THE EDITORIAL PAGE

AUSTERITY A WAY OF LIFE

Prime Minister Narenadra Modi's appeal to Indians for taking steps like holding back on buying gold for a year, reducing the use of cooking oil and not undertaking avoidable foreign travels, etc. has set off a new thought process. We can always sacrifice a little for a brighter future. Already many ministers, chief ministers, leaders are scaling down their cavalcades to reduce the oil consumption; some are using public transportation, homemakers are working magic in kitchen with oil-free or less oil cooking. Indians are frugal by culture. In India, Kings and Emperors who owned wealth were not idolized but those who gave up riches and power were revered. In Indian culture, there is a stage of life where one must make money and riches and another stage where he must go for renunciation and live a frugal life ion Vanaprastha. So, in our culture giving up something for a cause is not a big thing. It elevates humans to a higher dimension of life and consciousness.

RAJOURI'S YOUNG HERO!

Mohammad Yasser from Rajouri is the new U-15 Boxing world champion. It has trigged a wave of optimism and joy in the border town. The young boy scripted a story of strength at Tashkent where he won all his matches with a stunning score and never let his rival overpower him even once. Yasser is an example of State supporting the talented young Indians and making them rise above their difficult circumstances. He has been trained under Khelo India programme. His success proves that if the younger generation is given patronage and training they can touch the skies. Yasser has not only given a new identity to the border town that was in news mainly for skirmishes between India and Pakistan. More importantly, he has emerged a face of hope for those yearing to rise in life no matter what their circumstances are.

Sanatan: Tradition Loudly Possessed, Quietly Unread

harya Prashant

The word "Sanatan" means eternal. It is now among the most fiercely contested words in Indian public life, invoked often to denounce, defend or mobilise with an urgency that might suggest the arguers have some acquaintance with the tradition the word names. The urgency disguises a near-universal absence of that acquaintance. This is the characteristic condition of a tradition that has survived for several millennia: its label is loudly possessed while its philosophical core is quietly unread. A label offers identity without the cost of inquiry; the tradition's core offers inquiry without the comfort of a pre-settled identity. These are incompatible offers, and the parties who fight most loudly over the label are, on both sides of every recurring controversy, determined to take the first and avoid the second.

When Udayanidhi Stalin declared in 2023 that Sanatan Dharma was like dengue, malaria, and the coronavirus, that it could not merely be opposed but had to be eradicated, and then renewed the substance of those remarks more recently, the response played out with perfect predictability. Defenders massed on one flank, critics on the other, and the noise between them was considerable. What the noise did not contain was any careful examination of the thing being argued about. The straw man, in which one constructs a distorted image of an opponent's position and directs the criticism at the distortion, was not the property of one side alone. Critics attacked a version of Sanatan Dharma that bears little resemblance to what the term philosophically denotes. Defenders rushed to protect a version of Sanatan Dharma they have largely never read. In the middle, the actual philosophical tradition sat untouched by either party, as irrelevant to the noise as a library to a riot outside its doors.

The critics have genuine grievances that must be acknowledged without evasion. Caste discrimination, patriarchy, the ritual exploitation of the vulnerable, the sanctification of social hierarchy in the language of the sacred: these are real, documented, and still operative. Tamil Nadu's history with precisely these abuses is not contested, and Periyar's long campaign against them represents one of modern India's more serious engagements with social oppression. His visit to Kashi, where he witnessed the conditions around the ghats and was then turned away from a feeding hall for not being a Brahmin, his years of questioning at Vaishnava religious gatherings as a young man, his decades of work against the abuse of caste authority: none of this is mythology. When a politician from that tradition objects to the spread of practices that historically served to brutalise the vulnerable, the objection carries genuine moral force. The criticism arrives from lived experience, not from ignorance of it.

Warranted indignation, however, is not the same as accurate targeting, and accurate targeting requires knowing what one is targeting. The social evils that animated Periyar did not arise from the philosophical core of the tradition called Sanatan Dharma. They arose from the ego's characteristic capacity to commandeer any available language in service of exploitation. The animal within man, to use a formulation that appears in this tradition's own diagnostic vocabulary, does not abandon its predatory instincts when it acquires the vocabulary of the sacred; it puts that vocabulary to use. The intention to exploit finds its cover in the language of religiosity, and thereafter the two are fused in public perception, so that attacking the exploitation feels like attacking the religion, and defending the religion feels like defending the exploitation. Both responses are mistaken, because the exploiter and the tradition the exploiter has hijacked are not the same thing.

If an unqualified practitioner causes harm in the name of medicine, that harm does not condemn the entire field; it condemns the practitioner's departure from it. To use the malpractice as evidence that medicine itself must be eradicated is to punish the discipline for the quack's crimes while leaving the quack untouched. This is precisely the structure of the argument against Sanatan Dharma. The social evils attributed to it were committed in its name, not in its spirit; to dispose of the tradition on this basis is to discard the antidote because the poison was administered in the same bottle.

The objection survives, of course, that if almost no one practices the antidote and the poison is what fills the bottles in actual circulation, the practical force of pointing to the antidote is limited. The honest answer is that the antidote is on the shelves where it has always been, untouched precisely because the work it demands is more difficult than the consolations of the poison. That untouched availability does not justify the poison; it indicts those who never opened the bottle.

What, then, does Sanatan Dharma actually mean? The answer lies in the tradition's own language. The root "dharma" denotes that which is worth carrying, the fundamental obligation that one owes to one's own existence. "Sanatan" denotes that which holds true irrespective of time, place, or circumstance. Together they name the obligation that is always operative. What in human experience qualifies as eternal in this sense? Ritual varies by village, belief varies by century, custom varies by caste and region and generation, all of these being local and contingent rather than eternal. What remains constant across all times, geographies, economic conditions, genders, and religious affiliations is the inner human condition: the restlessness, the fear, the greed, the bondage to desire and habit, the persistent registration that something is wrong within, that something essential is missing, that the ordinary strategies of accumulation and belonging have not and will not resolve the ache at the centre. This condition is neither Indian nor Hindu nor traceable to any particular scripture or founder. Every human being who has ever lived has inhabited it, whether in ancient Taxila or contemporary Tokyo. It does not abate with wealth or education or religious affiliation. It belongs, as the tradition itself diagnoses, to the structure of the ego that has not yet turned to look at itself. The dharma that arises from this eternal condition is equally universal: to move, through honest inquiry, from bondage toward understanding. This directional imperative, installed in the human situation itself, is what Sanatan Dharma names. Not a religion in the familiar sense of a founder and a creed and a list of compulsory observances, but a description of the ego's most fundamental predicament and of what it owes itself in response.

A note on vocabulary is necessary before going further. The word "Atma," which will recur, does not in this argument name a hidden substance behind the ego, a positive entity awaiting discovery once the ego is set aside. It names the limit of the ego's reach, the point at which the categorising agent runs out of categories to apply. T

he classical commentators often used the word to name something positive, and the popular tradition has inherited this usage. The investigation conducted here is concerned with what the ego can honestly verify, and what it can verify is its own operations and the limit at which those operations terminate.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC DAMAGES DUE TO IRAN WAR

B K Singh

Trump claimed to have obliterated all Iranian nuclear facilities in Operation Midnight Hammer, using US B-2 bombers and Israeli missiles during the 12-day war in June 2025. Yet, his forces, along with the Israelis, launched Operation Epic Fury on 28 February 2026, bombarding Iranian nuclear enrichment sites, missile manufacturing facilities, hundreds of naval ships and IRGC installations. Trump again claimed to have destroyed Iranian naval and air power, as well as missile launchers, during the 39-day-long war and unilaterally declared a ceasefire. Since then, negotiations between the US and Iran have made no headway. Trump has been demanding that Iran surrender 450 kg of enriched uranium and suspend programmes aimed at developing nuclear weapons. The Strait of Hormuz, which remained open for international trade until 28 February, has now been closed by Iran to exercise leverage in negotiations. Trump also ordered a naval blockade in the Gulf of Oman to prevent cargo ships from transiting to and from Iranian ports in the Persian Gulf, with a view to embargoing oil movement and blocking revenue that funds the war. This has not proved effective, as Chinese ships have defied the blockade. The Iranian regime is fighting for survival and does not wish to surrender its only leverage - the closure of Hormuz.

The bombardment of Iranian energy infrastructure, oil refineries, oil stocks and ships transporting oil in Iran, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Israel and the UAE has caused environmental damage at both regional and global levels. The black rain that followed in Tehran during the recent conflict contains atmospheric pollutants. The environment is choked with pollutants released from the burning of heavy fuel — a low-quality by-product of oil refining — including methylene chloride, benzene and acetone. Benzene, notably, is known to cause cancer. Missiles and drones generate chemically laden debris, which falls on agricultural land surrounding military and oil infrastructure sites. Combined with fires on the ground, these chemicals remain in the soil and considerably reduce agricultural productivity. Around 5,000 MT of explosives are believed to have been dumped in the region, polluting air, water and soil. The environmental impact of the war has far-reaching consequences, affecting human health, livelihoods and even contributing to catastrophes caused by rising seas.

During the 39 days, Iran struck all 13 US bases in GCC countries, as well as Israeli defence and civilian infrastructure, oil refineries and residential areas near Dimona, close to the nuclear research centre. Dimona is believed to produce plutonium for Israel's undeclared nuclear weapons programme. It hosts the IRR-2 heavy water reactor, which operates outside IAEA safeguards. The Strait of Hormuz, through which 20 million barrels of oil and gas per day once flowed for global consumption, has been choked by the Iranian IRGC, and now only a trickle passes through, triggering one of the biggest global energy crises.

Theodore Postol, a professor of nuclear physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a former Pentagon adviser, stated before Western media — based on engineering data and battlefield evidence — that Iran already possesses the material needed to move quickly towards developing a bomb. Iran's stockpile of 450 kg of 60 per cent enriched uranium hexafluoride could potentially produce 11 atomic bombs. Prof. Postol further added that experience suggests Iran would not make the first use of a nuclear bomb. However, if the US or Israel were to use nuclear weapons against Iran, a response would be inevitable. From its existing stockpile of 60 per cent enriched uranium hexafluoride, Iran has the capability to further enrich it to 90 per cent within less than two weeks.

Despite continuous bombardment of its nuclear sites at Isfahan and Natanz, Iran's capability has not been completely obliterated. Nearly 100 centrifuges required for further enrichment to weapons-grade material could reportedly be brought into operation quickly, enabling the preparation of 11 atomic bombs. These centrifuges can be installed inside tunnels and concealed locations. Three atomic bombs could destroy an area of 25 square kilometres, such as Tel Aviv, while 11 would theoretically be sufficient to eradicate Israel entirely.

Even if Iran has not assembled a complete nuclear bomb, a delay of two weeks in response would make little difference in strategic terms. Even lower-grade nuclear weapons could unleash urban firestorms, radiation exposure and radioactive rainfall, leading to massive casualties in cities such as Tel Aviv.

Iran's technological base has not been undermined despite decades of sanctions and international isolation. Iran's targeting of Israel and American bases with ballistic missiles is considered a game changer. Prof. Postol says ballistic missiles travel at hypersonic speeds of up to Mach 5 or more, leaving detection systems with only seconds to react. Israeli claims that they intercept 90 per cent of missiles and drones are also disputed.

This asymmetric warfare has created economic cost imbalances between Iran and the far more powerful US. Iranian drones costing ten to twenty thousand dollars are intercepted using missile defence systems operated by the US and Israel, with each interceptor missile costing several million dollars. Attacks on US allies in GCC countries, disrupting supply chains and energy infrastructure, amount to attacks on the economic lifelines of adversaries.

Bengal's verdict against the 'Kabuliwala trap'

Abhinav Walia

West Bengal has voted: voted with determination, courage, clarity and finality. In that unmistakable vote lies not merely a political verdict, but a psychological one. The people of Bengal did not simply change a government; they actually repudiated a culture — a culture of decades-long accommodation of lawlessness dressed in the language of compassion, a governance model that protected the predator while rendering the victim invisible.

The new administration inherits both an opportunity and an obligation. What it does next will determine whether Bengal's mandate becomes a turning point or merely an interlude.

Every society carries within it a set of assumptions about crime and punishment; assumptions so deeply embedded that they feel like common sense rather than ideology. In Bengal, that embedded assumption has been what evolutionary thinker Gad Saad might call "suicidal empathy": the systematic prioritisation of empathy for the perpetrator of crime over security for the innocent.

It sounds compassionate, but in practice, it is catastrophic.

When empathy becomes reflexive rather than reasoned, when it flows automatically towards the offender and away from the victim, it ceases to be a virtue and becomes what Saad terms an "idea pathogen": a belief system that corrodes a society's rational defences from within and becomes a "psychological trap". A society that mistakes tolerance for criminals as virtue does not grow more humane, but more vulnerable.

Bengal's literary tradition is magnificent. Kabuliwala is a masterpiece of humanist writing — a story that finds paternal tenderness in an unlikely place and asks us to see the full human being behind the frightening exterior. As literature, it is irreplaceable, but as policy, it is lethal.

The Bhadralok tradition is one of the subcontinent's finest civilisational achievements: cultivated, empathetic, and genuinely humane. It is precisely because of its nobility that it has proven so vulnerable to exploitation — where the stabbing of a neighbour becomes a tragic misunderstanding, where the recidivist becomes a victim of circumstance, and where the actual victim, who could be bleeding, frightened, or even silenced, becomes an afterthought in the moral drama centred on the perpetrator.

This is not compassion. This is "pathological altruism", a concept studied seriously in behavioural psychology, where the very impulse to protect becomes the instrument of harm. The new government in Bengal needs to come out of this "Kabuliwala trap".

The new government need not theorise because evidence prevails regarding what really works in day-to-day administration, and this applies to the international canvas as well.

In early 2026, the Philippines implemented its intensified Safer Cities initiative by prioritising high-visibility policing and swift accountability. This resulted in a marked decrease in serious crime.

Singapore implemented a civilisational model based on the same principle: the rule of law, applied consistently and without sentiment, is the most compassionate gift a government can give its people. Today, it is one of the world's safest and most prosperous societies.

Then there is New York City. Within living memory, Times Square was not a destination; it was a no-go zone. Crime was not an occasional visitor; it was a permanent resident. When the administration prioritised safety, the murder rate fell, the streets returned to their people, and tourism soared. All in all, New York did not become cruel; instead, it became safe.

The upshot is that safety is not a cultural inheritance, but a policy choice.

Bengal has seen its own version of this paralysis. The new government must name it, reject it, and replace it. What Bengal needs is not harshness, but clarity, especially "rational realism": the struggling background of a perpetrator explains his history, but it does not excuse his violence. Human rights protections exist to shield the innocent, not to provide legal sanctuary for the predator. Swift, certain and visible consequences for crime are not barbarism. They are the highest form of social compassion and a declaration that the law-abiding citizen's right to live without fear matters more than the criminal's right to exploit it. The new government in Bengal needs, on the one hand, to deromanticise crime and, on the other, to institutionalise victim-centric justice, thereby restoring the "social contract".

Bengal's voters did not queue in the summer heat to be given more poetry. They came for something older, simpler and more urgent: the right to walk home safely, to sleep without fear, and to raise children in a state that protects rather than poeticises.

To govern is to choose, and the choice before this administration is not between compassion and cruelty; it is between empathy that protects the innocent and empathy that, through its own excess, destroys them.

Bengal's populace has chosen, and governance should now become the echo of that choice.