

See illegal mining and...
BJP is trying to make a sentimental issue out of it. BJP want to divide Hindus and Muslims. It was the Congress gov-

This time, do you think Congress can retain power without any allies?
We will not require allies; we will form

We are promoting...
ing an individual. We want to project the right to differ, and not any individual.

...
campaign for elections).

Union home ministry issued a notice...

...
understand why Bengal suffered.

Patriotism And Loyalty In A Time Of Fear

The Needle's Eye



CHAITANYA KALBAG

Three years of Abenomics and nationalism have not put any vim or vigour into the Japanese economy. Nor are nationalism and loyalty preventing the Chinese economy's slide. Xi, like Modi, also wants to root out corruption.

"In trust we God" was emblazoned on the back of a truck roaring past us on an Indian highway. In this topsy-turvy world, it is time to talk about terror; and nationalism, and loyalty, and to put things in perspective.

Here are some numbers:

India's 2011 Census counted 172 million Muslims and 966 million Hindus. 61.2 million Muslims or 35.5% were in the 15-34 age group (almost the same proportion as among Hindus) which you might consider most susceptible to influence and radicalisation. A total of 23 Indian Muslims have so far joined the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). That's right - 23, or 0.0000133%.

In Belgium (population 11.2 million) about 500 young Muslim men and women have joined the ISIS ranks.

The Brussels terror attacks have brought fear surging back into our living rooms. Let us take a deep breath - we have seen our fair share of terror over the past three decades, but it is not apocalyptic.

India's Muslims outnumber the total population of Belgium, France and Germany, and they outnumber the total population of West Asia. As I wrote in a column last year, India will have the world's largest number of Muslims - 311 million - by 2050.

Why are things different in India, considering that ISIS is now staging more and more attacks in neighbouring Pakistan?

There are a few reasons. One counter-terrorism expert I spoke with pointed to the confluence of Islam and Hinduism in India.

Traditionally, Indian Islam has worn a kinder, gentler face, although

preachers like Anzar Shah Qasmi and Zakir Naik speak a harsh, polarising language. Second, Islam has been diffused within the Indian social structure. The earliest Muslim proselytisers spread their message among the artisans and craftsmen and less-elite populations that lived outside of fortified city walls; those professions still characterise large



NOT A NEW SLOGAN



Modi ended his speeches at San Jose, MSG, and Wembley Stadium with Bharat Mata Ki Jai...

numbers of Muslims. Third, Indian Muslims are home-grown and trace their origins to conversion. They are locals, not migrants like the Muslims who form the disenfranchised, marginalised and discriminated minorities in European cities. And fourth, most of India's doctrinaire and ultra-orthodox Muslims chose Pakistan at the time of Partition.

Last November, after the ISIS attacks in Paris, Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind leader Mahmood Madani called for a jihad against terror and said his organisation would hold rallies in several Indian cities to protest against the unIslamic use of violence against innocents. We need more moderate Muslim leaders to stand up and speak out as terror crouches at our doorstep.

A week ago, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke at a World Sufi Forum about the healing power of this branch of Islamic philosophy, and presaged the Brussels attacks by saying that in a mobile world, "one incident can claim citizens of many nations". In an introspective speech, Modi surveyed the wonders of Sufism as well as the horrors of terrorism, adding: "[L]et us remember the teaching of Holy Quran that if anyone slew one innocent person, it would be as if he slew a whole people; if anyone saved one life, it would be as if he saved a whole people."

No doubt Modi will repeat his call for a global alliance against terrorism when he travels to Brussels next Wednesday for a previously scheduled India-EU summit, and then on to Washington and Riyadh.

At home, though, "God's gift to India", as one of his ministers described him, has been reticent about the clamour around nationalism.

The latest row to keep the water bubbling in the Modi government's kettle was triggered when earlier this month Mohan Bhagwat, the supremo of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, said young Indians need to be taught to say Bharat Mata Ki Jai (Hail Mother India).

This is not a new slogan. Modi ended his hour-long speeches at the SAP Center in San Jose in September last year and at Madison Square Garden in New York a year before that, and again at Wembley Stadium in London in November 2015, with some cheerleading: "Clench both your fists and repeat after me: Bharat Mata Ki Jai... Let your voices be heard all the

way back in India!"

Those six syllables roll more easily off your tongue than Jai Hind, which was how Indian political leaders traditionally ended their speeches for decades, or even Vande Mataram, or homage to the mother(land). Indians have always had a choice of slogans when it comes to loudly proclaiming their patriotism.

The interesting thing is that Jai Hind was coined by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, recently embraced by Modi and inducted into the Bharatiya Janata Party's pantheon of neo-idols, alongside Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, B.R. Ambedkar and even Ram Manohar Lohia. Jai Hind was a battle cry for Bose's Azad Hind Fauj or Indian National Army. Vande Mataram, literally "I praise thee, Mother" is the title of a poem from Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya's 1882 novel Anandamath.



FILE PHOTO

Loyalty pledges seem to be the flavour of 2016, though. Donald Trump, who could be the first U.S. president to have his name on apartment buildings in Indian cities before it is nailed to the White House gate, has been asking his supporters at rallies to solemnly pledge they will vote for him by raising their hands. One Jewish leader said the raised-hand pledge was scarily reminiscent of Nazi Germany. Trump said this was ridiculous, but the pledging continues.

The United States already has its Pledge of Allegiance, and it is recited every morning by children in many schools. Originally, the pledge began with a military salute, and after the first few words "I pledge allegiance to the flag..." the pledge-taker had to extend her hand towards the flag, arm extended. During World War Two, because it resembled Hitler's Sieg Heil (Hail Victory), the salute was changed to keep the right hand over

the heart throughout the pledge.

Nationalism has been used as a handy tool by two other world leaders who Modi admires and who seek to reform their countries' economies: Japan's Shinzo Abe and China's Xi Jinping.

Abe wants to change the current Japanese constitution, which he and other right-wingers see as U.S.-imposed, and to change the nature of the Japanese army from 'Self-Defense Forces' to one that can fight abroad. But three years of Abenomics and nationalism have not put any vim or vigour into the Japanese economy.

Nor are nationalism and loyalty preventing the Chinese economy's slide. Xi, like Modi, also wants to root out corruption. He claims he does not want to build a personality cult like Mao's, but songs have been composed and cartoons drawn in his praise. The brusque Xi has stepped on many toes, chiefly of fearful officials who want to do as little as possible, dragging their feet on implementing change.

China has been tightening the screws on foreign journalists, and last month Xi moved to stamp his authority on state media with three extraordinary visits to state television CCTV, official news agency Xinhua and party mouthpiece the People's Daily newspaper. Gushing journalists tripped over each other to proclaim their undying fidelity to the Communist Party and Xi himself. The Chinese media's new mantra is "Dang mei xing dang", which means "State media, your family name is the Party!" - in other words, total loyalty through total control.