

**Course correction – on Rights & Wrongs****The Centre should reconsider its draft Bill on transgender rights**

It will be a **travesty** of its **avowed** objectives if the proposed legislation to protect the rights of **transgender** persons is not sufficiently rooted in a rights based approach. News that the Centre has **brushed** aside a parliamentary standing committee's report and plans to introduce the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill without changes is a disappointment. The process of recognising the rights of the community and seeking to protect it by legislation gained momentum in 2014, when the Supreme Court gave a landmark **verdict** in the NALSA case. The court **recognised** the community as a third gender entitled to the same rights and constitutional protection as other citizens. It called for an end to **discrimination** based on gender against those who do not conform to the gender assigned to them at birth. Besides this negative right against discrimination, the court ruled that transgender persons had a positive right to make decisions about themselves, express themselves and participate in community life. It directed the government to **accord** them 'socially and educationally backward' status so they could benefit from affirmative action. In 2014, a private member's Bill moved by DMK MP Tiruchi N. Siva was passed in the Rajya Sabha. In the Lok Sabha, the government introduced its own Bill, which was referred to the Standing Committee on social Justice and Empowerment.

The Standing committee, in its July 2017 report, suggested some modifications and additions to the draft. In particular, it disagreed with the definition of 'transgender' in the draft Bill and wanted modification to bring it in line with **global** norms. The Committee felt that the definition violated the principle that transgender persons have a right to self-identification of their gender. Activists and experts have also rightly pointed to the absence of any reference to the implications of criminal and civil laws that are based on the traditional gender **binary**. While provisions on equality and non-discrimination would promote equal opportunity, in the process the real benefit of reservation in jobs should not be denied. Social legislation should not be merely **benevolent**; rather, it should be **imbued** with an approach that extends to the marginalised sections the freedom, dignity and **autonomy** that other citizens enjoy. In the domain of legislation, disagreements over drafts are natural. It is up to the government of the day to adopt an inclusive approach towards **divergent** opinions and come up with the best law possible. Ignoring the opinions of experts and parliamentary committees does not help the process. The Centre should **revisit** its draft and **incorporate** the inputs of the standing committee and an **expert** panel that submitted a report in 2014.

**WORD LIST**

1. **Travesty** : a debased likeness or imitation: a travesty of justice.  
Synonym : spoof, ridicule, burlesque, exaggeration, force, mockery, perversion, satire, sham  
Antonym : Seriousness, Solemnity
2. **Avowed** : (acknowledged; declared) : an avowed enemy.  
Synonym : sworn, professed, accepted, admitted, affirmed
3. **Transgender** : (Denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex.)  
"a transgender activist and author".
4. **Brushed** :  
synonym : caress, thick, shove, kiss, scrape, ski, smooth, sweep
5. **Verdict** : (Related to law judgement)

- synonym : answer, award, conclusion, decision, decree, finding, opinion, ruling
6. **Recognised** : (Acknowledged)  
synonym : accepted, identified, known, perceived, remembered, sanctioned, allowed
  7. **Discrimination** :(bias, particularly in taste)  
synonym : bigotry, favouritism, hatred, inequity, injustice, intolerance, prejudice, unfairness
  8. **Accord** : (agreement or mutual understanding, which is often written)  
synonym : deal, pact, reconciliation, accordance, concert, concord, conformity, harmony, okay.
  9. **Global** : (worldwide, all encompassing)  
synonym : comprehensive, international, overall, universal, all round.
  10. **Binary** : (twofold)  
synonym : double, binate, dual, twice, paired.
  11. **Benevolent** = (charitable, kind)  
synonym : benign, caring, compassionate, generous, humane, philanthropic
  12. **Imbued** : (infuse, saturate)  
synonym : inculcate, ingrain, instill, leaven, pervade, steep, suffuse.
  13. **Autonomy** : (independence)  
synonym : freedom, self-determination, self-government, self-rule, liberty, sovereignty.
  14. **Divergent** : (differing)  
synonym : atypical, conflicting, contradictory, contrary, different, desperate, dissimilar, various
  15. **Revisit** : (visit again)  
synonym : call, frequent, return, stay, visit often
  16. **Incorporate** : (include, combine)  
synonym : absorb, assimilate, blend, consolidate, cover, embody, fuse, integrate, merge, mix.
  17. **Expert** : (knowledgeable, proficient)  
synonym : adopt, adroit, deft, experienced, skilled, trained

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This month South Africa will have a rare opportunity to **break away** from the difficult political **legacy** of corruption and **governance** failures that have **blighted** its post-**apartheid** years. At a conference during December 16-20, the Africa National Congress will pick its candidate for party leader, and that person will go on to replace 10-year **incumbent** President Jacob Zuma. Whoever Mr. Zuma hands over the **reins** of power to will be the favourite to become the country's next President in 2019. But he or she will also **inherit** a **troubled** political system and a **nervous**, gloomy economy. Steadily rising unemployment, now nearly touching 28%, has been the chief characteristic of what some describe as Mr. Zuma's "scandal-ridden decade" at the helm of the ANC. This has been, by most accounts, a period during which **allegations** of grand corruption and **cronyism** multiplied exponentially. Promising to root out this **pervasive rot** in institutional quality is one of two leading candidates : Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa, a policy **centrist** and firm member of the party's constitutionalist wing. The other serious candidate in the **reckoning** is Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Mr. Zuma's ex-wife who was a minister across several cabinets and chair of the African Union.

Ms. Dlamini Zuma, if she **prevails**, is expected to **muddy** the **prospects** of any investigation into alleged **murky** financial dealings between Mr. Zuma's son and three brothers of the wealthy, Indian origin Gupta family of South Africa, owners of a massive business **conglomerate** that controls **stakes** in the computer equipment, media and mining industries. She is also expected to be the candidate of continuity **inasmuch as** she will echo Mr. Zuma's call for 'radical economic transformation' and continue policies that are **ostensibly** aimed at redistributing control of resources to the nations' relatively **impoverished** black majority. Either way, her nomination will boost the forces of "state capture," or economic rent seeking built on the marketization of the South Africa state itself. Already, there are 783 counts of corruption relating to a 1999 arms deal pending against Mr. Zuma, yet no charges have been pressed. Similarly, despite **reams** of evidence against the Guptas in a report by a former Public Protector, no enforcement action has been forthcoming. According, to Pravin Gobardhan, who was fired as Finance Minister in March 2017, about \$15 billion "has been looted" owing to **undue** influence of private interests over public institutions. Yet even if Mr. Ramaphosa triumphs at the party **conclave**, the troubles of the ANC may be far from over. With its overall popularity **sliding**, the party will have to work hard to bring in the next generation of leaders, with a greater political stature, if it wishes to realise a greater collective **destiny** for South Africa.

#### WORD LIST

1. **Break away** : (depart)  
Synonym : escape, flee, fly, leave, quit, runaway, split
2. **Legacy** : (inheritance, heritage)  
Synonym : estate, gift, tradition, endowment, bequest, devise, heirloom
3. **Governance** : (government)  
Synonym : administration, control, law, politics, authority, bureaucracy, ministry, power
4. **Blighted** : (ruined, destroyed)  
Synonym : mar, taint, blast, crush, damage, dash, decay, injure, spoil, wreck
5. **Apartheid** : (racial segregation)  
Synonym : discrimination, racism, separation
6. **Incumbent** : (obligatory, office holder)  
Synonym : binding, necessary, compelling, urgent
7. **Reins** : (restraint, restrain, control)  
Synonym : curb, bit, brake, bridle, deterrent, governor, halter, harness, line, restriction
8. **Inherit** : (gain as possession from someone's death)  
Synonym : acquire, derive, obtain, receive, succeed, take over, get, accede.
9. **Troubled** : (worried)  
Synonym : agitated, anxious, bothered, concerned, confused, distraught, distressed, irritated, tormented, unsettled
10. **Nervous** : (anxious, fearful)  
Synonym : afraid, annoyed, apprehensive, edgy, fussy, hesitant, spooked, timid, volatile, jittery, shaky.
11. **Allegations** : (assertion placing blame)  
Synonym : accusation, charge, claim, plea, statement

12. **Cronyism** : (condescension)  
 Synonym : civility, deference, deigning, disdain, insolence, patronizing, stooping, toleration
13. **Pervasive** : (extensive)  
 Synonym : common, inescapable, omnipresent, prevalent, rife, universal
14. **Rot** : (Corrosion, disintegration)  
 Synonym : blight, decay, decomposition, deterioration
15. **Centrist** : (having moderate political views or policies). "a centrist politician"
16. **Reckoning** : (computation, account)  
 Synonym : calculation, estimation, check, ciphering, estimate, figuring
17. **Prevail** : (dominate, control)  
 Synonym : abound, beat, overcome, prove, reign, succeed, triumph, win, preponderate
18. **Muddy** : (dark and cloudy)  
 Synonym : dirty, dull, filthy, flat, gloomy, marshy, sloppy, sodden, soggy, swampy
19. **Prospect** : (outlook for future)  
 Synonym : anticipation, chance, expectation, forecast, future, hope, likelihood, possibility, probability, proposal, thought
20. **Murky** : (gloomy, obscure)  
 Synonym : cloudy, dark, dim, dirty, dismal, dreary, fuzzy, misty, muddy, nebulous, stormy
21. **Conglomerate** : (composite, composite organization)  
 Synonym : amassed, assorted, blended, clustered, massed, melded, mixed, motley, variegated, varied.
22. **Stake** : (bet, wager, share, investment)  
 Synonym : pale, paling, picket, post, rod, spike, stave, stick
23. **Inasmuch as** : (conjunction)  
 Synonym : because, in so far as, making allowance for, seeing that, since, while
24. **Ostensibly** : (apparently)  
 Synonym : evidently, officially, seemingly, supposed by
25. **Impoverished** : (poor, exhausted)  
 Synonym : barren, destitute, distressed, indigent, needy, poverty stricken, strapped
26. **Ream** : (heap)  
 Synonym : batch, bundle, scad, stack ton
27. **Undue** : (excessive, unnecessary)  
 Synonym : disproportionate, extreme, improper, inappropriate, inordinate, needless, unjust
28. **Conclave** : (Secret meeting)  
 Synonym : confab, powwow, assembly, meet, parley
29. **Slide** : (move smoothly; move down)  
 Synonym : accelerate, drift, drop, fall, flow, glide, move, shore, skate, skid, slump, slither, tumble, veer
30. **Destiny** : (fate)  
 Synonym : circumstance, future, inevitability, intention, prospect

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