

# Nehru and the Kashmir quandary

The former PM erred in having too much confidence in the sense of justice of his successors



D. SHYAM BABU

Union Home Minister Amit Shah earlier this month held India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, responsible for the country being deprived of one-third of Kashmir. Except for those who deify Nehru, most others readily agree to the obvious fact that Nehru was not infallible. However, it is ironical Mr. Shah and his party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, focus on an area of Nehru's alleged culpability – his handling of the Kashmir question – on which the latter perhaps deserves their indulgences and empathy.

What must one, then, think of when one thinks of Kashmir? Is it a stolen land? Or a symptom of Hindu-Muslim rivalry? Or a case of cross-border terrorism? Or perhaps a battleground for two nuclear rivals? Kashmir is all these and much more. However, there are some aspects to the muddle that have been ignored for far too long.

## Nehru, the Kashmiri Pandit

First, given Nehru's well-known secular credentials, we tend to treat him as less of a Hindu, if not looking at him as an outright anti-Hindu. In reality, on Kashmir, he acted not only as a Hindu determined to protect his co-religionists, but as a Kashmiri Pandit.

In 1947, the immediacy of the crisis in Kashmir – the procrastination of Maharaja Hari Singh to join either India or Pakistan and Pakistan's invasion of the state – dictated that Nehru and the Government of India do everything to prevent the impending genocide of the Hindus in Jammu and Kashmir.

Wouldn't a secular Nehru have also acted in a similar way? Indeed. But a secular Nehru would have liberated the rest of Kashmir, including Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), as well. Because India could either claim the whole of Jammu and Kashmir or nothing. Ignore, for the time being, the purported reluctance of Indian Army to proceed further due to the operational constraints that forced Nehru to agree to a ceasefire.



**A measured handshake:** Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru with Kashmir's Maharaja Hari Singh in Srinagar in May 1948. • THE HINDU PHOTO ARCHIVES

Further, if one were to examine Nehru's actions in solely communal terms, one wouldn't be able to visualise a better strategy for the Hindus in the State than the one he chose. It must surely have crossed Nehru's mind that if he liberated PoK, it would create a situation where Hindus in Jammu and Kashmir were further relegated to a minority.

Here, it is not difficult to count the benefits of Nehru's calibrated inaction. A unified Jammu and Kashmir would have meant that even a brilliant gerrymandering of political topography would not have helped the Kashmiri Hindus. Hence, the BJP's criticism of Nehru's actions comes across as ironical.

## The Hyderabad parallel

Prior to 1947, Jammu and Kashmir and Hyderabad State were mirror images of each other: an autocratic ruler from a minority community having put a heavy yoke on the majority population.

We are far too willing to accept the gory details of Hyderabad Nizam's misrule but squeamish in shedding a similar light on Kashmir. This has distorted our understanding of the Kashmiri problem in two ways.

One, the current angst among the Kashmiri Muslims is explained away as the people's anti-India sentiments or the machinations of Pakistan.

There is truth in both explanations. But they also mislead us into believing that the Kashmir problem started after 1947. The fact is that the cross-border terrorism started much before the Partition of the subcontinent when Muslims in British India used to slip into the princely State of Jammu and Kashmir in solidarity with fellow Muslims, who were getting a raw deal from their ruler. Had we been cognisant of this fact, we would have focussed more on good governance and ensuring basic liberties to the people in Kashmir.

Two, after its accession into India, Jammu and Kashmir was pushed into adopting democracy whereas it never had the institutions, the cultural temperament and the robust civil society so essential for democracy to take roots and flourish. Recall how Hyderabad State (now Telangana) suffered for decades from left-wing extremism which was a counter to its feudal set-up.

Leaving aside a few honourable exceptions like the princely States of Travancore, Baroda and Kolhapur, most areas under native rule prior to Independence proved to be fallow for democracy, whereas British India enjoyed a whiff of rules-based governance.

Understanding the parallels between Hyderabad and Kashmir would give us a whole new way of dealing with the root cause of the problem,

rather than just its symptoms. The Maharaja's delay in choosing between India and Pakistan prompted Pakistan to resort to military intervention. That its troops were dressed up in mufti should not distract us from that fact.

## On a fire-fighting mode

After accepting the Maharaja's instrument of accession, Nehru's main task was to secure the safety of Hindus, especially in the Valley. Having accomplished his goal, he had to end the war at a time and place of his choosing. How else could he have achieved it without going to the United Nations?

He was right in his likely assessment that Hindus wouldn't be safe in Pakistan and Muslims would be better off in India. His assessment was proved right during his time. But the fire-fighting nature of Nehru's actions in 1947-48 should have been additionally followed up with measures of restoration and rehabilitation, keeping Kashmir's history and culture in context.

Nehru and India had three policy options at their disposal during the initial years of the problem. They were: a) Use the window of opportunity to relocate Hindus away from the Valley; that would have avoided communal strife though democracy would have taken more time to fructify; b) Usher in secular and liberal democracy which would take care of the interests of everyone; or c) Put in place an autocratic system that would be managed from New Delhi.

The first option (evacuation) was never attempted as the government thought it was not necessary and the Centre was supposed to be following the second option (democracy) but *de facto* ended up following the third one (direct rule).

Unfortunately, for Nehru, taking possession of Jammu and Kashmir – minus the 'one-third' – was an end in itself but not the beginning of a long process of integration. Further, he had too much confidence in the superiority of India's liberal polity, which he believed Kashmiris would happily embrace. He also had too much faith in the sense of justice and equanimity of his successors. His faith proved to have been misplaced.

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# Deepening #MeToo

A year after an actor inspired women to speak up against harassment, it's critical to assess the gains and challenges



DAMINI CHOPRA

In the mid and late-1800s, social movements in Europe for equal rights for women threw up the word 'feminism', which traces its origins to French. The suffrage movement in Britain in the early part of the 20th century was another component of women's fight for equality across the world.

Over the years, this fight has gained momentum, often with varying goals depending on the cultural traditions and the degree of prevalence of patriarchy in different societies. Various instances have inspired women to collectively get together and assert their rights – to create a combined voice that strongly advocates the impending need to view them as equal to men.

In the current world, there are strong stances that women are taking to support causes, such as the #MeToo movement that started in the U.S. and took down power players like Harvey Weinstein and Roy Price and is now a force to reckon with in India.

## Why it is needed

The abuse of power by men in high offices has been an open secret. Many women across industries have been subject to lewd remarks, suggestive behaviour and assault – and have often been penalised for rejecting such advances.

Tanushree Dutta's decision, in September 2018, to speak out against her alleged exploiters from a decade ago gave courage to many women to be able to openly speak up against bullies who coerce them into compromising situations.

Many other women have been empowered by the #MeToo platform to be able to take on powerful bullies. A big boon for feminism, #MeToo has also given women a tool against oppressors in influential positions. As sexual harassment is considered a serious offence when proven beyond reasonable doubt, the men stand to lose their sources of income as well as public reputation. Social media has, thus, been a huge platform in helping women to be able to express their ordeal as well as find solidarity and support.

A corollary to the same is the apparent misuse of these tools by some for personal agendas.

Many women are choosing to lash out at ex-lovers and blame them for harassment. Consent is imperative in every relationship; however, a mutual relationship (irrespective

of the state of it) cannot be comparable to exploitation of women employees at workplaces by men in senior positions.

## Settling personal scores

Former Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court, Sujata Manohar (who was part of the bench that penned the Vishakha guidelines against sexual harassment at workplaces), observed that many women were misusing the #MeToo movement to shame men on social media and to settle personal scores. Adding allegations of a personal nature dilutes the essence of a very powerful and necessary movement.

Further, a lot of women anonymously share stories about their harassers but refuse to take further legal or police action. This raises questions on the ingenuity of their claims. In a recent example, an aspiring actor filed a complaint against a noted director, but then withdrew it.

Such actions not only allow the men in question to go scot-free, but also cast a shadow on the veracity of the victims' claims. If an untoward incident did occur, the sufferer must be willing to follow the proper channel to lodge a complaint and seek support for the same. It takes immense courage for a survivor to come out in public and relive her ordeal, and she must be believed and supported.

In such an atmosphere, false claims by a few women cast a net of suspicion on all allegations. Using social media to name and shame an alleged perpetrator just to settle a personal score under the garb of #MeToo is a disservice to women who genuinely need the aid of the movement.

To achieve a balance, it is important fairly assess each situation while taking a neutral approach in dealing with both the parties involved – the man and women.

This article does not attempt to undermine the need for women to assert themselves. Neither does it aim to question the legitimacy of all the complainants rallying behind the #MeToo movement. It only aims to argue that as we propose to create a more equal society, we must not let the oppressed assume the role of the oppressors. While there are great tools at our disposal, they also come with great responsibility.

For #MeToo to retain its moral clarity, it is important that we now look at ways to strengthen the processes at workplaces and the legal framework in general, so that cases of sexual harassment are speedily settled, and not left to a 'she-said-he-said' aftermath that extends the trauma of the innocent women and, sometimes, the men concerned.

Damini Chopra is an actor

# A case for nutrition counselling

It is a low-cost measure that offers lifelong benefits

BJORN LOMBORG  
SHIREEN VAKIL

The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme is one of the world's largest programmes for early childhood care and development. Now, a new study suggests that nutrition and health counselling delivered under the programme's auspices is one of the best possible investments that can be made by any government.

This timely, non-partisan report is by India Consensus, a partnership between Tata Trusts and Copenhagen Consensus, which has undertaken a first-of-its-kind analysis of 100 government programmes. These were identified by NITI Aayog for their role in supporting India's efforts to achieve the Global Goals.

The Global Goals have a dizzying array of 169 targets, such a long list that no country on Earth can achieve all of them. That's why the unique India Consensus economic analysis approach is vital: it adds new knowledge about costs and benefits. This way, it can be clearer which programmes achieve the most good for every rupee spent.

Researchers have identified twelve programmes that have phenomenal benefits for every rupee spent. Among the top programmes is nutrition and health counselling.

## Empowering the mother

As a behavioural change intervention, nutrition and health counselling is relatively low cost for every person that is reached. It's important to note that this programme does not provide food, but instead provides information to the mother, making it more likely that the child will receive more and better food. And that in turn leads to lifelong benefits.

Many studies have now demonstrated that these benefits can be large. Improving the nutrition and health outcomes of the children of mothers reached makes this a highly cost-effective intervention.

Two analyses were undertaken in Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, looking at a six-year campaign of nutrition counselling and hand-washing.

The average cost of counselling sessions for each woman was estimated at ₹1,177 and ₹1,250 for Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan respectively. Based on previous studies, it is estimated that counselling leads to a 12% reduction in stunting. This leads to better cognitive skills.

## Quantifying the benefits

Quantifying the increase in earnings shows that the per unit benefit for Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan comes to ₹71,500 and ₹54,000.

What these figures mean is that the investment generates returns to society worth ₹61 and ₹43, respectively, for every rupee spent. While the analysis will differ for other States, these results show that nutritional counselling is a phenomenal investment. It's relevant to note that these figures take into account the challenges of nutrition counselling: it's a relatively difficult intervention to implement and ensure that every person is reached. But even if India's implementation problems were worse than other countries studied by researchers, it is unlikely to make the investment less impressive. The take-away point is that, among all the ways that the Indian government

is spending money to achieve Global Goals targets, adding additional resources to nutrition counselling would be a phenomenal investment. The preliminary results of this analysis show that there are many policies that can achieve amazing outcomes. If India were to spend ₹50,000 crore more on achieving the Global Goals, focussing on the most phenomenal programmes identified so far by India Consensus would create extra benefits for India worth ₹20 lakh crore – more than the entire Indian public consumption.

With returns like this at stake, there are compelling reasons to look favourably at approaches including nutrition counselling.

Bjorn Lomborg is president of the Copenhagen Consensus Center.

Shireen Vakil heads the Policy and Advocacy unit of the Tata Trusts



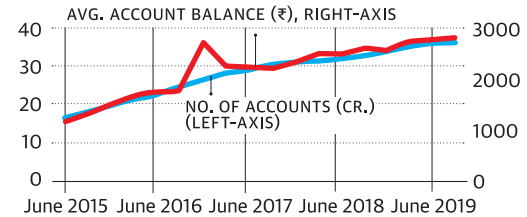
## DATA POINT

### Banking up better

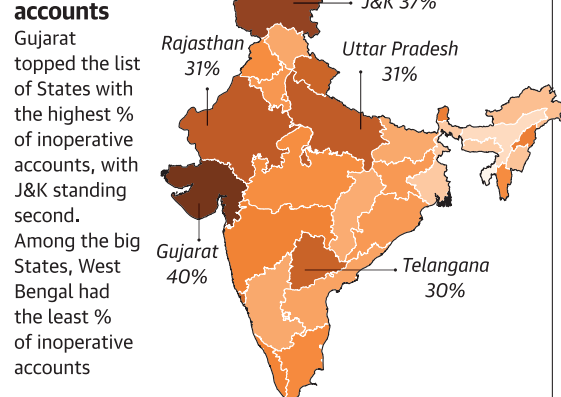
The cumulative account balance in zero-balance bank accounts opened under the PM's Jan Dhan Yojana scheme crossed the ₹1 trillion mark on July 3. The average balance in each account now stands at ₹2,787. However, as of December 2018, 23% of the accounts were inoperative. By Varun B. Krishnan & Sumant Sen

#### Rapid climb

The number of accounts and the average account balance have steadily increased. Just after demonetisation, there was a sudden surge in the average account balance



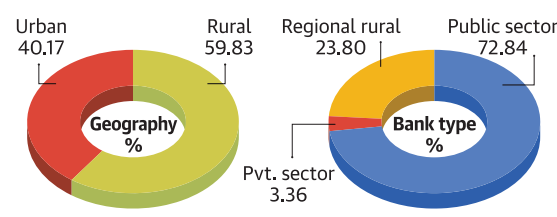
#### State of accounts



Source: PM Jan Dhan Yojana archives, Parliament Question Hour, With inputs from Siddharth Rao T.

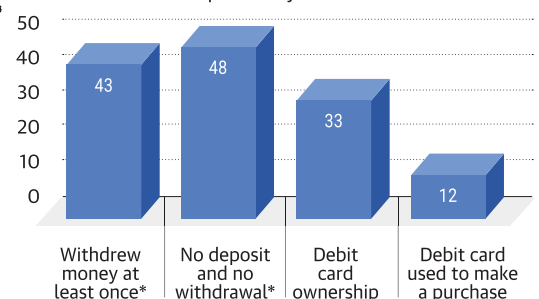
#### Where the accounts are

Six out of 10 Jan Dhan accounts are in the rural areas and close to three-fourth are in public sector banks. Private sector banks account for just 3.4% of these accounts



#### Measure of usage

While the country has made big strides in providing institutional access to the unbanked, a large share of people are not making use of the banking facilities, according to the Global Financial Index put out by the World Bank in 2017



\*In the year preceding the survey. Above numbers in percentage, for 2017. Respondents were aged 15+ and had a bank account

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 11, 1969

### Immigrants to Malaysia

Malaysia to-day [July 10] tightened its immigration regulations and called on all non-citizens above 12 years of age to call at the Immigration Office before September 15 to furnish fresh particulars about themselves. There are an estimated 700,000 non-citizens among Malaysia's 10 million population, nearly a quarter million of them are Indians. The more rigid immigration regulations which will come into effect next Tuesday [July 15] is part of the emergency declared in the country when racial riots broke out on May 13. The regulations known as Essential (Modifications of Immigration Laws) Regulations 1969 were gazetted to-day [July 10] and will remain in force for the duration of the emergency. The new regulation requires travellers to leave Malaysia only at authorised points. Under the present regulations, travellers are only required to enter the country at such points but could leave from any spot. Authorised points are airports, ports, Johore causeway and immigration and customs check points at the Malaysia-Thailand border in Kedah and Kelantan.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 11, 1919.

### Chamber on Currency Crisis.

The Committee of the Indian Merchants' Chamber and Bureau in Bombay, submitting to the Government of India their views relating to exchange and currency questions, strongly urge the the fixity of exchange with-in gold points and suggest the introduction of a token coin, valued at two rupees or three, in which the percentage of silver shall be so small that there may be no appreciable loss even when silver is seventy pence. They also advocate the issue of coins to an unlimited extent. A point which the committee desire most to urge is the penalising of Indian Exports by the raising of exchange and the undue advantage which it gives to imports from foreign countries. The committee advocates the strengthening of a gold exchange standard, believing that a gold exchange standard has proved from the beginning disastrous to the country, and that in gold standard only lies its salvation. In order to make gold standard a success, the Committee recommend that establishment of a gold mint in India on the same terms as those given to the British dominions. Both the gold standard and paper currency reserve should be entirely located in India. Council Bills must be sold meanwhile for stated amounts.