

AAP'S MOMENT OF RECKONING

Aam Aadmi Party that had a meteoric rise, is now facing its worst existential crisis. The party that claimed inclusivity and ideological cohesion is splitting down the middle. What began with the rebellion of its Rajya Sabha member Raghav Chaddha, who eventually joined the Bharatiya Janata Party, has snowballed into an enmass defection in Rajya Sabha, eroding its prestige and parliament presence. The defection of seven Rajya Sabha MPs from the Aam Aadmi Party to the Bharatiya Janata Party has triggered more than a political embarrassment—it has exposed the vulnerability of AAP. For a movement born out of anti-corruption protests and positioned as an alternative to entrenched political culture, AAP has increasingly shown that the rank and file of the party are not happy with the party leadership, which is being accused of adopting autocratic-style of functioning. The defection of AAP MPs enmass also triggers a constitutional situation and big question being asked is if the anti-defection law applies to these seven MPs and should they be disqualified? The immediate battle now shifts to the office of C. P. Radhakrishnan, where AAP plans to seek the disqualification of the defecting MPs. The party's argument leans on the sanctity of the Tenth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, asserting that any defection—regardless of numbers — is unconstitutional. However, the defectors have thought it through.

If two-third of the MPs defect, then it is not defection but a "merger." So, AAP may not be able to disqualify these seven MPs as they are constitute more than two third of MPs of AAP's 10 MPs in the Rajya Sabha. This is not merely a legal contest; it is a political reality check. AAP's leadership, including figures like Sanjay Singh and Bhagwant Mann, has framed the defections as coercive and unethical. Yet, voices from within the breakaway faction tell a different story — one of alienation, inaccessibility of leadership, and dissatisfaction with governance, particularly in Punjab. Allegations of marginalisation of key leaders and the concentration of decision-making suggest deeper organisational fissures. The crisis, therefore, is not sudden; it is symptomatic. AAP's rapid rise—from Delhi to Punjab—created a structure that is still fragile and vulnerable.

What lies ahead for AAP is a test of political maturity. The party can choose to treat this as an external sabotage, or it can confront uncomfortable internal truths. Rebuilding trust within its ranks, decentralising leadership, and addressing governance concerns—especially in Punjab—will be crucial. The alternative is a slow erosion of credibility. The larger lesson extends beyond one party. India's anti-defection framework, conceived to ensure stability, has paradoxically legitimised large-scale defections.

It punishes the lone dissenter but rewards the organised rebellion. Until this contradiction is addressed, such political migrations will remain a recurring feature. Besides, it is also a telling reflection of the declining standards of Indian democracy, where money and coercion are deployed by ruling parties to fracture the Opposition—a situation that warrants a serious rethink on the limits of morality and the high standards that once defined Indian politics.

Santhosh Mathew

A nation that once renounced war now stands at the edge of rewriting its identity. Japan, shaped by the ashes of World War II, built its global reputation on peace, restraint, and constitutional idealism. Today, that very foundation is shifting. The winds of change blowing through Tokyo signal more than a policy adjustment. They point to a historic turning point that could redefine Asia's security landscape. Japan's Parliament, the Diet, has moved closer to approving changes to its pacifist Constitution. Both chambers—the House of Councillors and the House of Representatives—support the move. Public sentiment tells a different story. Surveys conducted by Kyodo News reveal that nearly 80 per cent of Japanese citizens oppose amending the country's Constitution. A deep divide has emerged between the political leadership and the people.

At the centre of this debate stands Article 9, a clause born out of unimaginable destruction. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki forced Japan into a moral reckoning. The Constitution that followed rejected war as a sovereign right and ruled out the maintenance of military forces for the purpose of combat. Article 9 became more than a law. It became a symbol of hope in a war-torn world. Japan's strategic environment has transformed rapidly. The rise of China as a global power has altered regional dynamics. Maritime disputes in the South China Sea continue to intensify. North Korea keeps the region on edge with missile developments. These realities shape the arguments of those calling for constitutional revision. Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi and her allies present a clear case. They argue that Japan must build stronger defence capabilities to protect its sovereignty and contribute to regional stability. Their vision includes transforming Japan's Self-Defence Forces into a more conventional military. The language of deterrence now replaces the language of restraint.

A stronger Japanese military presence could trigger an arms race across East and

Japan: The Rise of a New Security State



Southeast Asia. Joint military exercises involving Japan, the United States, and the Philippines near Luzon highlight a growing security alignment. The Indo-Pacific region begins to resemble a high-stakes arena where alliances deepen and rivalries sharpen. The phrase "roller coaster relations" captures the uncertainty shaping the region. Economic factors add another layer to this transformation. Japan once dominated the global economy. In 1994, it accounted for 17.8 per cent of global GDP. That share now stands near 3.4 per cent. China, in contrast, has surged to nearly 19 per cent. This dramatic shift fuels concerns about national decline and global influence. Inside Japan, structural challenges continue to mount. The country faces an aging population and a declining birth rate of around 1.2. Public debt exceeds 200 per cent of GDP. Industries struggle to maintain growth. These pressures shape the national mood. Increased defense spending, now nearing 2 per cent of GDP, places additional strain on public finances. Budget cuts in healthcare, education, and welfare have sparked protests across the country.

The alliance with the United States plays a decisive role in Japan's strategic thinking. Washington views a stronger Japan as vital to maintaining balance in the Indo-Pacific. Military cooperation between the two nations continues to expand. Ameri-

can bases across Japan, including those in Okinawa, form a critical part of this partnership. This relationship shapes Japan's evolving defence posture. A more capable Japanese military supports broader efforts to counterbalance China's growing influence. The Indo-Pacific strategy of the United States depends on reliable regional partners. Japan fits that role with its technological strength and strategic location. The devastation caused by nuclear warfare left scars that have not faded. More than 300,000 people lost their lives in the atomic bombings. Survivors, known as Hibakusha, endured decades of suffering due to radiation exposure. Their stories continue to serve as powerful reminders of war's human cost. The global movement for nuclear disarmament drew inspiration from Japan's experience. Thinkers such as Bertrand Russell and scientists like J. Robert Oppenheimer reflected deeply on the consequences of atomic weapons. Oppenheimer's recollection of a verse from the Bhagavad Gita during the first nuclear test captured the enormity of that moment.

The decision to allow arms exports marks a significant policy shift. Advanced military equipment, including warships, fighter jets, drones, and missiles, will now be supplied to partner nations. Seventeen countries stand to benefit from these ex-

ports in the initial phase.

This move reflects Japan's willingness to play a more active role in global security. Countries aligned with Japan welcome its new approach. The Quad grouping—comprising the United States, India, Australia, and Japan—views this shift as strengthening regional stability. China and North Korea interpret it as a sign of containment and respond with caution.

Southeast Asia emerges as a potential flashpoint. Territorial disputes, maritime tensions, and military build-ups converge in this region. Japan's growing involvement could influence the balance of power. The next theatre of war may well take shape in these contested waters. One path preserves the spirit of Article 9 and the moral authority it represents. The other embraces a more assertive role in global security.

Both paths carry risks and opportunities. The choices made in Tokyo will resonate far beyond its borders. The idea of a "frozen peace" no longer holds. The calm that defined East Asia for decades begins to shift. Strategic competition intensifies. Military preparedness gains importance. Diplomatic engagement continues, though under increasing strain.

The end of Article 9, if it arrives, will mark more than a constitutional change. It will signal the transformation of Japan from a pacifist state into a proactive security player. This transition will reshape alliances, redefine regional dynamics, and influence global stability. A nation that once chose peace above all now prepares to navigate a world where power and security dominate the conversation. The story of Japan enters a new chapter—one filled with uncertainty, ambition, and far-reaching consequences.

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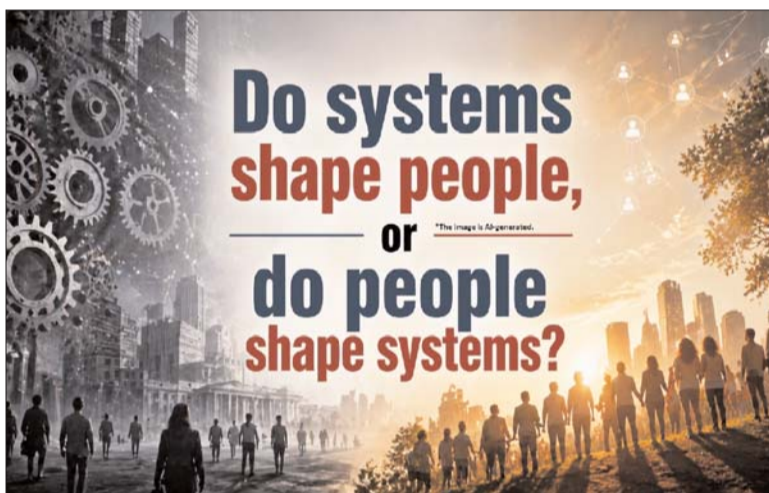
DO SYSTEMS SHAPE PEOPLE, OR DO PEOPLE SHAPE SYSTEMS?

Sanjay Chandra

My recent vacation in Germany left me with a lingering question: do people create systems, or do systems shape people? I wrote earlier about unruly behaviour in public spaces. This time, however, my experiences were not about people, but about systems—specifically, the much-regarded German railway network, Deutsche Bahn (DB).

We were to travel from Prague to Berlin by train. Even before we had begun our journey from India, we received an email informing us that our scheduled train had been cancelled. An alternative was suggested, but it was either unavailable or not easily traceable on their website. Eventually, we decided to make the journey by road—a decision that turned out to be fortuitous, allowing us to take in the landscape along the way.

For the final leg, from Berlin to Frankfurt, uncertainty continued. It was only upon reaching the station and checking the display board that we discovered our train would terminate about an hour short of the destination. What followed was a series of hurried adjustments—two train changes, heavy luggage in tow, and the added strain of limited communication with station staff due to language barriers. This was not the railway system



I remembered from nearly three decades ago, when punctuality and efficiency were almost synonymous with it. Today, I found that DB had become, in some circles, a subject of quiet humour. These experiences led me to reflect on similar challenges that foreign travellers might face in our own country, particularly when navigating long-distance train journeys. There is much that still needs improvement. And yet, there are examples that point in another direction—instances where systems have not only functioned well, but have set benchmarks.

I had the opportunity to be associated

with the construction of the Delhi Metro in its early years. Its Managing Director, E. Sreedharan placed unwavering emphasis on punctuality—first in construction, and

later in operations. More importantly, this emphasis was not enforced merely through rules, but internalised by the people who worked within the system. Each individual became a custodian of that culture, contributing to what eventually emerged as a world-class transportation network. Even in personal life, he would ask his driver to continue circling a venue so as not to inconvenience the organizers if he was early. Japan offers another example. On one occasion, a mediator escorting us to a meeting ensured that we reached the vicinity well in

advance, but deliberately made us walk around the block so that we would enter the office exactly at the appointed time. His reasoning was simple: arriving early or late would inconvenience the host and disrupt their schedule. Such experiences suggest that systems and people are not independent of each other. Systems may provide structure, but it is people who give them meaning. At the same time, well-designed systems can influence behaviour, nudging individuals towards discipline and consideration. Perhaps the real question, then, is not whether people create systems or systems shape people, but whether we are willing to take responsibility for both. It is easy to attribute failure to institutions and success to individuals, but in reality, each mirrors the other. Systems falter when people disengage, and people drift when systems lose clarity and purpose. If there is to be any lasting improvement, it will come not from expecting one to correct the other, but from recognising that discipline, accountability, and respect must flow in both directions—quietly, consistently, and without exception.

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Challenges before the new chief minister Of Bihar

Subodh Kumar Mehta

Atal Bihari Vajpayee's critical decision to back Nitish Kumar as the Chief Minister of Bihar in 1999-2000 was a strategic vision to dislodge the political dominance of Rashtriya Janata Dal in Bihar. The intent to combine the organisational strength of the BJP with the Administrative skills of Nitish Kumar, who happens to be from the Kurmi caste, which was part of the Triveni Sangh Movement (Yadav, Koiri, Kurmi). This Movement was started in 1933 for social empowerment and to remove the social evils and dominating structural norms of the society that was prevalence at that time. Atal Bihari Vajpayee's faith in Nitish Kumar has brought fruitful results for the Bharatiya Janata Party in Bihar. After a long political struggle, the BJP has succeeded in installing Samrat Chaudhary as the 24th Chief Minister of Bihar. After 1990, the constituents of the Triveni Sangh Movement have dominated the state's politics of North India, and Bihar is not an exception.

The new Chief Minister has immense challenges in front of him as he has to carry forward the social investment along with economic development. The processes of democratisation of democracy will test his ability to incorporate the aspirations of weaker sections of society as a part of deci-

sion-making processes. The contemporary situation in Bihar demands major reconstruction in the form of policies and institutional perceptions so that the trust deficit between the government and people can be overcome. To begin with, the first demand, Samrat Chaudhary must carry forward economic participation along with social transformation and political participation. These demands are the result of the piecemeal "social engineering".

The second demand is to tackle the consequences created by the federal policies of pre- and post-Independent India. The policies include Permanent settlement, high land revenue, forced commercialisation (cash crops), fright equalization policy, New Economic Policies, which helped the developed states to grow faster, and Bihar faced the collapse of local industries. Due to these policy Bihar also faced inadequate infrastructure, which resulted in stagnant and weak institutional development.

These factors helped develop states, and Bihar lagged in benefiting from the New Economy Policy. These federal policies left peasants landless, trapped in debt, forced into low-paid agriculture and Migration. These policies has great side effects on Education, Health, Agriculture, Employment, and governance.

The planning commission aimed to plan



India evenly, but this aim did not bring desirable results. India witnessed uneven development in different parts of India. The state, which was at the bottom of the development ladder at the time of independence still stagnating at the bottom of the Development Indexes. The task posed by these policies can only be tackled by a harmonious relationship with the central government. It's a great opportunity for Samrat Chaudhary to bargain for big projects and special economic packages to uplift the demography of one of the youngest states of India. We all know that Bihar stands at the bottom of the ladder in the Human Development Index and various other parameters of Niti Aayog and State Development Index.

The third demand is from the minority class to inculcate a sense of security so that they feel secure and their right to life and liberty is protected. Minorities in the last 35 years in Bihar have felt secure, this trust should not take a back seat. Thus, Samrat Chaudhary must develop a cautious approach towards minorities so that trust-building measures can help society in building harmonious relations amongst different groups. Moreover, the fourth demand is to restore the long-standing stagnating institutional crisis in the social sector that crippled the Health care, Education and Empowerment. The fifth, most crucial demand is to improve the financial capabilities of the state by reducing the high debt burden, as the state's public debt has risen sharply in recent years. As Bihar continues to depend heavily on central funds and the transfer of money.

New avenues must be created to generate adequate own tax revenue and should tackle the deficit through fiscal management. The sixth, demand has been brought by the leader of opposition Shri Tejaswi Yadav in the form need for institutional reform in the field of Education, Health, Empowerment, Agriculture and Governance. On all these parameters, Bihar has continuously lagged. The need of the hour is to reconstruct these sectors. The seventh demand is for farmers as

they have the least income compared to farmers from different states.

The Agriculture Sector needs drastic steps so that the Primary Sector can become the fulcrum for development. The other demands include tackling floods in the Kosi belt, maintenance of law and order, police reforms, eradication of Corruption at various levels of state departments, programs like Satt Nishchay, building urban infrastructure, enhancing purchasing power of the masses, creating tourism infrastructure, social reform and women empowerment are the needs of the hour. Bihar should develop a political culture so that citizens can develop both Political inputs (Voting, lobbying) and Political outputs (Policy, Government Services). The present government must understand that Bihar should carry forward the objective of 'socially comprehensive development' along with the development of market mechanisms. This can only be done by strengthening the weak institutions. If steps are not taken in this direction speedily enough, then a state that John Houlton described as being 'the heart of India' will die unused.

It is up to the new CM Samrat Chaudhary and his abilities to uphold the Gandhian vision that is the true objective of Democracy is that the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest.