A thought for today

The genius of Einstein leads to Hiroshima

PABLO PICASSO

Hiroshima's Message

Obama calls for a "moral revolution" to stave off Armageddon, start with US

resident Barack Obama has delivered an important speech in Hiroshima, at the site where the Americans dropped an atomic bomb in 1945. He called not only for an end to nuclear arms but also a "moral revolution", as mankind increasingly possesses the means to destroy itself. That moral revolution could start with America itself, not only because it is one of the most technologically innovative nations on earth but also because it is in love with the idea of technology as the solution to all problems. If mankind is to survive, however, technologies must not be developed just for their own sake but should be subjected first to an ethical and social audit.

Obama may have been on solid ground in not offering an apology for the US atomic bombing of Hiroshima; even the Japanese did not appear to expect one. The exigencies of wartime are such that there may have been more human casualties had the bomb not been dropped. Besides

the Soviet Union was poised to invade Japan; in the event of a Soviet takeover the Japan we see today-democratic, prosperous and peaceful -would never have emerged. The point, though, is that every

development in destructive warfare since the nuclear bomb has demonstrated that once the genie is out of the bottle, it cannot be put back in. The American security establishment suffers from the delusion that it will be able to control every new

military technology it develops; the reality is that other nations inevitably catch up and eventually terrorists will acquire it too. Today, even as the US retains thousands of atomic weapons, Pakistan and North Korea have acquired them too and turned into nuclear outlaws. Nuclear weapons have become central to North Korea's identity, while Pakistan uses them to blackmail the world into permitting it to continue as a launch pad for global terror.

Now an even graver threat has appeared on the horizon: military robots that act like soldiers and kill people. Over a thousand artificial intelligence experts, including luminaries such as Stephen Hawking, Elon Musk and Skype founder Jaan Tallinn, have signed a letter calling for a ban on the development of such weapons. This is a no-brainer and should be accepted by the world's major nations. Anything else would be moral idiocy, firmly committing mankind to the path of collective suicide.

Not Smart

If private players solve urban transport problems, governments shouldn't get in the way

The furore over surging pollution levels in our cities which have made them among the worst in the world on air pollution - and the perilous impact this has on citizens' health - do not seem to have significant impact on getting governments to address this growing crisis, apart from the tokenist odd-even scheme in Delhi. Governments, both at the Centre and states, continue to quibble and nit-pick on petty issues ignoring the enormity of the problem. The red flags raised by Delhi lieutenant governor Najeeb Jung to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government's proposal to flag off an app based $premium \, bus \, service-on \, the \, lines \, of \, app \, based \, taxi \, services-to \, boost$ the rapidly buckling public transport system in the capital city, is



only the latest instance of government culture steeped in bureaucracy and political infighting.

The LG's grouse seems to be that the ruling ispensation in Delhi did not seek his prior

Revitalise Our Aquifers

India can be water secure, but for that we need to act urgently

Rohini Nilekani and Mala Subramanian



country will be blessed with rain soon. It is the final but worst stretch of the hot, dry summer. A good time to commit that, post monsoon, we will never forget one of the most widespread droughts in recent memory.

Three years running, many states have declared drought conditions. A normal monsoon may come soon. But what about the following years? Climate scientists warn us of severe variability. India may be water stressed as early as 2025.

Can we de-risk from this uncertainty? We can if we innovate on solutions. Few countries of this size and population have faced water challenges of this scale ever before. Existing models from the developed world will not work for us.

We believe that one of the best places to begin is with better ground water management. India is a ground water civilisation. For millennia, people have used ingenious and elegant structures to use and replenish water in shallow aquifers, creating a reliable, widespread, cost effective and democratised water infrastructure. We need to build on that knowledge, to ensure that the country's aquifers become a dependable local resource, especially when the monsoons fail.

Ground water is people's water and is loosely regulated. Constitutionally, water is a state subject, and despite the Union government's intentions to bring about a pan-India ground water law, most state governments exercise little control over this common pool resource.

We believe this lack of regulation has created both a crisis and an opportunity. India draws more groundwater per annum than the US and China combined. This crisis comes from unsustainable over-extraction, perversely incentivised by agricultural subsidies and energy mismatches. That is a story familiar and oft repeated.

The opportunity is less understood. Approximately 30 million, mostly private wells in the country offer an

opportunity to use ground water wisely, without the financial and ecological issues that come with both small and

large-scale surface water transfers. Groundwater supplies around 70% of all our water needs across agriculture, industry and domestic water. Ironically, most public investments have been made in surface water - dams and canals for irrigation, pipelines for water to industry and to cities. Enough data suggests this

approach yields diminishing returns. We believe therefore that it is smarter and safer to focus on ground water. Unfortunately, people abstract ground water as if it were an infinite resource, because it is invisible.

What happens if you make this invisible water visible? What if you give people scientific tools to understand ground water as a finite but renewable resource? Can they manage it better, making the right trade-offs between demand and maximum renewable supply? We believe they can and will, with a

little help. Let's look at direct examples of

successes. In Maharashtra ACWADAM, an NGO

Public funds can enable rural communities to use good science to understand aquifers, and build their capacity to manage those aquifers as renewable resources and not as inexhaustible taps. Let's activate these public funds

founded by hydro geologists, experimented in a few communities to seed data-driven collective action for water security. Communities mapped their aquifers, understood water availability and developed protocols for water usage. Resolutions passed by their panchayats formalised these social protocols. Within three years, the community's drinking water and agricultural needs were secured. This work has now scaled up into the state's Jal Yukta Shivar scheme.

Another story from India's biggest and most arid district: Kutch. Here, most people depend on irregular tanker supplies

for lifeline water. A combination of interventions by NGOs ACT and SAMERTH, ranging from deepening of "talaabs" construction of new wells, reclaiming abandoned wells, constructing roof top rainwater harvesting or recharge structures helped many communities become water secure. Result? Most have not called for tanker water as late as April 2016.

Surprisingly, Kerala has severe problems too. Despite high rainfall, communities in Thrissur district suffered from groundwater depletion and salinity ingress in their open wells. The district administration initiated a shallow aquifer recharge programme called "Mazhapolima" through which rain was directed from rooftops to ubiquitous wells with simple filtration. It worked. People's well water rose significantly. This campaign has now scaled across the state as the "Jalsuraksha" programme.

One last illustration. In Rangareddy and Mahboobnagar districts of Telangana, farmers learnt to pool existing bore wells to extract groundwater more equitably and efficiently. Working with NGO WASSAN, these farmers arrived at water sharing norms to ensure critical

irrigation for all. Groundwater increased by two metres

in three years and the irrigated area doubled. This practice of bore well pooling is now actively supported in the state Indira Jala Pradha scheme

There is no space here for the many other similar results we have from around 500 installations around the country, resulting in direct benefits to lakhs of citizens. So what does it take to scale this work?

Public funds can enable rural communities to use good science to understand aquifers, and build their capacity to manage those aquifers as renewable resources and not as inexhaustible taps. Let's activate these public funds.

This is certainly not a quick fix. We estimate it takes at least two years of the annual hydrological cycle for people to see the benefits from making the necessary trade-offs.

We do not have many options today. Let's learn from what has worked. Let's revitalise our aquifers. They are the lifeblood for future water security.

The writers are Chairperson and CEO respectively of Arghyam, a Foundation for Water/Sanitation

'Germany must protect itself ... Muslims have integration problems here ... right-wing up as democracy overlooks people'

German philosopher Marc Jongen, known for 'avant-garde conservatism', is associated with the Alternative fur Deutschland (AfD) party, a controversial political outfit making strident calls against refugees and Islam. Speaking with Subodh Ghildiyal in Stuttgart, Jongen, who teaches philosophy at Karlsruhe University of Design, discussed why more Europeans are turning to a growing right-wing, Angela Merkel's calculations about refugees -and why he thinks Muslim migrants can't adjust to life in Germany:

Are you comfortable on the political right – when leading philosophers

We're moving in the social welfare direction. This comes from eastern Germany where members want more emphasis on social welfare. The west is moreliberal

Our rivals box us as right-wing to demonise us - in Germany, the term 'right-wing' is problematic.

We want to de-demonise the term'right'

■ But AfD's termed farright because rhetoric its against refugees your chief apparently have to save our borders. Right or left, that's an elementary

necessity. With AfD demanding bans on Islamic symbols like headscarves and minarets, are you opposing Syrian

refugees because of their religion? When i say we'll be a failed state if we let everyone in, there are two factors. People coming in are not educated enough to integrate in our market and society – they will simply not find jobs. That's the social factor.

But there's also the cultural factor. They come from Muslim countries – a different cultural background. We take a pragmatic view that we will not be able to re-educate them in such a short time. They will keep their way of thinking, their habits-and we see a problem in it. Muslims have been here for decades but have had problems to integrate. Governments refused to talk about it –

we've put it on the discussion agenda.

Now, everyone is talking about it. Chancellor Angela Merkel took huge risks by allowing refugees, seen as a move to rectify some of Germany's Nazi past – what's your view?

You could see this decision as hypermoralism. It's humanitarian on the surface - but because Angela Merkel is a very clever person and always looking at power calculations, it does not fit with her personality. It's not coming from moral considerations.

There are geo-strategic considerations of the US that Europe should take immigrants. I think Merkel feels protected and legitimised by supporting



approval before planning to roll out the premier bus service, which could persuade affluent classes to move to public transport and relieve the pressure on roads and the city's air. However, it is not the case that Delhi chief minister Arvind

Kejriwal has been accommodative in other instances. In April the Delhi government clamped down on surge pricing by taxi service aggregators, which reduced the supply of taxis and placed the travelling public at great inconvenience.

Earlier state governments in Maharashtra and Karnataka had also resorted to similar steps and drawn up new rules to fix fares charged by such service aggregators, when cheaper fares would have benefited the travelling public. Such interventions only reduce or delay private investments in our public transport system, and what the public gets is the opposite of smart cities. When tech-driven solutions come up on their own, it would be much smarter for governments not to get their nose in.

When parties party

Two year celebrations, swearing in ceremonies: netas are enjoying the democratic dividend

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If you're a political party you must have a party. Netas love playing party games even though citizens may ask who pays for your party? From celebrations of two years of Modi sarkar, to the swearing in ceremonies of Mamata Banerjee, J Jayalalithaa and Sarbananda Sonowal, we saw some event management neta style.

Mamata may be Didi next door but even she abandoned the usual venue of Raj Bhavan for a more public spot at Kolkata's Red Road for her swearing-in, with Shah Rukh Khan and Amitabh Bachchan in attendance. After all, when you are a politician whose star is rising then why should stars not rise for you?

After years of Left-bashing, Didi knows how to have a really good bash. That's what you call getting as much Bong for her buck as she can. When politicians celebrate in public we know exactly vote's going on. Also, netas are particularly sensitive to who is seated below the salt.

That's what happened at Jayalalithaa's swearing in where in the high noon of Amma power, the organisers probably mistook MK Stalin for a Soviet relic when they made him take a back seat to history-in-the-making. We have been humiliated, cried DMK but Jayalalithaa clarified that seating Stalin in the back rows was done according to formal protocol, even though she obviously thought of him as a party pooper.

 \odot When it comes to the DMK, Jayalalithaa doesn't take kindly to the phrase, Guess Who's Coming For Dinner, because her party is a club for members only who not only let their hair down but prefer to lie

down, face first. With prohibition looming in Tamil Nadu, it's impossible to say cheers at Amma's soirées.

There was a time when movies celebrated their silver and golden jubilees. Now even a good first weekend is enough for a film to be declared a hit. No wonder governments are taking a cue from films and are no longer waiting for the five year itch. Modi sarkar celebrated two years in power with much media music hoping voters dance to the government's tune.

Governments these days take out an annual report card, like annual appraisals of companies to check yearly profit and loss in the political balance sheet. In Modi sarkar ministers were supposed to reassure voters that the party's not yet over. When it comes to netas and their revelry, citizens are entitled to ask where's the party tonight?

from Germany are usually left-wing?

I have problems with the terms 'right' and 'left' – i think intellectuals must be critics of the system. The left historically occupied institutions. But they still behave like rebels – when they are the establishment.

I see myself in the best intellectual traditions of being a critic of the establishment.

■ AfD is a right-wing party in a country with a troublesome history what direction can it take?

At first glance, we are more right-wing than left-wing. But Alexander Gauland, the founding member, said AfD is the party of the small people on the street.

even said shoot people crossing the borders. Frauke Petry did not

say so - this was a media It's not a ques-

campaign against AfD. tion of our being against foreigners. It's simply a question of pragmatic rational policy for your own country we cannot do away with borders, else we'd be a failed state. We US policy.

What's driving today's right-wing surge across Europe?

It is a big protest against the political system – because people have an impression that this system is not democratic anymore.

It's what political thinker Colin Crouch calls 'post-democracy'. Democratic institutions are there – but they don't represent the people's will anymore. Real decisions are taken by other forces behind these institutions.

That's why people protest against the system – and the system reacts by calling these protest parties 'populist'.

There are problematic aspects in this movement-but it's necessary it happens.

Sacred*space*

No Baggage

because of your desires and

longing for Maya. Your body

will become a pile of dust;

and youth, you will have to

leave with nothing.

Guru Granth Sahib



The 'Aum' Sound Is Cosmic, Not Religious

the

Vijay Hashia

very change affects the energy ✓ equilibrium-till disturbances settle ⊿ down. The universe is made up of various energy fields and the quantum of 'Aum' is the base for all energy equilibrium. While scientists debate the first sound energy ever to occur in the universe, rishis had documented it extensively in the upanishads. Modern physicists believe 'Aum' is the sound of cosmic creation that occurs throughout the universe.

Sound can travel through any medium, collide with molecules and push them closer together. It enters our brain through stimulus of external vibration, created by chanting of Aum. It can stimulate prana, the life source that keeps everything moving. Piaanjali says, Aum is the sound that is identified with the continual omnipresent stochastic energy of zeropoint continuum, which is interpreted as the constant fluctuation of ether present throughout the universe, our physical

wave existence. The Katha Upanishad says, it is the goal that all vedas declare, all austerities aim at, and which all desire when we lead the life of continence. This syllable is the best and highest support, adored in the world of Brahmn. Aum is indeed Brahmn.

Aum is considered as third eye chakra, at the centre of the forehead, directly in

line with the centre of the brain. In the beginning was the sacred sound of Aum, it was with God and God was Aum. Through this sacred sound all things were made. Aum mantra connects with the ultimate without possessions, relationships and the physical world.

Vedic texts equate Aum with speaking Bhur-bhuvah-svah, symbolising the whole veda. It offers various shades of meaning of the universe beyond the sun and that which is mysterious and inexhaustible, the infinite language infinite knowledge, essence of breath, life,

everything that exists. All Hindu texts recommend Aum as a tool for meditation. Aum is also referred to as letter of the alphabet imperishable, immutable, and Omkara means literally, the beginning of female divine energy.

'Aum' chanting will cleanse and heal the whole system. It is the seat of intuition and of life purpose; its chanting will attune

us to the sound of the cosmos just like a droplet dissolves into the ocean, its resonating will open the ocean of love within.

The upanishads say, time is threefold-past, present and future and all these are Aum. The fourth of time is that which transcends time and that too is expressed by Aum. Aum defines four states of Atman, the

tree physical, inner thought, spiritual consciousness and the fourth state if realised with the Self, the eternal. Aum is four states of consciousness

wakefulness, dream state, deep sleep and

state of ekatma (being one with Self). Aum is all of knowledge, its first element is A, which is apti-obtaining, reaching or adimatva being first. The second element U, is utkarsa, exaltation or ubhayatva, intermediateness. The third element M, is miti-erecting, constructing or from minati, annihilation. The fourth is without development, beyond the expanse of universe.

Its chanting sequentially activates the stomach, spinal cord, throat, nasal and bran regions. It activates prana that will move from the base all the way up to the brain, thereby channelising energy and activating the spinal cord and brain. Its continuous chanting will shift the attention and echo the harmonic relation ship of every vital organ, our heartbeat, breathing, brain wave pulsing, neuron cells, metabolic, enzymatic and hormonal rhythms, and will bust stress, addictions and improve behaviour. It acts as brain stabiliser, and by practising it, one can enter into one's own natural state.