

Course correction – **Deep traps: On borewell deaths**

The onus on closure of abandoned wells should be on the local body, and not the owner

As with several such incidents in the past, the intensive operation in Tamil Nadu to rescue a child who slipped into an abandoned borewell in Manapparai, Tiruchi district, **ended in spectacular failure**. Hopes for two-year-old Sujith Wilson were brightest in the initial phase, but they faded when the victim sank further into the borehole, partly buried under earth. The valiant measures of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel along with their State counterparts and the slim hope for a happy ending of the kind witnessed in Kurukshetra 13 years ago kept spirits up for some time, but the end was a tragedy. Unfortunately, the truth is that no breakthrough method has emerged, whether in terms of technology or protocols, when it comes to rescuing small children who have fallen into deep holes that are less than a foot wide. The disaster that befell the Tamil Nadu farmer's family last week is no different from the one that took the life of another two-year-old in Punjab's Sangrur district earlier this year. Worryingly, more such disasters are bound to occur, since there are many disused and uncovered well holes scattered in farms in several States. No time can be lost in implementing the safety rules relating to wells issued in the past, to save children at risk.

Tamil Nadu issued, under its Panchayats Act, the **Regulation of Sinking of Wells and Safety Measures Rules 2015**, incorporating **measures ordered by the Supreme Court** in 2010. Among the many steps prescribed for orderly well-digging, there is a provision requiring the holder of a permit or well to fill up an abandoned hole up to the ground level using clay, sand or boulders (the court also mentions pebbles and drill cuttings). For meaningful implementation of this provision, the onus should rest with the local body, and not the owner of the borewell who is often a farmer of poor means. Under a normative system, closing an abandoned well would no longer be seen as a wasteful expenditure by farmers, since they would not be charged for it, and panchayat personnel would execute the closure rather than merely certify that action has been taken. Besides avoiding the ghastly human toll, time-bound capping of open wells will eliminate the intensive, high-cost rescues that the NDRF has to attempt; the agency deployed its teams no less than 37 times until 2018, mostly in Maharashtra, but also in Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Karnataka. Deep borewell accidents have also occurred in cities that rely heavily on groundwater, and as the Supreme Court pointed out, it should be the task of the municipal and public health authorities to eliminate the lurking danger. In the court's view, the District Collector bears responsibility for enforcement. Now that another life has been lost to neglect, it is time the State governments took safety seriously, came up with a census of well structures in need of attention, and capped the problem forever.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **trap** (noun) – inescapable & very bad situation.
- **onus** (noun) – responsibility, duty, burden.
- **spectacular** (adjective) – unforgettable/breathtaking, striking, noticeable.
- **fade** (verb) – disappear, vanish, decline, fail/dwindle.
- **sink** (verb) – go down, descend, fall.
- **valiant** (adjective) – brave, heroic, courageous; determined/resolute/firm.
- **personnel** (noun) – employees/staff, workforce.

- **counterpart** (noun) – a person/thing that serves the same job/function but in a different location; equivalent.
- **spirit** (noun) – feeling, temper, atmosphere; way of thinking, point of view.
- **breakthrough** (adjective) – successful; effective, advance.
- **protocol** (noun) – procedure.
- **befall** (verb) – (of something bad) happen, occur, take place/appear.
- **bound to** (adjective) – certain/sure, very likely, guaranteed.
- **disused** (adjective) – no longer in use, idle, unused.
- **no time to be lost (or) no time to lose (or) lose no time (phrase)** – be quick, speed up, hurry up (as fast as you can to do something).
- **prescribe** (adjective) – stipulate, lay down, set down, establish.
- **provision** (noun) – term, clause, requirement.
- **means** (noun) – money, resources, income.
- **normative** (adjective) – relating to a standard/norm, particularly of behaviour.
- **ghastly** (adjective) – terrible, frightful, horrible.
- **time-bound** (adjective) – related to a certain moment or era in time.
- **cap** (verb) – put a cover on.
- **deploy** (verb) – employ.
- **rely on** (phrasal verb) – depend on, count on; resort to/have recourse to.
- **point out** (phrasal verb) – identify, recognize, designate.
- **lurking** (adjective) – concealed, hidden (danger), kept out of sight (of an unpleasant thing).
- **bear** (verb) – take responsibility for, carry, support.
- **enforcement** (noun) – imposition, implementation, execution.
- **neglect** (noun) – negligence, lack of concern, dereliction of duty.
- **come up with** (phrasal verb) – produce, devise, propose.

Course correction – **Brotherhood unbound: On BJP-Shiv Sena tussle**

Sena's brinkmanship in talks with BJP is unlikely to fetch it dividends in Maharashtra

The protracted bargaining for power sharing between two pre-poll allies, the BJP and the Shiv Sena, is holding up government formation in Maharashtra, despite their victory in the Assembly election. The irony is starker when compared to Haryana where a new government has been in place, though the State elected a hung Assembly. The BJP could easily cobble up a post-poll alliance in Haryana with regional outfit the JJP, but is unable to reach an agreement with the Sena, its oldest ally. The BJP and the Sena are closely aligned ideologically too, as the latter champions Hindutva more stridently than the former. However, transactional politics often trumps ideological affinity as a Sena leader appeared to suggest in his caustic comparison of the situations in the two States. In Haryana, the new Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala got a reprieve for his jailed father in exchange for joining hands with the BJP, the Sena leader suggested. The BJP could not pressure the Sena that way, he declared, upping the ante. Mr. Chautala retorted sharply, leading to an inter-State sparring

between the two BJP allies. Devendra Fadnavis has meanwhile declared that he would remain Maharashtra Chief Minister for the entire five-year-tenure of the legislature, shutting the door on the Sena's demand for the top post after two and a half years. Both parties met the Governor separately.

The Sena is possibly upping the ante in an attempt to drive the best bargain with the BJP, and the brinkmanship is unlikely to lead to a separation between the two. After all, the BJP has many allies, but the BJP is the only partner that the Sena could possibly get. The Maharashtra theatrics of both parties, however, signifies a weakening of the BJP and a ceiling for the style of the party's current leadership. In 2014, the BJP dislodged the Sena as the leader of the alliance in the State, after contesting the Assembly election alone and cornering the latter into a post-poll partnership. Bolstered by its rising popularity, the BJP leadership had taken a dismissive attitude towards alliance politics in general and even humiliated several long-standing partners, including the Sena. It has even advertised its refusal to consult other parties — allies and the Opposition alike — on policy matters as a sign of strong leadership. That principle is on test in Maharashtra. The BJP could win only 105 Assembly seats, compared to 122 in 2014, increasing its dependence on the Sena. The Sena too won fewer than its tally five years ago, but has ended up with higher leverage vis-à-vis the big brother. As the haggling goes on, what is abundantly clear is that none of the issues at stake has anything to do with public interest.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **brotherhood** (noun) – union, alliance, community/association/group.
- **unbound** (adjective) – not bound together.
- **tussle** (noun) – scuffle, fight, struggle; clash, disagreement.
- **brinkmanship** (noun) – the practice of trying to achieve an advantageous results by engaging in a dangerous issue or event to the edge of safety, especially in politics, by pushing dangerous events.
- **fetch** (verb) – yield, make, earn.
- **dividend** (noun) – benefit, gain, advantage.
- **protracted** (adjective) – very long, long-lasting, prolonged/extensive.
- **ally** (noun) – partner, supporter, accomplice/confederate.
- **hold up** (phrasal verb) – delay, obstruct, impede, hinder.
- **irony** (noun) – paradox, incongruity, peculiarity.
- **starker** (comparative adjective of **stark**) – clear, distinct, evident.
- **in place** (phrase) – ready, set up, established/arranged.
- **cobble up** (phrasal verb) – prepare hastily, put together roughly, patch together.
- **outfit** (noun) – organization, group, party.
- **champion** (verb) – advocate, promote, support.
- **stridently** (adverb) – strictly, firmly, in a tough/stiff way.
- **transactional** (adjective) – transferable, negotiable; relating interaction between people.
- **trump** (verb) – surpass, outdo, outperform, outshine.
- **ideological** (adjective) – relating to a system of ideas.
- **affinity** (noun) – association, bond, relationship.
- **reprieve** (noun) – stay of execution; cancellation, suspension, postponement (of a punishment or something undesirable event).
- **join hands with** (phrase) – work together with.

- **up the ante** (phrase) – to take an action that raises the stakes (risks), i.e. that increases the chances of conflict/dispute.
- **retort** (noun) – counter, respond; answer/reply.
- **inter-** (prefix) – between.
- **sparring** (noun) – argument/dispute, fight, quarrel.
- **shut/close the door on** (phrase) – to no longer thinking about/dealing something
- **theatrics** (noun) – dramatic scene, spectacle, crisis.
- **ceiling** (noun) – upper limit, maximum, limitation, highest permissible level.
- **dislodge** (verb) – remove, displace, knock out of a place.
- **corner** (verb) – gain control of, take over, control, dominate.
- **bolster** (verb) – strengthen, support, reinforce/fortify.
- **dismissive** (adjective) – negative, unenthusiastic, disdainful/lack of respect.
- **long-standing** (adjective) – well established.
- **humiliate** (verb) – embarrass, degrade, shame.
- **advertise** (verb) – publicize, make known, announce.
- **leverage** (noun) – influence, power/authority, control.
- **vis-a-vis** (preposition) – in relation to, with regard to.
- **haggle** (verb) – barter, bargain, negotiate.
- **go on** (phrasal verb) – talk at length, continue, proceed.
- **abundantly** (adjective) – significantly, particularly, especially.
- **at stake** (phrase) – in question, at issue.

Course correction – **Settling the Ayodhya case once and for all**

There must be an understanding that in the outcome, there is neither victor nor vanquished

The Ayodhya issue is tantalisingly poised and there are only guesses about how the case could pan out — the Supreme Court of India had allowed arguments before the court and mediation talks to proceed simultaneously. It has been an unusual step. The dichotomy of this approach could perhaps be explained by the fact that the Court had marked August 15 as the deadline for turning in the settlement. Then, in July the pace of mediation was stepped up and the court wanted a report by August 1. Since there was no settlement by then, it commenced hearing. Down the line some parties made requests for a resumption of talks. It looked as if the court was unwilling to stop the hearing but also reluctant to let go of the possibility of a compromise.

Parties to appeals, settlement

The appeals pending before the court — as many as 14 — arose out of five original suits filed in Allahabad. Out of the said five suits, four were filed between January 1950 and 1962. The first two were filed by individuals in their capacity as worshippers. The second suit was allowed to be withdrawn on September 18, 1990. The third suit was filed by the Nirmohi Akhara of the Ramanandi

Sect through its Mahant in 1959. The fourth was filed in 1961 by the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board and eight Muslim residents of Ayodhya and the general secretary (by name) of the Jamiat Ulema Hind, U.P. branch. In this suit many Hindu parties were arrayed as defendants. Representative status was given by the court to the plaintiffs and defendants in this suit to represent their two communities respectively. The fifth suit was filed in 1989 by Bhagwan Sri Rama Virajman (the deity is regarded by law as a perpetual minor requiring representation through human agency) and Asthan Sri Rama Janma Bhumi Ayodhya (the place of birth) through Sri Deoki Nandan Agrawal, who incidentally was a former High Court judge and resident of Allahabad and sought to be treated as the friend of the deity.

Going by media reports, it appears that some of the significant parties in the case, but not all, are parties to the settlement. It is believed the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in the form of the Ram Janambhumi Nyas and its supporter T.N. Pandey as the current friend of deity on the extreme side, and the Jamiat Ulema Hind on the other extreme side are opposed to the settlement. If that be so, it means there is a broad spectrum in between, of the Sankaracharyas backed Punaruddhar Samiti, the Nirvani and Nirmohi Akhara bodies and the Hindu Mahasabha which are pro-settlement.

And most important of all, the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board, the statutory custodian of the disputed site under the Waqf Act, is reported to be a signatory. If these reports are anything to go by, the board is willing to acquiesce in the acquisition of the disputed site and give up its claim to it if other places of worship are protected and the Muslim community gets a fair number of additional mosques, in Ayodhya and elsewhere, where prayers can be held. So, what does a court do under these circumstances where a number of parties come forth with a settlement which they can subscribe to and which could cease the conflict, but which other parties oppose?

The Code of Civil Procedure allows one or more of community of persons, with the permission of the court, to sue or be sued, or may defend such suit, on behalf of or for the benefit of all persons so interested. The court shall, in every case where permission or direction is given, at the plaintiff's expense, give notice of the institution of the suit to all persons so interested, either by personal service, or, where, by reason of the number of persons or any other cause, such service is not reasonably practicable, by public advertisement, as the court in each case may direct.

Independent of the power to represent the general body, any person on whose behalf, or for whose benefit a suit is instituted or defended may apply to the court to be made a party to such suit. The only restriction for a settlement so brought about to bind all persons is that no suit could be withdrawn, or compromise made, without the leave of court. The Sunni Waqf Board having been given representative character and which claimed ownership to the site and the mosque literally excludes any scope for any other person among the Muslim community to lay claim to the property contrary to the concessions and agreement which it is prepared to enter into. The Hindu parties that have not come on board will have to tell the court why they are resisting a settlement in which they are getting the land for which they have been fighting for so long and raised such large funds, when the site is being effectively given up by the Muslim parties, and where the Ram temple can now be a reality. A lack of bona fides may result in some strict action from the court. Where it is alleged by one party and denied by the other that an adjustment or satisfaction has been arrived at, as per the diktat in the Code of Civil Procedure, the court shall decide the question; but no adjournment shall be granted for the purpose of deciding the question, unless the court, for reasons to be recorded, thinks fit to grant such adjournment.

Width of court jurisdiction

There is another larger aspect here and that is the overarching power given only to the Supreme Court under Article 142 of the Constitution, the power to do complete justice in cases before it. This rare and almost awesome power permits the court to work through legalistic objections and climb above procedural difficulties to bring about the best possible result for the parties — and in this case, the country. In the words of the Supreme Court itself in *State of Punjab v Rafiq Masih* (2014), "Article 142 of the Constitution of India is supplementary in nature and cannot supplant the substantive provisions, though they are not limited by the substantive provisions in the statute.

It is a power that gives preference to equity over law. It is a justice-oriented approach as against the strict rigours of the law. The directions issued by the Court can normally be categorised into one, in the nature of moulding of relief and the other, as the declaration of law." Given the fact that "justice" itself is susceptible to a plurality of meanings, the court could mesh the wisdom of parties' efforts in putting together an agreed formulation, aided by suave handling by the mediators and the counsel's lucubration that played out in court for 40 days of marathon hearings. It can come out with a humble offering on a platter of how the collective wisdom of all parties yielded to a denouement that douses mutual bickering among the communities and cement a lasting peace that will do India proud.

Need for a strong message

The majority community owes to its Muslim brethren an assurance that the ugly incidents of December 6, 1992 shall never be repeated in any other place, neither in Kashi nor in Mathura. And that in the outcome, there is neither victor nor vanquished. Restoration of dented prestige, enhancement of social standing and durability are the motivations for the nature of final outcome.

On August 15, 1947, Gandhi marked the day with a 24-hour fast, prayer and spinning yarn. When C. Rajagopalachari visited and congratulated Gandhi for restoring peace in the city of Calcutta, Gandhi said he will not be satisfied "until Hindus and Muslims felt safe in one another's company and returned to their own homes to life as before". His hope remained but a dream. On the day when the judgment of the Supreme Court is given, let the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh appear along with other parties to the litigation to hear the judgment of the Supreme Court as it is read in open court. This act will instil confidence that even if they had failed in the past, they shall begin yet again an era of goodwill and trust among all sections of the community.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **once and for all** (phrase) – conclusively, decisively, finally.
- **vanquished** (adjective) – defeated, routed, quelled.
- **tantalizingly** (adverb) – excitingly, interestingly, fascinatingly.
- **poise** (verb) – position, balance, hold steady.
- **pan out** (phrasal verb) – turn out, result, come out (well).
- **dichotomy** (noun) – disunion, difference, disagreement.
- **turn in** (phrasal verb) – hand over, tender, offer.
- **step up** (phrasal verb) – increase, accelerate, quicken.
- **down the line** (phrase) – at a further point, at a later point.
- **resumption** (noun) – restarting, recommencement, reopening.

- **reluctant** (adjective) – unwilling, disinclined, unenthusiastic.
- **let go** (phrase) – release one's hold on, give up, relinquish (grip).
- **arise out** (verb) – result, proceed, follow.
- **plaintiff** (noun) – a person who is bringing a lawsuit against another person before a court; claimant, litigator, petitioner.
- **defendant** (noun) – appellant, litigant, respondent.
- **perpetual** (adjective) – continuous, unceasing; sustained.
- **spectrum** (noun) – range, gamut, sweep; a wide range of positions, opinions, etc. between two extreme points.
- **back** (verb) – support, endorse, uphold.
- **statutory** (adjective) – legitimate, acceptable, permissible/admissible.
- **custodian** (noun) – curator, guardian; caretaker/protector.
- **signatory** (noun) – the person who signed an official document/agreement.
- **acquiesce** (verb) – permit, consent/agree to, allow/accept without protest.
- **acquisition** (noun) – acquiring, collection/procurement, appropriation.
- **subscribe to** (verb) – agree with, accept/believe in, support.
- **sue** (verb) – take legal action against, take to court, bring an action against.
- **at someone's expense** (phrase) – to someone's embarrassment.
- **bind** (verb) – require, compel, constrain, obligate.
- **lay claim to** (phrase) – claim to have rights to (something).
- **bona fide** (adjective) – genuine, real, authentic, true/actual.
- **allege** (verb) – claim, accuse, charge.
- **diktat** (noun) – order, regulation, decree.
- **adjournment** (noun) – postponement, rescheduling, suspension.
- **think fit** (phrase) – consider it acceptable to do something.
- **width** (noun) – range, compass, scope/extent.
- **overarching** (adjective) – all-inclusive, complete, all-embracing, comprehensive.
- **supplant** (verb) – supersede displace/replace, remove/oust.
- **substantive** (adjective) – important & meaningful.
- **provision** (noun) – term, clause, requirement.
- **statute** (noun) – act/law, regulation, rule.
- **rigour** (noun) – carefulness, diligence, attention to detail.
- **susceptible** (adjective) – subject to, prone to, at risk of.
- **plurality** (noun) – a large number of people (coexist in a community).
- **mesh** (verb) – go together, coordinate, match.
- **aid** (verb) – help, assist, support.
- **suave** (adjective) – refined, worldly, sophisticated.
- **lucubration** (noun) – writing or study.
- **play out** (phrasal verb) – happen, occur, take place.
- **on a platter** (phrase) – used to mention that someone receives something with no effort.
- **yield** (verb) – cede, concede, give up/relinquish (a point of dispute).
- **denouement** (noun) – finale, outcome, result.
- **douse** (verb) – pour a (flammable) liquid over something.
- **bickering** (adjective) – disagreeing, arguing/squabbling, fighting/disputing/quarreling.
- **cement** (verb) – settle or establish firmly.
- **lasting** (adjective) – permanent, long-lived, indelible.

- **brethren** (plural noun) – believers, communicants.
- **dent** (verb) – undermine, reduce, lessen.
- **durability** (noun) – longevity, resilience, strength.
- **yarn** (noun) – thread, cotton/wool, fibre.
- **instil** (verb) – establish, inculcate, implant, fix.

SOME IMPORTANT IDIOMS AND PHRASES

1. Feeling a bit under weather

Example – I am not going to gym today as I am feeling a bit under weather.

Meaning – Feeling slightly ill.

2. Mean business

Example – The border is surrounded by forces who mean business.

Meaning – Being serious/ dedicated.

3. The best of both worlds

Example – I had the best of both world since I worked as an ordinary member but got to learn from the leaders.

Meaning – The benefit of widely different situations, enjoyed at the same time.

4. Hear it on grapevine

Example – I heard it on grapevine that he has cheated the organization.

Meaning – To hear rumors about something or someone.

5. Can't judge a book by its cover

Example – It is wise not to judge a book by its cover.

Meaning – Can't judge something primarily by it's appearance./ Don't judge someone based on how the person looks like.

6. The icing on the cake

Example – I got MS in the University that I wished to and scholarship was like the icing on the cake.

Meaning – Something that turns good into great.

7. Jump the bandwagon

Example – When I put on few kgs, I immediately jumped on the bandwagon and join the gym.

Meaning – To join a popular activity or trend.

8. Cost an arm and a leg

Example – My laziness costs me an arm and a leg every time.

Meaning – Be very expensive.

9. The ball is in your court

Example – Now the ball is in my court and I will take the revenge on him.

Meaning – When it is up to you to take the next step or decision.

10. It takes two to tango

Example – The manager realizes that it takes two to tango before taking the decision.

Meaning – Actions or communications need more than one person.

☞ ““STOP LOOKING FOR HAPPINESS
IN THE SAME PLACE YOU LOST IT.””☞