

# THE HINDU EDITORIALS & WORDS

## 18<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2021

### 1. Clientelism: ग्राहकवाद

It is the exchange of goods and services for political support, often involving an implicit or explicit quid-pro-quo. Clientelism involves an asymmetric relationship between groups of political actors described as patrons, brokers, and clients.

**Similar:** favouritism, cronyism, ingratiating, protectionist, bias, nepotism, patronage.

### 2. Proffer

Hold out or put forward (something) to someone for acceptance.

"she proffered a glass of wine"

**Similar:** offer, tender, present, extend, give, submit, volunteer.

### 3. Notwithstanding: नाँटविथ्' स्टैन्डिङ्

**Preposition, adverb**

In spite of something

के बावजूद (भी)

**Similar:**

**Preposition:** in spite of, despite, regardless of, for all.

**Adverb:** nevertheless, nonetheless, even so, all the same, in spite of this/that, despite this/that, after everything, however, still, yet, be that as it may, having said that.

**Conjunction:** although, in spite of the fact that, despite the fact that, even though, though.

### 4. Exceptionalism

The belief that something is exceptional, especially the theory that the peaceful capitalism of the US constitutes an exception to the general economic laws governing national historical development.

### 5. Gentle vs genteel

**Genteel:** Polite or refined in an affected or exaggerated way.

She is too **genteel** for words. Do you behave in a **genteel** way?

**Gentle:** (1) Mild, kind, careful, not rough, not violent, not severe.

### 6. To/of no avail, to/of little avail

If you do something **to no avail** or **to little avail**, what you do **fails** to **achieve** what you **want**.

*His efforts were to no avail.*

*I apologized repeatedly, but to little avail.*

### 7. Censure: सेन्श(र्)

To tell somebody, in a strong and formal way, that he/she has done something wrong

अनुचित काम करने के लिए किसी की भर्त्सना करना

The attorney was censured for not revealing the information earlier.

### 8. Staggering: स्टैगरिङ्

That you find difficult to believe

विस्मयकारी, हैरतअंगेज़ (जिस पर विश्वास करना कठिन हो)

**Similar:**

1. lurch, walk unsteadily, reel, sway, teeter, totter, stumble, wobble, move clumsily, weave, flounder, falter, pitch, roll.

2. astonish, amaze, nonplus, startle, astound, surprise, bewilder, stun, flabbergast, shock, shake, stupefy.

### 9. Rescind: रि'सिन्ड्

To officially state that a law, contract, decision, etc. is no longer valid

किसी क़ानून, अनुबंध, निर्णय आदि को अधिकृत रूप से निरस्त, रद्द या मंसूख करना

**Similar:** revoke, repeal, cancel, reverse, abrogate, overturn, overrule, override, annul, nullify.

## 10. Exorbitant: इग्'ज़ॉर्बिटन्ट

(used about the cost of something) much more expensive than it should be

असाधारण रूप से महँगा

**Similar:** extortionate, excessively high, extremely high, excessive, sky-high, prohibitive, outrageous, unreasonable, preposterous, inordinate, immoderate, inflated, monstrous, unwarranted, unconscionable, huge, enormous, disproportionate, punitive, ruinous, expensive, extravagant, over the odds.

## 11. Freebie

A thing that is provided or given free of charge.

"he was never able to resist a bargain or a freebie"

**Similar:** pass, perk, sample, comp, enter, transactions, freebee, costlessness, giveaway, goody and freebies.

## 12. Dole out

Distribute, dispense, divide, deal, **dole out** mean to give **out**, usually in shares, to each member of a group. distribute implies an apportioning by separation of something into parts, units, or amounts.

## 13. Unabashed

Not embarrassed, disconcerted, or ashamed.

"he was unabashed by the furore his words provoked"

**Similar:** unashamed, shameless, unembarrassed, brazen, audacious, barefaced.

## 14. Something is loaded against somebody/something

Used to say that a system, situation, or organization is unfair and some people have a disadvantage

**Similar:** biased

The justice system is loaded against people from ethnic minorities.

## 15. Antithetical

Being in direct and unequivocal opposition: directly opposite or opposed.

**Constituting or marked by antithesis:** pertaining to the rhetorical contrast of ideas by means of parallel arrangements of words, clauses, or sentences.

## 16. First brush

Have an encounter or come in conflict with.

This was not the **first** time that Bob had a **brush** with the law.

This expression alludes to the noun **brush** in the sense of "a hostile collision," a usage dating from about 1400.

## 17. Afloat

**On the surface of the water; not sinking**

पानी पर तिरता हुआ

A life jacket helps you stay afloat if you fall in the water.

(used about a business, an economy, etc.) having enough money to survive

(व्यापार, अर्थव्यवस्था आदि) अच्छी आर्थिक स्थिति में होना

## 18. Moot point

A **moot point** is a fact that doesn't matter because it's not relevant to the current situation.

**Similar:** debating point, moot case, debatable point, point at issue and arguable point; irrelevant point.

## 19. Renege

Go back on a promise, undertaking, or contract.

"they have renege on their promises to us"

**Similar:** default on, fail to honour, go back on, break, back out of.

# FREEBIES FOR VOTES

**Tamil Nadu's competitive clientelism goes against free and fair elections**

From gold *thalis* and mixer-grinders in the past, competitive clientelism in Tamil Nadu has escalated this election season on the home appliances and electronics front — with the AIADMK proffering washing

machines and free-of-cost cable TV connection and the DMK laying out tablets and computers. The ruling party added ₹1,500 per month assistance to women — over the ₹1,000 promised by the DMK. Promises on job quotas were common in the two rivals' manifestos released within 24 hours of each other last weekend. Notwithstanding the exceptionalism that marks the patron-client polity in Tamil Nadu, the sheer scale of it this year is remarkable.

The Election Commission's rather genteel guidelines in the model code of conduct have been of little avail, although they do dictate that the manifestos indicate the means by which the tall promises shall be met. Already, the Madras High Court has issued notices to the EC on March 10 on a plea by a Coimbatore-based NGO that the EC has, in the past, "censured" the State's political parties on extravagant manifestos, but only after the elections. In the matter of cash, liquor, coupons and freebies in elections, Tamil Nadu seems to leave most other States way behind. More than 50 per cent, that is, 118 out of 234 Assembly constituencies in the State fall under what the EC characterises as "expenditure sensitive" (based on its observations on poll campaigns). This is staggering when contrasted against the high-voltage contest in West Bengal where this number totals up to less than 16 per cent, or 47 out of the total 294 constituencies, and Kerala where the number stands at 25 out of 140, about 17 per cent. At least two recent elections in Tamil Nadu, for the Vellore parliamentary constituency in 2019 and the RK Nagar (Chennai) Assembly constituency in 2017, have been rescinded due to exorbitant and unaccounted for cash flows and freebies doled out by the rival political parties.

Such unabashed clientelism is loaded against new entrants. By creating entry barriers, it is antithetical to free and fair elections. Delhi has witnessed the dramatic rise of a rank newcomer, Arvind Kejriwal and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) whose first brush with electoral power was largely driven by crowd-sourcing resources. In Tamil Nadu, even a superstar of Rajnikanth's appeal shies from treading into a territory skewed in favour of the entrenched players. Kamal Haasan, with assets over ₹176.9 crore, has had to borrow ₹25 crore and work overtime in TV franchises to stay afloat. It is a moot point whether the similar economic policies of established political players have ensured industrial growth with stability — with investors seemingly confident of no incumbent reneging on commitments negotiated by his predecessor. Elections in Tamil Nadu can certainly do with some institutional scrutiny. And, hopefully, people will soon begin to see the reality of these giveaways — that they come from the taxes that they themselves pay.

## **ALLAYING CONCERNS: ON PUBLIC TRUST AND VACCINATION PROGRAMMES**

**Public trust is a key ingredient to successful vaccination programmes**

A little over 392 million doses of vaccine have been administered globally, according to the **Bloomberg Vaccine Tracker**, with India accounting for around 9% of them. In the last week, there have been a flurry of reports from Europe, of **blood clots developing in a very small fraction of those vaccinated** and leading to a cascade of European countries announcing a temporary **halt to their vaccination programmes involving the AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccine**. WHO and the European Medicines Agency have underlined that there is no causal link between vaccines and the occurrence of such clots. In fact, there are less than 40 such occurrences reported so far, and that is much below the background of about 1,000 to 2,000 blood clots every single day in the general population, say studies based on the U.S. population. These organisations advocate that the ongoing vaccination drives continue, even accelerate, as the rate of vaccination is not keeping pace with what is required to control the pandemic. However, there are good reasons too for the countries to have called for a temporary halt. The AZ, Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have been released under emergency use authorisations, meaning that the entire profile of risks associated with them have not been thoroughly studied. History is replete with instances of vaccines that have been taken off even years after approval after a slight increase in untoward complications. As of now, the risk of dying from serious COVID-19 far outweighs that from vaccine reactions and it is such a calculation that weighs on the minds of regulators before approving vaccines.

Unlike drugs administered to the sick, vaccines have a higher bar of proving themselves safe as they are given to the healthy. Regulators of all countries rely on the experiences of others, as exemplified in India alone where it was AZ trials in the United Kingdom that paved the way for approval in India. Therefore, a warning in one country must immediately activate the sensors in another. India has a long experience with vaccinations as well as expertise in evaluating risk; however, transparency and prompt data sharing, thereby

building public trust, is not one of its strong suits. This was evidenced by the approval of vaccines in spite of scant efficacy data. There is almost no information by the National Committee on Adverse Events Following Immunisation on the nature of serious adverse events following immunisation. This is in contrast to the frequent analyses shared by organisations such as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on adverse events. Public trust is a key ingredient to successful vaccination programmes and this can be only earned by the government's zealous attention to allaying concerns.

## **IMMIGRATION CONUNDRUM: ON DIVERSITY, MIGRATION AND THE AMERICAN DREAM**

**The American Dream is struggling to remain a vision premised on diversity and migration**

It is unlikely that President Joe Biden ever imagined that it would be a cakewalk to undo some of the most damaging policies implemented by his predecessor Donald Trump, but even he might not have anticipated how quickly the thorny question of immigration reform could spiral into a full-blown crisis. In recent weeks, **an unprecedented surge of unaccompanied minors** at the U.S.'s southern border has pushed the need for comprehensive reform, front and centre. The sudden spike in their numbers in U.S. custody — over 4,000, according to reports — is already wearing federal resources thin. Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas struck a grim note when he said the U.S. was “on pace to encounter more individuals on the southwest border than we have in the last 20 years”. Complicating the entire exercise is the COVID-19 pandemic, which has made it impossible to take down a Trump-era emergency rule that gives border agents the authority to summarily turn away most migrants other than unaccompanied minors, denying them the right to have their asylum claims heard. In a sense, the mounting crisis is related to a sweeping immigration reform proposal unveiled by Mr. Biden's administration a month ago, as well as smaller bills that the Democrat-controlled Congress could pass with less resistance, including measures to quicken the process for grant of legal status to agriculture workers and “Dreamers”, or undocumented immigrants who entered the U.S. as children.

There are also plans under way to redress the ills of the legal migration system, many obstacles to which were erected by the Trump White House, including a controversial rule to raise mandatory minimum pay for foreign workers on the H-1B visa for skilled immigrants that is largely granted to Indian nationals. Similarly, some analysts have estimated that the Biden administration's proposed immigration bill could potentially increase annual ‘green card’ or permanent residency numbers by 35%. Mr. Biden's broader, omnibus immigration legislation proposal includes an eight-year pathway to citizenship for the nearly 11 million undocumented immigrants and the use of hi-tech systems for border patrol enforcement. The right, led by the vocal Congressional Republican minority, has attacked all such proposals as not being tough enough and encouraging the border surge, whereas the left, led by Democrats such as Representatives Ilhan Omar and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, have taken on Mr. Biden for not being humane enough. The intractable immigration conundrum that the country has wrestled with from its very inception is whether the American Dream is an inclusivist vision of economic growth premised on embracing diversity and skilled migration, or whether the Trumpian ‘America First’ battle cry for nativist populism will carry the day. What Mr. Biden does in the months ahead will help answer this question.