Quotable

"A person is ruined by taking the measure of other persons."
~ Gautama Buddha

Justice Beyond Borders

In every civilisation that has endured, the idea of justice has stood taller than the law itself. Laws evolve, systems change, but justice is timeless. It is this higher sense of justice that India must now summon, as she seeks to bring home those who have wronged her and fled her soil. As the political landscape heats up across the country this week, what stood out was Union Home Minister Amit Shah's call for a ruthless approach toward fugitives. It is not merely an administrative directive, but a moral reminder. For years, the Indian state has shown restraint, choosing patience over pursuit. But patience has its limits, especially when those who defrauded the exchequer, funded violence, or waged proxy wars against the Republic live comfortably in foreign lands, mocking the very nation whose generosity they exploited. India can no longer afford to be forgiving in the face of betrayal. The pursuit of fugitives is not vengeance; it is justice; justice to the soldier who defends our borders, to the taxpayer whose money was stolen, and to the family that lost loved ones in terror attacks funded from abroad. When such individuals hide behind the shield of foreign laws or exploit the moral hesitations of democracies, it becomes the duty of the Indian state to rise above diplomacy and act with conviction. But conviction alone is not enough. Justice demands credibility, it demands a system that the world cannot doubt. That is why the government's proposal to establish at least one international-standard prison in each state is not about appeasing fugitives; it is about strengthening India's moral claim in global courts. A nation that ensures dignity even for the guilty commands far greater authority when it demands accountability. The need for seamless coordination between passport authorities, police, and intelligence agencies is equally vital. Too often, the machinery of the state has acted in silos, allowing those under investigation to flee even as warrants were being signed. The technology exists today to ensure that a Red Corner Notice translates instantly into a cancelled passport and a grounded suspect. What is required now is political will and institutional integration. Not more committees, but more coordination. The numbers tell a promising story. In 2025 alone, India issued nearly 200 Interpol notices, a historic record. But a notice is only the beginning. The real challenge lies in follow-through, in diplomatic persistence, in outlasting the legal gymnastics that well-funded fugitives deploy abroad. It is here that India must learn to combine moral firmness with procedural finesse, to be both righteous and relentless. For a civilisation that gave the world the concept of dharma, justice is not an administrative act; it is a sacred obligation. Every fugitive brought back is a reaffirmation that the Indian state does not forget, that its memory is long, and its patience is not weakness. The time has come to ensure that no one-- no matter however powerful or however far-- can outrun the moral gravity of Indian justice.

River Crisis

RISK TO LIFE & PROSPERITY

DR OISHEE MUKHERJEE

Recently a parliamentary panel stated that the stretch of the Yamuna in Delhi is severely polluted and virtually dead. It found 23 of the 33 monitoring sites, including six in the national capital, had failed to meet primary water quality standards. The report categorised the Yamuna into three parts – the stretch from Yamunotri to the Hathnikund barrage, which is unpolluted, from Hathnikund barrage to Palla, which is moderately polluted and from Palla to Okhla in Delhi, which is severely polluted. In most stretches of the Ganga and the Yamuna, experts have stated that the deteriorating quality parameters called for urgent and coordinated response from all stakeholders to abate pollution. The analysis on assessing the water quality has been done on four parameters of dissolved oxygen, pH, biochemical oxygen demand and faecal coliform. Over the years, the central and state governments have made some efforts to conserve rivers which have failed to bring about the desired results.

Atmospheric pollution is a major concern, as is the contamination of rivers and lakes. Studies reveal that rivers are dying in the Himalayas, causing water shortages, and seas are also reportedly drying up beyond India.

A recent North Bengal University study found that rivers in the Himalayan foreland basin, including Raidak, Teesta, Mahananda, and Kosi, are drying up in North Bengal's foothills, endangering local ecosystems, livelihoods, and water security. Between 1985 and 2024, long-term water zones shrank by 2,900 acres while short-term zones expanded by 3,550 acres. About 25,700 acres of riverbeds became farmland, and 21,200 acres were turned into settlements. Ironically, these same rivers have triggered major floods in North Bengal over the past two days.

The growing population has made potable water scarcity a major issue, especially in metropolitan and urban areas. Rivers supply essential water and are culturally significant, particularly in Hinduism, where the Ganga is both spiritually revered and commonly associated with final rites. Despite its importance, most sections of the Ganges are heavily polluted.

India's rivers are vital for millions of people and support 18% of global aquatic life. However, over half of the country's 605 rivers were polluted in 2022, posing risks to public health, biodiversity, and contributing to worldwide water pollution.

Pollution levels in rivers such as the Ganges, Yamuna, and Sabarmati have increased significantly. These rivers are used to transport untreated waste, including disposed idols, human and animal remains, sewage, chemical waste, wastewater, and other debris. Contributing factors include industrial discharge, untreated municipal sewage, inadequate waste management systems, and actions by individuals.

The Ganga River, which supports over 600 million people across India, Nepal, and Bangladesh, is currently experiencing its most significant decrease in water flow in 1300 years, according to a recent study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. The research indicated potential impacts on water security, agriculture, and power generation in this densely populated region. Researchers from IIT Gandhinagar and the University of Arizona analyzed the river's stream flow using a combination of instrumental data, paleoclimate records, and hydrological models, finding that the decline since the early 1990s is greater than that experienced during major droughts of the 16th and 18th centuries.

Lead author Dipesh Singh Chuphal noted that the Ganga has suffered multiple severe droughts over the past 30 years, with 2004-2010 being the worst in more than a millennium. The basin experienced two major seven-year droughts (1991-97 and 2004-2010), among the ten longest in its 1300-year history. Researchers warn that higher temperatures could reduce streamflow by 5–35% if rainfall remains low.

Recently a parliamentary panel stated that the stretch of the Yamuna in Delhi is severely polluted and virtually dead. It found 23 of the 33 monitoring sites, including six in the national capital, had failed to meet primary water quality standards. The report categorised the Yamuna into three parts – the stretch from Yamunotri to the Hathnikund barrage, which is unpolluted, from Hathnikund barrage to Palla, which is moderately polluted and from Palla to Okhla in Delhi, which is severely polluted.

In most stretches of the Ganga and the Yamuna, experts have stated that the deteriorating quality parameters called for urgent and coordinated response from all stakeholders to abate pollution. The analysis on assessing the water quality has been done on four parameters of dissolved oxygen, pH, biochemical oxygen demand and faecal coliform. Over the years, the central and state governments have made some efforts to conserve rivers which have failed to bring about the desired results. Several programmes and policies aimed at the conservation and rejuvenation of rivers across the country have been launched which include Namami Gange (National Mission for Clean Ganga), National River Conservation Plan, National Mission for Clean Chambal, National Mission for Clean Narmada and National River Linking Project.

In addition, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and various state pollution control boards have carried out initiatives focused on river cleaning and conservation. These efforts include monitoring and regulation, enforcing environmental laws, capacity building and public awareness, implementing river rejuvenation projects, and supporting research and development. Despite the actions taken by both central and state governments, challenges persist, which may be attributed to insufficiently strict monitoring of waste disposal practices by industries and municipalities.

The government spent Rs. 13,000 crore on cleaning the Ganga, but results have been minimal. In 2019, the Quality Council of India reported that over 70% of towns along the river still dumped waste directly due to inadequate municipal plants. Nationwide, more than 38,000 million litres of wastewater reach Indian rivers each day because of insufficient sewage treatment and poor disposal systems.

High pollution levels are a serious issue, demanding action to keep rivers clean. Both government bodies and society should enforce plastic bans, ensure proper waste disposal, treat wastewater, raise awareness, organise cleanup campaigns, regularly monitor water quality, and work with non-profits.

India produces 152,245 metric tonnes of municipal solid waste (MSW) daily, with about 75% processed and a significant portion entering water bodies. Although Solid Waste Management Rules require segregation at source and state enforcement, much MSW remains unsegregated, resulting in mixed waste with low calorific value that is unsuitable for incineration and ends up in landfills. The Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0, launched in 2021, seeks to achieve complete source segregation and scientific waste management by 2026, but experts doubt these targets are achievable given current infrastructure limitations.

A study conducted two years ago estimated that 40 per cent of India's population may lack access to a clean water source by 2030. Pollution levels in ponds and lakes, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, contribute to challenges related to drinking water, including an increase in water-borne and communicable diseases.

According to WHO standards, potable water is unavailable in many villages in underdeveloped districts. Contaminants are a concern for public health, especially among populations with lower immunity. Cleaning rivers and other water bodies requires coordinated efforts between the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and state pollution control boards. Efforts from both central and state governments are necessary, along with raising public awareness regarding the importance of maintaining clean water sources. Collaboration between government agencies and voluntary organisations can support measures such as banning plastics, ensuring proper waste disposal, treating wastewater, promoting public awareness, organising cleanup campaigns, and regularly monitoring water quality. Addressing issues such as siltation is also important in preserving river health.---INFA

The Significance of Dhanteras Poojan

HAPPY DHANTERAS MAKING THE START OF DIWALI ON 18 OCTOBER 2025 WITH RITUALS LIKE CLEANING HOMES, BUYING GOLD AND PERFORMING PUJA FOR WEALTH AND HEALTH PURCHASING GOLD, SILVER AND OTHER AUSPIOUS ITEMS LIGHTING DIYAS AND PERFORMING LUXMI AND YAMA PUJA. THIS MAJOR HINDU FESTIVAL ALSO KNOWN AS DHANTRAYODASHI IS CELEBRATED TWO DAYS BEFORE DIWALI. DEVOTEES WORSHIP LORD KUBER. THE DAY IS ALSO CELEBRATED AT DHANWANTRI JYANTI, HONOURING THE GOD OF MEDICINE

RAVI ROHMETRA

Dhanteras is the first day of the five-day Diwali Festival as celebrated primarily in Northern & Western part of India. The festival, known as "Dhanatrayodashi" or "Dhanvantari Trayodashi". The word Dhanameans wealth and Trayodashi means 13th day as per Hindu calendar. It is celebrated on the thirteenth lunar day of Krishna paksha (dark fortnight) in the Hindu calendar month of Kartik.

On Dhanteras, Goddess Lakshmi is worshiped to provide prosperity and well being. Dhanteras holds special significance for the business community due to the customary purchases of precious metals on this day. Lord Kubera, the God of assets and wealth is also worshipped on this day.

The festival of Dhanteras falls in the month of Kartik (Oct-Nov) on the thirteenth day of the dark fortnight. This auspicious day is celebrated two days before the festival of lights, Diwali.

HOW TO CELEBRATE DHANTERAS

On Dhanteras, Lakshmi - the Goddess of wealth - is worshiped to provide prosperity and well being. It is also the day for celebrating wealth, as the word 'Dhan' literally means wealth and 'Tera' comes from the date 13th.

In the evening, the lamp is lit and Dhan-Lakshmi is welcomed into the house. Alpana or Rangoli designs are drawn on pathways including the goddess' footprints to mark the arrival of Lakshmi. Aartis or devotional hymns are sung eulogizing-Goddess Lakshmi and sweets and fruits are offered to her.

Hindus also worship Lord Kuber as the treasurer of wealth and bestower of riches, along with Goddess Lakshmi on Dhanteras. This custom of worshiping Lakshmi and Kuber together is in prospect of doubling the benefits of such prayers.

People flock to the jewelers and buy gold or silver jewelry or utensils to venerate the occasion of Dhanteras.

Many wear new clothes and wear jewelry as they light the first lamp of Diwali while some engage in a game of gambling.

LEGENDS

An ancient legend ascribes the occasion to on interesting story about the 16-year-old son of King Hima. His horoscope predicted his death by snake-bite on the fourth day of his marriage. On that particular day, his newly-wed wife did not allow him to sleep.

She laid out all her ornaments and lots of gold and silver coins in a heap at the entrance of the sleeping chamber and lit lamps all over the place. Then she narrated stories and sang songs to keep her husband from falling asleep. The next day, when Yama, the god of Death, arrived at the prince's doorstep in the guise of a Serpent, his eyes were dazzled and blinded by the brilliance of the lamps and the jewellery.

Yama could not enter the Prince's chamber, so he climbed on top of the heap of gold coins and sat there the entire night listening to the stories and songs. In the morning, he silently went away. Thus, the young prince was saved from the clutches of death by the cleverness of his new bride, and the day came to be celebrated as Dhanteras. The following day came to be called Naraka Chaturdashi ('Naraka' means hell and Chaturdashi means 14th).

It is also known as 'Yamadeepdaan' as the ladies of the house light earthen lamps or 'deep' and these are kept burning throughout the night glorifying Yama, the God of Death. Since this is the night before Diwali, it is also called 'Chhoti Diwali' or Minor Diwali.

According to another popular legend, when the Gods and demons churned the ocean for Amrita or nectar, Dhanvantari (the physician of the Gods and an incarnation of Vishnu) emerged carrying a jar of the elixir on the day of Dhanteras.

PREPARATION, TRADITIONS & CELEBRATIONS

On the day of Dhanteras, business premises are renovated and decorated. Entrances are made colorful with traditional motifs of Rangoli designs to welcome the Goddess of Wealth and Prosperity. To indicate her long-awaited arrival, small footprints are drawn with rice flour and vermilion powder all over the houses. Lamps are kept burning all through the night.

On Dhanteras Hindus consider it auspicious to purchase gold or silver articles or at least one or two new utensils. It is believed that new "Dhan" or some form of precious metal is a sign of good luck. "Lakshmi Puja" is performed in the evenings when tiny Diyas of clay are lit to drive away the shadows of evil spirits. "Bhajans", devotional songs in praise of Goddess Lakshmi, are also sung.

Dhanteras is celebrated with gusto and enthusiasm. "Lakshmi Puja" is performed in the evenings when tiny diyas of clay are lit to drive away the shadows of evil spirits. Bhajans, devotional songs in praise of Goddess Laxmi, are sung and "Naivedya" of traditional sweets is offered to the Goddess. There is a peculiar custom in Maharashtra to lightly pound dry coriander seeds (Dhane in Marathi for Dhanatrayodashi) with jaggery and offer as Naivedya.

In villages, cattle are adorned and worshiped by farmers as they form the main source of their income.

THE MYTH OF DHANAVANTRI

Another legend says, in the cosmic battle between the gods and the demons when both churned the ocean for 'amrit' or divine nectar, Dhanavantri – the physician of the gods and an incarnation of Vishnu – emerged carrying a pot of the elixir. So, according to this mythological tale, the word Dhanteras comes from the name Dhanavantri, the divine doctor.

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