**Fare Well False Year**

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| THE year 2019 should never have been born. It began with a f alse hope of change and ended with a solar eclipse. In between, it saw floods in Venice, bush fires across Australia, earthquakes in Peru, riots in Hong Kong. Will 2020 be another year of turmoil or one with a balanced vision, as its numerals imply? Two predictions will govern this fresh year: Movement and Migration. In theUS, President Trump (a pinching impeachment notwithstanding) will rearrange the furniture in the White House for a second five-year occupancy.  In the UK, Prime Minister Boris Johnson, having successfully quit Europe, intends to make 10 Downing Street his home until 2024. In Europe, German Chancellor Angela Merkel will spend her final year (she retires in 2021) buttressing the frail credentials of her chosen successor Ms Kramp-Karrenbauer. French President Macron must quell domestic insurrections before he can claim pre-eminence in a fragmenting European Union. And both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping still have `miles to go` before they sleep.  In neighbouring India, Prime Minister Modi and his sub-ego Home Minister Amit Shah will pursue their pogroms against Indian Muslims. Their savagely truncated Bhagavad Gita is M.S. Gowalkar`s We or our Nationhood Defined (1939) which offered, as they do, a stark choice to Indian non-Hindus: `There are only two courses open to these foreignelements,either tomerge themselves in the national race and adopt its culture or to live at its mercy so long as the national race may allow them to do so and quit the country at the sweet will of the national race.  Would Gowalkar, one wonders, have acceptedtwoCongressleaders-theItalianborn Mrs Sonia Gandhi or British-born Dr Shashi Tharoor as being Indian enough? Minorities, Gowalkar argued, must merge with the Hindu race, `or stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment not even citizens` rights`.  A recent equally influential Hindutva ideologue Pandit D.D. Upadhyaya attacked the Indian constitution itself, dismissing it as a foreign hybrid: `The founding fathers of the Republic of India were largely Anglophile Indians schooled in Western systems of thought; their work revealed no Indianness [.] Thus, our constitution, like an English child born in India, has become an AngloIndianin character,instead of purely Indian.  Such abrasive assaults created the breach that admitted the repudiation of Article 370 and the passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, by a BJP-dominated legislature. Does the RSS/BJP envisage an eviction in time of all Indian Muslims, par-alleling Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman`s alleged threat to repatriate all 1.9 million Pakistanis f rom Saudi Arabia, to be followed by the expulsion of 1.2m Pakistanis by an obedient UAE? Since the oil boom of the 1970s, our governments have behaved like undisciplined Muslim landlords. They treated loans as income and remittances as a perennial harvest of fiscal subvention. Yet, the Saudi threatisnot animpossibility. Itis aninescapable eventuality, given the illiquidity of the Saudi economy. Has anyone in the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis even planned for the absorption of repatriated Pakistanis in our overcrowded, shrunken economy? Or is the ministry concerned only with hosting costly, sterile seminars taunting non-resident Pakistanis to invest in Pakistan? In 2020, two judicial cases of inordinate insignificance will be brought forward into the Supreme Court`s Lists. The first is the special court verdict holding that former president Gen Musharraf committed trea-son. It has put the PTI government in a quandary. A predecessor`s meat has decomposed into this government`s poison. How can it support a previous dictator without whetting the appeute of a future one? The secondcaseis a review of the SupremeCourt decision on the extension of the army chief. Will the Supreme Court repeat its demand for an appropriate law to determine the tenure of all such salaried employees? Or might it tell parliament to peep across the border at the modifications being made to the Indian Army rules? A new post of chief of defence staff (the counterpart of our chairman joint chiefs of staff) has been created to accommodate the retiring army chief Gen Bipin Rawat, allowing him a tenure up to the age of 65.  Will 2020 be the year Shahbaz Sharif, having disgorged a sum said to be £190m, claims the prime ministership? It has been his ambition ever since December 1997, when Nawaz Sharif (then prime minister) hoped to replace president Farooq Leghari, vacating the prime ministership for Shahbaz. Abbaji told them to stay put, and brought in Rafiq Tarar instead.  An in-parliament change could be managedbyinducing defectionsbyformerPML-N loyalists, now PTI mouthpieces. Remember, 2020 is the Chinese Year of the Rat. The writer is an author and historian. |