

Date Accessed: 28.3.2016

The New Mandarins

(Hartosh Singh Bal, *The Caravan*, March 1, 2016)

The reality is that the BJP, from temporarily being Modi's party, is changing back to what it has largely been throughout its history: the political front of the RSS. Potentially the most contentious area of dispute between Modi's cohort and the RSS is the economy. News reports, albeit ones based on sources from the opposition, have already indicated that voting on the proposed Goods and Services Tax, a major plank of Modi's economic plans, may be deferred beyond the upcoming session of parliament, partly because of resistance from the RSS and its large base of traders.

Read More: <http://www.caravanmagazine.in/perspectives/the-new-mandarins-amit-shah-resurgence-rss#sthash.KbmCHyKx.dpuf>

Date Accessed: 28.3.2016

Issue Coordinator: Mr. Jeet Singh

Connect with RGICS at: info@rgics.org; www.rgics.org



Disclaimer: This document has been prepared by the RGICS staff and has not been seen by the Trustees of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF). Further, the views presented in this document in no way reflect the views of the RGF Trustees.

To unsubscribe, please write to us at info@rgics.org