

STATE OF THE UNION

Early elections and full statehood are essential to the total integration of J&K with India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation on Thursday may not have reached its primary audience in Jammu and Kashmir which was in blackout. But he did well by speaking out on his decision to revoke its special status, and divide it into two Union Territories. Considering the secrecy and disinformation that preceded the decision that he rightly characterised as historic, and the triumphalism among his supporters that followed, the address was reassuring. The promises he made will be checked against delivery in the coming months, not only by the people of J&K but also by the rest of India and other countries. In his 37-minute address, Mr. Modi promised restoration of statehood to J & K once normalcy returned, a participatory election, and growth in employment, commerce and opportunities in general for them. The PM urged industrialists to set up shop, and film-makers to shoot in the Valley, and asked people there to integrate with the global community. He even offered a catalogue of products and services that could make the State attractive in the global market. While these are desirable objectives, the PM could start with what is exclusively within his powers to effect — to call for fresh election and restore statehood at the earliest. While an elected government itself will be a sign of improvement in the situation, it will also make normalcy more organic. Revocation of statehood was unjustified in the first place, and its restoration must be immediate.

What actually triggered separatism and terrorism in J&K - whether the special status and autonomy it was granted by the Constitution or the gradual erosion of these concepts over decades - is a difficult question, but the BJP has always claimed to have known the answer. The PM reiterated that position, stating that Articles 370 and 35A gave only "separatism, nepotism and corruption to the people of J&K". Additionally, he also said these were hurdles in the region's development; and now that these are removed, an era of development and progress could be ushered in. While the charges of corruption and nepotism are true to an extent, there is no reason to suggest that J&K has been any worse than other States in this respect. The implied reductionism in the address that political aspirations may be a price worth paying for material progress may not be a democratic path to progress. No other formation in India is more vociferous than the BJP on questions of culture, heritage and faith.

National integration is essential for peace, stability and progress, and uniform development across regions, but this is not synonymous with an enforced cultural homogeneity. J&K needs a representative government and full statehood urgently for normalcy and integration with the Indian Union.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Integration		Combination, amalgamation, incorporation, unification
Revoke		Cancel, repeal, rescind, abrogate, annul, nullify
Triumphalism		Excessive, exultation over one's success
Restoration		Repair, refurbishment, reinstatement, return
Urge		Desire, wish, need, impulse, longing, craving
Setup		Establish
Catalogue		Classify, categorize, systematize, index
Call for		Demand, exact
Organic		Living, animate, biological, natural
Trigger		Activate, set off, set going trip
Autonomy		Self government
Reiterate		Repeat, re-capitulate, retell, iterate
Hurdle		Obstacle, difficulty, problem, barrier, sang
Usher in		Begin, start, kick off
Nepotism		Favouritism, bias, partiality, patronage
Aspiration		Desire, hope, longing], yearning, hankering
Vociferous		Vehement, out spoken, vocal, forthright, frank
Homogeneity		Uniformity, homogeneousness, similitude

TAKING ON THE MOB

Rajasthan's laws on lynching, 'honour killing' are inevitable responses to rising hate crimes

It is possible to argue that there is no need to create new criminal offences for 'lynching' and 'honour killing' because they remain plain murders. These are already

punishable with death or life imprisonment. Yet, mob lynching and murderous attacks on young couples in the name of preserving family or community honour have emerged as preponderant social evils. It is but inevitable that societies come up with new ways of combating such hate crimes. Rajasthan has made bold to grapple with these two crimes by passing special penal laws. Vigilante mobs have unleashed a wave of crimes in the name of cow protection and preventing the sale of beef or transport of cattle; the spread of rumour and attempts to establish sectarian dominance have also contributed to this disturbing phenomenon. The Supreme Court zeroed in on the nub of the trend when it spoke of “rising intolerance and growing polarisation” in a judgment last year. It also mooted a special law to criminalise it and “instil a sense of fear” among those too quick to form a lynch mob. The passage of the Protection from Lynching Bill, 2019, makes Rajasthan the second State, after Manipur, to implement the suggestion. A positive feature is that it closely resembles the Manipur law in the way “lynching” is defined. It covers any act of violence, whether spontaneous or planned, by a mob on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, language, dietary practices, sexual orientation, political affiliation or ethnicity. And two persons are enough to constitute a ‘mob’.

According to the State’s Parliamentary Affairs Minister, 86% of mob lynching incidents reported in India after 2014 were in Rajasthan. The Bill says that when a mob attack ends in death, it is punishable with life imprisonment and a fine of up to ₹5 lakh. There are lesser terms for causing injuries. As directed by the Supreme Court, the Bill provides for appointment of a nodal officer to prevent lynching and for district police chiefs to act as coordinators. It ensures compensation to victims and rehabilitation measures for those displaced. The opposition BJP, on expected lines, contended that the Bill was being brought in a hurry to please a community. However, it is a fact that Muslims have been prime targets of lynch mobs. The party’s fulmination against the other Bill that prohibits interference in the “freedom of matrimonial alliances in the name of honour and tradition” was equally bereft of substance, as it cited societal norms and cultural practice to oppose the progressive law. In effect, it was battling for khap panchayats that seek to interdict inter-caste marriages. The Bill provides for both death and life imprisonment for killing in the name of honour, but it is doubtful if courts will look at all such murders as among the ‘rarest of rare cases’ that warrant the resort to the death penalty.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Take on		Oppose, combat, battle, fight
Mob		Crowd, horde, multitude, rabble
Lynch		Kill illegally, hang
Preserve		Conserve, protect, maintain, safeguard, look after
Preponderant		Dominant, predominant, prevalent, superior
Inevitable		Unavoidable, inexorable, unpreventable
Come up with		Produce, (a new idea)
Combat		Oppose, battle against, tackle, counter, resist withstand
Grapple with		Wrestle, struggle, tussle
Sectarian		Separatist, dissenter, dissident, non-conformist
Zero in on		Focus on, concentrate
Unleash		Let loose, release, free, unbridle, untether
Mooted		Raise, broach, bring up, mention, introduce
Polarisation		Division in two sharply contrasting groups
Spontaneous		Unforced, voluntary, unconstrained, unprompted
Affiliation		Annexing, attaching, connecting, bonding
Ethnicity		State of belonging to a social group having common national / cultural tradition
Rehabilitation		Restoration, (health)
Contend		Assert, maintain, hold claim, argue, profess
Fulminate		Protest, outcry, rail, rage, storm
Proscribe		Prohibit, forbid, prevent, ban, embargo
Bereft		Deprived of, robbed of, stripped of, denuded of
Bat (v)		Hit, strike
Resort		Recourse to, turning to, the use of