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GEM TRANSACTIONS TO TOUCH USD 100 BILLION IN 3 YEARS: SURESH PRABHU

Relevant for: Ethics | Topic: Utilization of public funds

Ministry of Commerce & Industry

GeM transactions to touch USD 100 billion in 3 years: Suresh Prabhu

Posted On: 05 SEP 2018 5:29PM by PIB Delhi



Suresh Prabhu speaking during the launch of National Mission on GeM

Union Minister of Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation, Suresh Prabhu, today launched the National Mission on Government eMarketplace (GeM) for increasing awareness and accelerating the use of (GeM). Speaking on this occasion the Minister said that in the next 3 years transactions on GeM will reach USD 100 billion. He further stated that during this mission efforts will be made to bring more self-help groups, artisans and start-ups on this platform. The Central and State Governments along with Banks and PSUs will undertake the national drive from 6th September to 17th October 2018 by organising workshops, roadshow, trainings, events and other information, education and communication activities, including buyer and seller registration.

The National Mission will cover all central government departments, states and public sector

undertakings in a mission mode. It is aimed at creating awareness about GeM, train the buyers and sellers, get them registered in GeM and increase the procurement through GeM. This aim of this mission is to promote inclusiveness by empowering various categories of sellers and service providers such as MSMEs, start-ups, domestic manufacturers, women entrepreneurs, and Self-Help Groups. It will also highlight and communicate the value addition via transparency and efficiency in public procurement, including corruption-free governance in sync with the Central Government's objective of 'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance'. The mission also aims to give a boost to cashless, contactless, paperless transactions in line with Digital India objectives. It will improve overall efficiency and driving significant savings in Government procurement spends and it will maximize easy availability of all types of products and services procured by Government buyers via registration drives for existing vendors, further expanding the base of online products and services. Widespread training initiatives will be undertaken across the country, ensuring on-boarded buyers and sellers are aware of all GeM features.

Government eMarketplace is the national public procurement portal offering an online, end-to-end, solution for procurement of common use goods and services by government departments. GeM provides an open, inclusive, transparent and efficient online marketplace, which provides huge savings to government. It is mandatory for central government departments to procure through GeM. 25 states and Union Territories have signed MoU with GeM to adopt it as the mandatory mode of procurement for their departments so far.

GeM deploys technology to completely automate procurement processes and systems, introducing greater accountability in public procurement across India. In two years of its operations, GeM has recorded more than 7.25 lakh transactions worth over Rs.11,250 crores and established itself as an open, transparent, efficient and inclusive platform providing huge savings to the government. The portal has nearly 27 thousand buyer organisations registered and about 1.37 lakh sellers and service providers offering more than 4.65 lakh products and services for online purchase and contributes to approximately 20-25% average overall savings to the Government.

MM/ SB

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IMA MOOTS ETHICS CODE OVERHAUL

Relevant for: Ethics | Topic: Ethics in Private and Public relationships

The code would subsequently be submitted to all the relevant Central Ministries. Getty images/istockphoto

Can an individual doctor advertise, have a website to promote her practice to compete with aggressively marketed corporate hospitals? Should the donation of cadaver organs be made mandatory for all? Is it important for medical students to study ethics throughout the duration of the MBBS course?

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) says yes to all these questions.

Marking a bold departure from the existing code of ethics that covers the medical profession, the IMA — an umbrella voluntary body that counts more than 2.5 lakh, or about a third, of the country's doctors as its members — is in the process of redefining the code in order to ensure a much more contemporary outlook.

"The current code of medical ethics by the Medical Council of India dates back to 2002," said Ravi Wankhedkar, IMA president.

"Much has changed in the medical field since then and many relevant topics do not find a mention in the present code. Therefore, we felt it was necessary to brainstorm on this aspect," he said, adding that IMA would be releasing a handbook on the redefined code of medical ethics to its members at the association's annual cultural festival in Pune this weekend. The code would subsequently be submitted to all the relevant Central Ministries – health, medical education, law and justice and the MCI – for consideration.

24 topics

The handbook would comprise 24 topics that either need to be reviewed or find no mention in the current code. For example, the current MCI norms do not allow doctors to publicise their practice through any type of advertising.

"Big private hospitals are constantly promoting their set ups through advertisements in all mediums. How will individual doctors, especially those who have just begun practice, survive such competition," wondered Dr. Wankhedkar, adding that the IMA believes that any publicity material should be ethical and approved after scrutiny by the respective State medical councils.

IMA's handbook also looks at the topic of 'end of life'.

"After much discussion, we are of a view that doctors cannot give consent for deciding on pulling the plug. We are against physician-assisted suicide. This decision can only be taken by relatives," said Dr. Wankhedkar.

Ethical issues around Assisted Reproductive Technology and surrogacy also find a mention in the handbook and the IMA states that doctors should ethically ensure that surrogates and egg donors are not exploited.

The IMA also recommends that cadaver organ donations must be made compulsory for all unless an individual specifically states that he or she does not want to become an organ donor.

Viewing this recommendation as a ‘utopian solution’, the IMA acknowledges that this particular suggestion may trigger a fierce debate.

Cadaver organ donations are currently carried out in India only when an individual has explicitly expressed a wish to donate or with the consent of immediate relatives in cases of brain death, creating a shortage of cadaver organs for transplants.

“We have a long waiting list of patients for organ transplants,” said Dr. Srikumar Vasudevan, chairman of IMA’s ethics committee. “India carries out a high number of living donor transplants as compared to cadaver organ donations,” he observed. “A revamp has been due for long.”

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA WAS AN EMBODIMENT OF HINDU CULTURE: VICE PRESIDENT

Relevant for: Ethics | Topic: Human Values - Lessons from the lives and teachings of great Leaders, Reformers and Administrators

Vice President's Secretariat

Swami Vivekananda was an embodiment of Hindu Culture: Vice President

Indian culture is eternally relevant, timeless and time tested;

India believes not only in universal toleration but we accept all religions as true;

Preserving the invaluable heritage of India is true nationalism;

In a world of unprecedented changes, India can provide a sheet anchor and a spiritual compass;

In a world that is filled with bitterness, India could provide honey of wisdom gathered from different flowers by different bees;

The best thermometer to the progress of a nation is its treatment of its women;

Addresses valedictory session of the 2nd World Hindu Conference 2018 in commemoration of 125th year of Swami Vivekananda's address

Posted On: 10 SEP 2018 1:20PM by PIB Delhi

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that Swami Vivekananda was an embodiment of Hindu Culture and his messages that are relevant till today reverberate across India. He was addressing the valedictory

session of the 2nd World Hindu Conference 2018, in Chicago, USA today, in commemoration of 125th year of Swami Vivekananda's address at Parliament of the World's Religions in 1893 held in Chicago.

The Vice President said that preserving the invaluable heritage of India is true nationalism and said that with its knowledge and wisdom India could provide honey of wisdom in the bitter world.

The Vice President said that the extraordinary vision of ancient India encapsulates a message that is timeless and eternally relevant because it is holistic, integrated and universal. Whenever the world is faced with the threats of fragmentation, conflict, hatred and irrational prejudices, the Indian voice brings to the world the soothing, inclusive perspectives that have pervaded its cultural world for more than two millennia, he added.

The Vice President said that the Parliament of the World's Religions emerged as a celebration of the rich diversity in religious and cultural beliefs around the world and brought the world together to understand different world views. He further said that it deepened our appreciation of the common quest for peace and harmony that human beings have been engaged in from time immemorial. Swami Vivekananda's addresses at this Parliament have had an incredibly influential, he added.

The Vice President said that the unequivocal messages of tolerance, acceptance, unity and plurality of love, compassion, service, charity, gender equality, poverty alleviation and protection of the environment that exponents like Swami Vivekananda had spread across the world embody timeless values that are more relevant today than ever before. We should ensure that these values are further reinforced through behavior and action, as Swamiji said, by 'being' and 'becoming', he added.

Saying that India is also moving on an ambitious reform agenda that seeks to transform people's lives, the Vice President said that at this juncture, the values we all cherish, as Indians, can be the guideposts for our individual growth and collective advancement.

We have inherited a treasure house of ideas, values and attitudes. In a world of unprecedented changes, we need a sheet anchor and a spiritual compass. India could offer those to the world. In a world that is filled with bitterness, India could provide the honey of wisdom gathered from different flowers by different bees.

The Vice President held a bilateral meeting with the Vice President of Surinam, Mr. Adhin Ashwin on the sidelines of the World Hindu Congress and discussed issues of mutual interest. The Congressmen Mr. Bill Foster and Mr. Peter Roskam called on the Vice President and shared their appreciation of the progress in Indo-US relationship as well as the common understanding on many issues of contemporary relevance.

Twelve CEOs of various companies in Chicago met the Vice President and shared their experiences. The Vice President gave an overview of the policies and

administrative reforms in India, especially those facilitating ease of doing business.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"I am pleased to be here with all of you at this valedictory session of the second World Hindu Conference. I am very happy that all of you have travelled from different parts of the world from Suriname to Fiji, from Mauritius to Thailand to commemorate the 125th year of Swami Vivekananda's address in this city.

It was, indeed, a unique event in modern world history that is worth commemorating. It is a moment that is worth celebrating. Not once but many times over.

Organized as a part of the celebration of the voyages of Christopher Columbus around the world, the World's Parliament of Religions emerged as a celebration of the rich diversity in religious and cultural beliefs around the world.

It brought the world together to understand different world views. It deepened our appreciation of the common quest for peace and harmony that human beings have been engaged in from time immemorial. Swami Vivekananda's addresses at this Parliament have had an incredibly influential. As Dr. J.H. Barrows, Chairman of the General Committee of the Parliament of Religions said, "Swami Vivekananda exercised a wonderful influence over his audience". Mr. Merwin-Marie Snell, President of the Scientific section of the Parliament, said that Swami Vivekananda was "beyond question the most popular and influential man in the Parliament". The grand vision of Indian thinkers found the most eloquent and sublime expression in Swami Vivekananda's exposition. While the main exposition was showcasing the discover new lands, the Swami's exposition showcased the discovery of spiritual well springs that have sustained the world over many centuries.

We, in India, feel proud that such a voice that stirred the hearts and minds of the delegates in the conference 125 years ago, still reverberates and strikes a deep resonance in many people across the globe. It does so, in my view because of the extraordinary vision of ancient India that encapsulates a message that seems timeless. It is timeless and eternally relevant because it is holistic, integrated and universal.

It is said of the great Indian epic Ramayana that "as long as mountains stand on this earth and the rivers flow, the story of Ramayana shall continue to be popular". What is true of the Ramayana is true of the entire treasure house of knowledge that India has given to the world.

Whenever the world is faced with the threats of fragmentation, conflict, hatred and irrational prejudices, the Indian voice brings to the world the soothing, inclusive perspectives that have pervaded its cultural world for more than two millennia.

As Swami Vivekananda said in his inaugural speech at Chicago on September 11, 1893, ours is a country that has “taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance.” India believes “not only in universal toleration but we accept all religions as true.”

Sisters and brothers from around the world,

We have come here to celebrate an event. We have come here to celebrate the remarkable exposition of important facets of the Indian world view. We have had an opportunity to listen to eminent personalities who have dedicated their lives to spread this message. As we come to the conclusion of this three-day conference, I would like to suggest some important aspects of our shared cultural heritage that were articulated so elegantly and emphatically by the great sage of modern India, Swami Vivekananda in his Chicago addresses.

This event is called the World Hindu Congress. But, what exactly is Hinduism? As Dr. Radhakrishnan observed, “we find it difficult, if not impossible, to define Hindu religion or even adequately describe it. Unlike other religions in the world, the Hindu religion does not claim any prophet; it does not worship any one God; it does not subscribe to any one dogma; it does not believe in any one philosophic concept; it does not follow any one set of religious rites or performances; in fact, it does not appear to satisfy the narrow traditional features of any religion or creed. It may broadly be described as a way of life and nothing more.”

The question is: what are the essential elements or facets of this “way of life”? Let me outline a few important ones.

First and foremost is the breadth of our vision. For the Hindus, the whole world is a family. The following verse from the Hitopadesha provides that enlarged, enlightened, all encompassing view.

“Ayam nijah paroveti ganana Laghuchetasam, Udaara Purushaanam tu vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” (To consider some of our fellow beings as our own and others as not our own reflects a poor understanding. In contrast, the enlightened persons see the the entire world as one family).

This view emanates from second key principle in Indian thought: World as a manifestation of the divine. The whole world including all the animate and inanimate objects are composed of the same elements and have the same divine energy within them.

The first name out of the thousand names of Lord Vishnu in Vishnu Sahasranamam is “Viswam” (The world). The Hindus believe that the entire universe is a manifestation of God. God lives in each living and non-living entity in this world.

As the Ishavasya Upanishad says, “Ishavasyam idam sarvam, yat kinchit Jagtyam jagat, tena tyaktena bhunjithah maa grudhah kasya svidh dhanam” (The divine principle pervades every atom in this universe. So, enjoy the bliss of being a part of

this universe and share the joy of living on this bountiful, beautiful earth with all your fellow beings and other objects without excessive greed and avarice).

When we see the world in this light, we cannot have a world which is fragmented or broken into “narrow domestic walls” as Gurudev Rabindranath had said.

We see everything and every person as divine, to be respected and treated as equal. Democracy and egalitarianism come naturally as corollaries to this world view.

This world view makes us care for our fellow beings and their needs. We also care for the preservation of natural resources and environment. We will create a more sustainable planet. The echoes of this principle are unmistakable in Mahatma Gandhi’s statement that “Nature has enough to meet man’s need but not for his greed”.

The third aspect is tolerance and acceptance of plurality. The Vedic sages had recognized that there are multiple perspectives on many issues. There was therefore no dogma and a singular path. The Rig Veda succinctly states, “Ekam sat, viprah bahudha vadanti” (The truth is one, the wise men describe it in different ways). As Swami Vivekananda says, “From the high spiritual flights of the Vedanta philosophy, of which the latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, to the low ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists and the atheism of the Jains, each and all have a place in Hindu’s religion.”

The fourth aspect is the realization that there is unity in diversity. Swami Vivekananda, in his address, refers to it quite explicitly when he says, “Unity in variety is the plan of nature, and the Hindu has recognized it”. Swami Vivekananda’s exquisite description is worth recalling. He said, “We Hindus accept every religion, praying in the mosque of the Mohammedans, worshipping before the fire of the Zoroastrians, and kneeling before the cross of the Christians, knowing that all the religions from the lowest fetishism, mean so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realize the infinite, each determined by the conditions of its birth and association, and each of them making a stage of progress. We gather all these flowers and bind them with the twine of love, making a wonderful bouquet of worship”.

The fifth important aspect is the ability to absorb and adapt. Saints and religious reformers like Buddha, Mahavir, Basava, Dhyaneswar and Tukaram, Guru Nanak, Dayanand Saraswati and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu have constantly made Hinduism a dynamic religion with the capability to reform, refine, reinvent its practices.

Sisters and brothers,

I have pointed out some salient aspects of the Hindu world view that Swami Vivekananda had brilliantly elaborated not only in his Chicago addresses but also in his lectures in India and abroad. Swamiji, in one his lectures, says, “Love and charity for the whole human race, that is the test of true religiousness. Religion is realization; not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing or acknowledging.”

Swami Vivekananda had also focused on possible ways in which India should build on the spiritual strength. It is good to recall what he had said. He was convinced that “the best thermometer to the progress of a nation is its treatment of its women.” He also prioritized “first bread and then religion” and felt that “No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses in India are once more well educated, well fed, and well cared for.”

I think Hinduism’s unequivocal messages of tolerance, acceptance, unity and plurality of love, compassion, service, charity, gender equality, poverty alleviation and protection of the environment that exponents like Swami Vivekananda had spread across the world embody timeless values that are more relevant today than ever before.

We should ensure that these values are further reinforced through behavior and action, as Swamiji said, by ‘being’ and ‘becoming’.

The organizers of this conference have chosen a good motto “Sumantrite suvkrante” that could provide a good way forward.

This is taken from the Chapter 3 of Mahabharata in which Yudhishthira tells Bheema

“Sumantrite suvkrante sukrute suvicharite

Siddhyantyarthaaah mahabaho daivam chatra pradakshinam”

(Whatever task is carried out after wide consultation and careful consideration, with the required competence will achieve the desired outcomes. Gods also will be pleased with this kind of work)

Sisters and brothers,

Hinduism provides a practical and seamless continuum between the inner spiritual world and the outer materialistic world, thus, bringing great harmony between our day-to-day existence and the existential questions we face as modern societies.

The world has embarked on an ambitious and transformative agenda focused on ‘people’, ‘prosperity’, ‘planet’, ‘peace’ and ‘partnership’. The sustainable development agenda accepted by all the countries around the world is to “foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.”

India is also moving on an ambitious reform agenda that seeks to transform people’s lives.

At this juncture, the values we all cherish, as Indians, can be the guideposts for our individual growth and collective advancement.

Let me recall what Max Muller, the great Indologist had said: “If I were asked under

what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered over the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied [Plato](#) and [Kant](#), I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of the Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw the corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human a life... again I should point to India."

We have inherited a treasure house of ideas, values and attitudes. In a world of unprecedented changes, we need a sheet anchor and a spiritual compass. India could offer those to the world.

In a world that is filled with bitterness, India could provide the honey of wisdom gathered from different flowers by different bees.

As Swami Vivekananda had said about India: "Her influence has fallen upon the world like that of the gentle dew, unheard and scarcely marked, yet bringing into bloom the fairest flowers of the earth".

I do hope the delegates from this conference will take inspiration from Swami Vivekananda's speeches made in this country that shares with India a common commitment to core values and do their best to promote a more inclusive, harmonious world we all want. I hope the dew drops from our sacred clouds will make the flowers around the world bloom.

Let me conclude, as all Upanishads start and end, with a shanti mantra, a prayer for peace.

Om Bhadram Karnebhih Shrunuyaama Devaah |
Bhadram Pashyema-Akshabhir-Yajatraah |
Sthirair-Angaih-Tussttuvaamsas-Tanuubhih |
Vyashema Devahitam Yad-Aayuh |
Om Shantih, Shanthih, Shanthih

(May we hear good news, may we see good things, may we work together with devotion, steady mind and strong bodies and spend our lives in pursuit of goodness)

Jai Hind!"

BK

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THE ONE WHO REACHED OUT TO CHINA: ON ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE

Relevant for: Ethics | Topic: Human Values - Lessons from the lives and teachings of great Leaders, Reformers and Administrators

India-China relations have come a long way from the period of enmity and bitterness that followed the 1962 war. True, they have not returned to the cheery days of *Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai*, but the maturity with which the leaders of both countries handled the Doklam crisis last year shows that the ties between New Delhi and Beijing are now based on a sound realisation that neither can ignore, much less antagonise, the other. Rather, comprehensive mutual cooperation between India and China is increasingly being seen as an imperative for peace, stability and progress in Asia and the world.

In this evolution of India-China ties, one leader who made a seminal contribution was Atal Bihari Vajpayee. A politician in the non-dogmatic mould, Vajpayee was open to learning the lessons of history and, thus, revising his own views from the standpoint of India's national interests. As a swayamsevak of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Vajpayee's views on Pakistan and China in the 1950s were quite negative. However, by the time he became the Minister of External Affairs in the Morarji Desai government, and particularly when he served as Prime Minister, Vajpayee was a changed man. He had come to firmly believe that for India to emerge as a major global power, it must normalise relations with Pakistan (which meant finding a permanent and amicable solution to the Kashmir dispute) and comprehensively improve relations with China (which meant resolving the vexed border problem in the spirit of mutual compromise).

Vajpayee's visit to China in February 1979 ended the chill created by the 1962 war. It was the first high-level political contact between the two countries after 17 long years. His ice-breaking meeting with Deng Xiaoping, then China's paramount leader, started a new chapter in India-China relations that has continued till date.

In a tribute to Deng on his birth centenary in 2004, Vajpayee recalled: "I have pleasant memories of my meeting with Deng Xiaoping. The unfortunate military conflict in 1962, caused by the border dispute, had left a scar on the centuries-old affinity between the two great nations of Asia and the world. I called on him in the Great Hall of People in February 1979. I must say that the genuine warmth with which Deng Xiaoping received me — I too reciprocated that warmth in equal measure — helped in overcoming the psychological barrier and looking forward with optimism to a positive new chapter in our bilateral relations."

Deng told Vajpayee: "We do have some issues on which we are far apart. We should put those on the side for the moment and do some actual work to improve the climate to go about the problem. Our two countries are the two most populous countries in the world, and we are both Asian countries. How can we not be friends?"

The creative solution that Vajpayee and Deng discussed to resolve the vexed border dispute was, in a nutshell, this: Do not let normalisation of bilateral relations become a hostage to the resolution of the border dispute. Develop bilateral relations in an all-round manner. Simultaneously, try to resolve the border dispute through dialogue and by ruling out the use of force to change the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

In December 1982, when a delegation from the Indian Council of Social Sciences Research called on him in Beijing, Deng referred to his meeting with Vajpayee and reiterated his pragmatic

view on the border problem: "When I met your former foreign minister in 1979, I put forward a 'package solution' to the problem. If both countries make some concessions, it will be settled... The problem between China and India is not a serious one... The problem we have is simply about the border. Both countries should make an effort to restore the friendship that existed between them in the 1950s. As long as we go about it in a reasonable way, I think it will be easy for us to settle our border question. Because this question has a long history, you have to take into account the feelings of your people, and we also have to take into account the feelings of our people. But if the two sides agree to the 'package solution', they should be able to convince their people."

The next major milestone in India-China rapprochement was Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in December 1988. Deng told Gandhi, "Welcome... my young friend. Starting with your visit, we will restore our relations as friends. There was unpleasantness at each other. Let's forget it. We should look forward. Do you agree with me?" Gandhi responded: "Yes."

Vajpayee's visit to China in June 2003, when I had the honour of accompanying him, witnessed a big breakthrough in bilateral relations. The China he saw this time was very different from what he had seen in 1979. Nowhere was this difference more striking than in the Shanghai skyline. Vajpayee and his delegation went on a boat ride along River Huangpu and what we saw on Pudong district, facing the historic Bund on the other side of the river, were glistening skyscrapers.

During this visit, India recognised for the first time that the "Tibet Autonomous Region is an integral part of the People's Republic of China". Some foreign policy experts, including some serving diplomats, were not in favour of this recognition. They felt it would prevent India from using the "Tibet Card" against China. But the realist in Vajpayee was convinced that his decision, apart from being in line with the unchangeable situation on the ground, was a helpful step towards improving bilateral relations. On its part, the Chinese side recognised Sikkim as a State of the Indian Union. The visit also saw an important breakthrough in trade relations — bilateral trade started rising rapidly thereafter.

An important upshot of the visit was the decision to fast-track the talks on the border dispute by initiating the framework of Special Representatives of the two Prime Ministers driving the dialogue. Accordingly, Vajpayee's trusted National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra and China's State Councillor Dai Bingguo were appointed as the two special representatives. Vajpayee and Premier Wen Jiabao also agreed that the joint work on the clarification of the LAC should continue smoothly, which helped in maintaining peace along the LAC. After Vajpayee's demise, Wen Jiabao sent a heartfelt condolence, calling Vajpayee an "outstanding politician".

I met Mr. Dai in Beijing last year. He said, "Mr. Vajpayee was a leader with a vision and strategic thinking. He did not want the past to determine the present. He started a new era of cooperation in India-China relations. He had an open mind on the border issue and wanted it to be resolved soon on the basis of give-and-take. I was very hopeful about making progress." He added: "Prime Minister Narendra Modi belongs to the same party as Mr. Vajpayee. He has an opportunity to become a New Vajpayee." How true!

Sudheendra Kulkarni was a close aide of Atal Bihari Vajpayee in the Prime Minister's Office between 1998 and 2004

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THE NEW CORRUPTION

Relevant for: Ethics | Topic: Ethics in Private and Public relationships

Realme 2 or Redmi 6 Pro? Know which smartphone you should buy

L'Affaire Mallya is revealing of the different facets of the Indian version of crony capitalism. First, cronies have no political party; to be more precise, they shift allegiance from one party to another. Vijay Mallya became a Rajya Sabha member in the early 2000s with the support of Congress. He then joined Subramanian Swamy's party and was finally re-elected to the upper house with the help of the BJP and the JD(S). Second, his political trajectory shows that parties need capitalists, according to a mechanism described by Raghuram Rajan in a remarkable paper, "Is there a threat of oligarchy in India?".

"The poor need the savvy politicians to help them navigate through rotten public services. The politician needs the corrupt businessman to provide the funds that allows him to supply patronage to the poor and fight elections. The corrupt businessman needs the politician to get natural resources cheaply," Rajan writes.

But the businessman in question not only needs access to natural resources, he also needs loans for his investments. The huge NPAs of the public banks today partly stem from this mechanism, as the country's rulers can help friendly businessmen get loans from the public banks, even if the projects supporting their applications are not terribly convincing and even if they are running heavy debts — because the rulers in question will get something in return (possibly a fraction of the loans) in order to pay for their next election campaign. Mallya got loans from 17 different banks — mostly public banks whose directors are increasingly from the ranks of junior bureaucrats (when the post is not vacant) and whose arm can be (even more easily) twisted. The total amount of loans received by Mallya crossed \$1.4 bn. When Kingfisher was declared bankrupt in 2013, that was exactly the amount the company owed to its employees, suppliers etc.

While Mallya has attracted attention, several other industrial houses illustrate the two dimensions of crony capitalism. The Adani group is a case in point as the company grew in the wake of [Narendra Modi](#)'s rise to power and continued to receive loans despite a high level of debt. According to the Credit Suisse, in 2015, the group got additional loans to acquire one more deep-sea port and two thermal plants, increasing by 16 per cent its debt, that was already among the highest — it had jumped from Rs 331 billion in 2011 to Rs 840 billion in 2015 (Credit Suisse Securities Research and Analytics, House of debt, October 21, 2015). The Credit Suisse report reviews the situation of 10 companies which continued to receive loans despite huge debts and which probably coincide with the list — kept secret — of the dozen of big defaulters representing a large part of the NPAs today.

However, Mallya belongs to a category of Indian businessmen who are, by and large, not represented on the Credit Suisse list. This category is made of those who are so active in politics that they have been elected on a party ticket. The number of such businessmen is increasing according to Aseema Sinha, who shows that the percentage businessmen-turned-MPs in the Lok Sabha jumped from 14 to 26 per cent between 1991 and 2014 — when 143 of the 282 BJP MPs belonged to this category, a record ('India's porous state' in C Jaffrelot, A Kohli and K. Murali (eds), Business and Politics in India). This reflects the win-win equation between parties and businessmen: On the one hand, parties do not have to pay for the election campaigns of these rich candidates and on the other hand, these businessmen-turned-MPs get access to the corridors of power.

As MPs, big businessmen can access first-hand information that may be useful for their businesses — they may even influence the making of regulations affecting them. Mallya was a member of several committees related to his sectors, including the advisory council that the ministry of civil aviation set up in the 2000s, the committee on industry, the Standing Committee on Commerce, etc.

Mallya's is not an isolated case: Other businessmen-turned MPs epitomise such conflicts of interest. Rajeev Chandrasekhar, a Rajya Sabha member who was elected first as an independent and reelected in 2018 with BJP support, had been a member of the Consultative Committee on Finance, of the Select Committee on Real Estate etc — in spite of the fact that he is the founder of Jupiter Capital, an investment and financial services firm.

Businessmen-turned MPs not only learn about the laws that Parliament is making to regulate their activities (possibly influence them), but they also come to know the bureaucrats who will implement these rules. They may even recruit them after retirement. A former chairman of the LIC, Sebi and the National Stock Exchange and a former finance secretary were part of Kingfisher's Board of Directors. Similarly, bureaucrats of the Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation, an ex head of the Gujarat Maritime Board and a former Union home secretary have joined the Adani group.

The business houses benefit from the expertise and connections of senior bureaucrats. This means those who aspire to start a private sector career after retirement may not deal with private companies with a complete sense of independence when in office — all the more so as the cooling-off period can be waived on request, as evident from the way the last foreign secretary of India joined the Tata group immediately after retirement. Incidentally, the same argument can be extended to public servants (including judges and bank directors) who aspire for a government appointment (as governor for instance) and may, therefore, lose some of their independence.

Almost 30 years after liberalisation, the process has opened a chapter that has not only impacted the economy but Indian politics and society as well. New forms of corruption have emerged and a new political economy has crystallised. The different pillars of this multifaceted phenomenon have one thing in common: They undermine the state's independence, and therefore, its promotion of public good via its emancipation from private interests. This is evident from the way businessmen lobby from within the political system by funding parties (something the new, opaque electoral bonds will make even easier) and by becoming MPs. There is a reverse trend as well: If businessmen become MPs and MLAs, MPs and MLAs (even ministers) also become businessmen. As a result, the functioning of the state is affected. Why should rulers make hospitals, schools and the police work if they have invested in clinics, private schools and security firms?

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MORE THAN RS. 12,000 CRORE BUSINESS RECORDED ON GEM

Relevant for: Ethics | Topic: Utilization of public funds

Ministry of Commerce & Industry

More than Rs. 12,000 crore business recorded on GeM

Posted On: 25 SEP 2018 3:39PM by PIB Delhi

The National Mission on Government e Marketplace (GeM), was launched by the Minister of Commerce and Industry, Suresh Prabhu, on 5th of September 2018. This was followed by the launch of the Mission in 19 States and Union Territories.

The Government of India decided to launch a six week long National Mission on GeM from 6th Sept. to 17th Oct 2018 in order to increase awareness, accelerate the use of GeM and to further augment the proven benefits of procurement through GeM for all government departments and organisations.

It covers all central government departments, states and public sector undertakings in a mission mode by organising workshops, roadshow, trainings, events and other information, education and communication activities, including buyer and seller registration.

During the awareness period, a buyer registration drive has been launched for on-boarding and increasing procurement by Central, State and local agencies on GeM. A vendor registration drive has also been initiated for on-boarding additional categories and populating the available ones on GeM with more vendors. Central Ministries, States and their agencies, including local offices, have been tasked with sharing a list of key vendors for on-boarding on GeM.

Widespread training initiatives are being undertaken across the country, ensuring on-boarded buyers and sellers are aware of all GeM features, thereby fully utilising the offerings for achieving greater efficiency. Moreover, GeM has committed to work with all entities in providing operational support for facilitating seamless transactions on GeM and resolving any issues in online procurement.

In two years of its operations, GeM has recorded till date more than 8 lakh transactions worth over Rs. 12,239 crore. GeM has established itself as an open, transparent, efficient and inclusive platform providing huge savings to the Government. GeM has nearly 27.9 thousand buyer organisations registered and about 1.43 lakh sellers and service providers offering more than 4.86 lakh products and services for online purchase. GeM contributes to approximately 20-25% average overall savings to the Government.

Government e Marketplace is the National Public Procurement Portal offering an online, end-to-end solution for procurement of common use goods and services by government departments. It is used by Central and State Government Ministries and Departments, Central and State Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs & SPSUs), autonomous institutions and local bodies. GeM provides an open, inclusive, transparent and efficient online marketplace.

MM/SB

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CENTRE APPOINTS SEARCH COMMITTEE FOR LOKPAL

Relevant for: Ethics | Topic: Challenges of corruption

After a long delay, the Centre on Thursday constituted an eight-member search committee, to be headed by former Supreme Court judge, Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai, to recommend the chairperson and members of the anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal. The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, which envisages establishment of anti-graft body Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayuktas in States to look into cases of corruption against certain categories of public servants, was passed in 2013.

Former State Bank of India chief Arundhati Bhattacharya, Prasar Bharati chairperson A. Surya Prakash and former Indian Space Research Organisation head A.S. Kiran Kumar are the members of the search committee, according to an order by the Personnel Ministry.

Former judge of the Allahabad High Court, Justice Sakha Ram Singh Yadav; former Gujarat Police head, Shabbirhusein S Khandwawala; retired IAS officer of Rajasthan cadre, Lalit K Panwar; and Ranjit Kumar are the other members of the panel.

The step comes after the Supreme Court's order to appoint Lokpal at the earliest. The search committee was appointed by the selection committee, which comprises Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra, Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan, leader of the largest Opposition party, which in this case was Congress's Mallikarjun Kharge, and eminent jurist Mukul Rohatgi.

Kharge absent

Mr. Kharge, however, is not a full-fledged member of the panel and he boycotted the selection committee meeting five times this year. He was not present at Thursday's meeting too.

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TRUTH ABOUT THE LAST PERSON

Relevant for: Ethics | Topic: Human Values - Lessons from the lives and teachings of great Leaders, Reformers and Administrators

Planning to buy a mid-range smartphone? Honor 9N is the notched beauty you need

I wish to begin this reflection with two images. One of a pair of sandals, now somewhat withered with age, and use, which lies in a glass cage in the Constitution Hill Museum in Johannesburg. These sandals reflect the attraction that its maker had for the minimalism of the Trappist aesthetics as also fondness for the material, leather. M K Gandhi, as a prisoner, made these in South Africa and gifted them to General Jan Christian Smuts. It tells many stories, but the story I wish to bring to attention is Gandhi the sandal-maker.

The other image is of Gandhi sitting cross-legged, peering with his left eye into a microscope raised with a fat volume. If the image is not cropped we see an open (note) book and a somewhat amused Pyarelal Nayyar by his side. Gandhi was examining leprosy germs.

These two images are reminders of what we have chosen to forget about Gandhi, of the various silences that surround the man. Among the many things we have chosen to forget about Gandhi is his lifelong work with leather and his desire to shod every feet with leather chappals. We would prefer Gandhi the spinner of fine, “pure” yarn. Leprosy, one of the oldest infectious diseases in human history has created for all cultures its “untouchables”. The leper and the leather worker are subject to the most enduring — albeit from different grounds — forms of exclusion and humiliation. They are Gandhi’s “last person”.

Silence was dear to Gandhi. He liked debate, even acrimony, but in that he wanted his silence. Each Monday he observed silence, and at times weary and unable to see his way in the darkness that surrounded him and us, he retreated into long periods of silence. Silence for him was not withdrawal from engagement. It was a mode of communion and of communication. His silence was both going inwards and reaching out.

Our silence, our amnesia about various aspects of Gandhi is a well-crafted manoeuvre. And in this the Indian State, since its inception, and Gandhi’s institutions after Gandhi, have been collaborators. The first of this has been to render Gandhi’s institutions into “anti-thought” establishments. Serious intellectual challenges posed to Gandhi’s thought and life practices are met either by a petrified silence or disdain arising out of certainty of the perfectness of the Master. This has created a deep and lasting inability to be morally innovative or ethically responsive. This is most deeply felt in the realm of political economy. In a world where the ethical in the economic, the normative in the market have been rendered illegitimate, Gandhi’s concern with the last person finds place only in a regime of subsidy, instead of in the creation of enabling institutional structures. The move away from Trusteeship to Philanthropy captures this predicament.

Gandhi’s lifelong quest was to create a possibility of collective non-violence, Ahimsa, not only as personal ethic but as political imperative, and as political economy that recognises the violence of poverty and deprivation. Gandhi like no other after him recognised the transformative potential of seva. Seva is derived from saha and eva meaning “together with”. Understood thus, seva is the epitome of fellowship, of a state of communion with self, other beings and the divine. It is an act of being with others, being that is non-acquisitive, being that seeks only to serve so that pain is alleviated, suffering made bearable, joy experienced and divine made immanent. In this sense, seva is the complete opposite of servitude and slavery, where both self and self-volition

are denied. Violence is the perfect opposite of seva. Seva as service, as care, as non-acquisitive selflessness is a necessary condition for Ahimsa. Violence unto the others occurs when they are pushed outside the realm of care and of seva. Seva is no longer part of lokniti and much less of rajniti. And memorials by their very nature cannot perform seva. Bereft of seva our capacity to deal with violence that surrounds us is enfeebled.

Disobedience of what is repugnant to one's conscience is imperative for any form of lokniti, rajniti and hence of citizenship. This right of disobedience is predicated upon it being "civil", that is, non-violent and upon its relationship to conscience. This right requires fundamental obedience — for Gandhi, not to the state, not to the nation, and certainly not to law or courts — to truth and non-violence and a recognition of the right of others to be equally adherent to their conscience. (Let us recall Gandhi's seven days of fasting in 1934 for an assault by his followers on Pandit Lalnath who opposed Gandhi's work on eradication of untouchability.) That the state and its apparatus, the courts, will be unable and unwilling to recognise this, is writ in the very nature of conscience. The modern state and law do not recognise conscience as a category and hence to seek amelioration of conscientious objection from them is to constrict the realm of the conscience. Our reliance upon law to expand the realm of autonomous moral action is for this reason deeply flawed. So long as we are willing to undergo the punishment for our conscientious disobedience, we retain the right to disregard the injunctions of law. But this right is not absolute, it accrues to those who engage with fellow beings through seva, that is, constructive work.

Gandhi reminded us and continues to do so that India is united in its poverty and deprivation, its structures of humiliation and violence. His legacy is this awareness. To the extent we remain conscious of this, we become tuned to his silence and would have less need to create silences around him.

The writer has recently published an annotated critical edition of M K Gandhi's autobiography

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HOW GANDHI WAS DIFFERENT

Relevant for: Ethics | Topic: Human Values - Lessons from the lives and teachings of great Leaders, Reformers and Administrators

Planning to buy a mid-range smartphone? Honor 9N is the notched beauty you need

Textbooks take a long time to absorb change and Pakistan has yet to digest what happened on January 30, 1948. Nathuram Godse, who killed [Mahatma Gandhi](#), later said, “The accumulating provocation of thirty-two years, culminating in his last pro-Muslim fast, at last, goaded me to the conclusion that the existence of Gandhi should be brought to an end immediately... When top leaders of Congress, with the consent of Gandhi, divided and tore the country — which we consider a deity of worship — my mind was filled with direful anger”.

Gandhi was killed because his assailants perceived that he supported the idea of Pakistan by dividing India. He was also the leader of the greatest Muslim movement in history, the Khilafat Movement, whose leaders were not too enamoured of Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Arun Shourie, in his book The World of Fatwas, says Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar and Maulana Shaukat Ali used to kiss the feet of Mahatma Gandhi for leading the Khilafat Movement. Hamza Alavi, in Ironies of History: Contradictions of The Khilafat Movement, writes that Jinnah was physically beaten by Shaukat Ali for opposing the movement. After 1947, Khilafat was not in the Pakistani textbooks although most of the anti-Pakistan Khilafat leaders were accepted into the pantheon of Pakistan’s Islamic nationalism. Why not Gandhi?

Christophe Jaffrelot wrote in The Indian Express (January 30, 2015) that a BJP MP wanted to elevate Gandhi’s killer Nathuram Godse to the status of a patriot because he “killed for a cause”. Presumably, Gandhi died “without a cause”. All this is happening as India looks to climb to world-power ranking with a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. Some Pakistanis thought Pakistan’s early medievalism would subside after a series of failures. Who could imagine that, instead of being chastened by Pakistan’s failure, India would set Gandhi aside and start killing Muslims “to protect the cow”?

Gandhi wanted Hindus and non-Hindus to live together and wanted Pakistan as a peaceful neighbour. Pakistan succumbed to extremist ideology and can hardly govern itself today. But India was not supposed to succumb to the same aetiology of state failure where people are scared on the streets, the judges scared in the courts and the media forced to hide the truth. The hope for peace inspired by a great man from within Hindutva, [Atal Bihari Vajpayee](#), has quickly faded. If the next election is won by the BJP, it might have enough numbers in Parliament to remove the word “secular” from the Indian Constitution.

Mahatma Gandhi has to be celebrated because he represented an important milestone in India’s intellectual evolution. Judging from the numbers he was able to mobilise in his movement, he will remain the greatest leader of South Asia for a long time. Vivekananda thought Hinduism could be the staple of Indian civilisation only if it could borrow monotheism from Islam and end its internal rifts. Gandhi thought of a Hindu-Muslim synthesis based on non-violence and tolerance.

Unfortunately, it was V D Savarkar who had clarity. His Hindu Mahasabha vision came out of the anti-Muslim historiography under the British Raj. He read the Muslim religious literature and suspected the Muslims of finally not accepting to live as one nation with the Hindus in India. His “solution” was that the Muslims should accept India as a Hindu Rashtra and convert back to Hinduism if they were to have full rights as citizens. As a non-Congress leader, Savarkar was

marginalised but his appeal was pan-Indian and he was to become the ideologue of Hindu nationalism sweeping India at the end of the 20th century.

Gandhi put off Jinnah when he mixed religion with politics, even though he agreed with the project of creating a secular state in India. He was firmly inclusivist in his approach to other religions. His mother, Putli Bai, believed in respecting Hindu and Muslim faiths equally. Gandhi did not tackle the Muslim question directly because he would not go into why the Indians were degenerate before British occupation. Others thought degeneration was owed to Muslim rule; he dodged the subject. As an apostle of non-violence, he thought of letting Muslims share power in India.

The world of Islam is in a state of upheaval because of a “surplus phenomenology of identity” or “hyper-asabiyya”, which makes it fight internecine wars. This crisis has grown out of an inability to reinterpret a creed predicated on violence. Gandhi’s non-violence appealed to many great leaders in the West after the two World Wars. India can never claim that he was a leader only of India.

Pakistan is frequently shaken by the persecution of innocent non-Muslims and secularists. The national trauma of the lynching of a free-thinking student, Mashal Khan, in a university in the province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa persists. Gandhi-hating “new” India has provoked India-watching Christophe Jaffrelot (*‘Hindu Rashtra, de facto’*, IE, August 12) into saying: “Not only has the prime minister abstained from condemning lynchings, some legislators and ministers have extended their blessings to the lynchers. Only a few of the lynchers have been convicted so far. Whenever lynchers have been arrested, the local judiciary has released them on bail. If the executive, legislature and judiciary do not effectively oppose lynchings, India may remain a rule-of-law country only on paper and, in practice, a de facto ethno-state.”

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