

The truth of truth

DARPAN OF INDIA

❖ QUOTES ❖

"materialism leads us to lose awareness of our inner life, which is bad enough; but to be hypnotized by our own feelings and sensations and forget about others and the world around us is worse."

—The Upanishads

Why is Ladakh in turmoil?

Narendra Modi's BJP government is treading a familiar path to calm the restive Ladakh. The government has accused the 'sheep' of being a 'sheep' for Wednesday's unrest and has cancelled the license of the organization of Magsaysay Award-winning educationist and environmental activist Sonam Wangchuk, accusing her of violating the Foreign Contribution Control Act. The CBI has also started a probe against her organization. It is being heard that Sonam Wangchuk may be arrested for inciting Wednesday's unrest. She has been peacefully protesting for several years for various demands in the interest of Ladakh. This is the first time that unrest has broken out. Four people were killed and 80 injured in a clash between security forces and protesters demanding the formation of a separate state and inclusion of Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution in Leh on Wednesday. The Union Home Ministry has already said that Sonam incited the crowd to become violent. Although there is no example of such behavior so far. According to the people of Ladakh, on the one hand, the government's indifference, and on the other hand, the deterioration of the physical condition of two of the hunger strikers, have angered a section of the public. However, a section of the BJP has said that Sonam is getting support from Pakistan. The reason for this slander is Sonam's participation in the climate conference 'Breath Pakistan' held in the Pakistani capital Islamabad last February. The Pakistani media 'Dawn' was the organizer of that conference. Hindu extremists are spreading that after returning from there, Sonam Wangchuk started a new movement demanding the status of a separate state. Now the Congress is also supporting her. The BJP has directly alleged that local Congress leaders are also involved in the violent incidents. Despite being an integral part of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh has always lived in peace. Except for a few minor clashes between Buddhists and Muslims in 1989, this vast region has remained peaceful. That conflict 36 years ago was for the liberation of Buddhists from Muslim-dominated Kashmiri rule. However, it did not last long. At that time, despite the resistance of a section of the Buddhist community, the government and the administration took steps to stop the violence. Since then, the fire of unrest in Ladakh has not flared up even once. The Kashmir Valley also started to become turbulent in 1989. The unrest began with the expulsion of Hindu scholars from the valley. That unrest gradually spread to Jammu. Surprisingly, it did not affect the Shia Muslim or Buddhist-dominated areas of Ladakh. Muslim-dominated Kargil, Drass, Matain, Kankar, Batalik, Zaskar or Buddhist-dominated Leh remained like a desolate lake. It is alleged that Pakistan's army chief General Pervez Musharraf unsuccessfully tried to disturb the Shia-dominated Kargil of Ladakh in 1999. This time, the Muslims of Kargil have also fully supported the demand of the Buddhists of Ladakh. They are also vocal in their demand for a separate state and inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. Public life in the entire Kargil region was at a standstill on Thursday. In short, Muslims and Buddhists of Ladakh are united in their demands.

How committed are you?

The Kremlin's ultimate goal is to prove that NATO's mutual security pledge, or Article Five, is useless

How committed is NATO to defending the Baltics? Russian President Vladimir Putin indirectly raised the question last week by sending fighter jets into Estonian airspace. NATO's public stance is clear. The 32-nation alliance will defend every inch of its territory. That commitment is on display at the Tapa military base in Estonia, close to the Russian border. Tapa means "kill" in Estonian. Once a Soviet air base, it is now a major base for the Estonian army and British-led NATO forces. When I visited Tapa last week, soldiers from Britain's Royal Tank Regiment had just arrived. A small unit from France is also stationed at the base. It is home to a powerful arsenal of weapons, including Challenger II tanks, Archer artillery systems, and Griffon armored vehicles. The British, French and Estonian armies have a unified command structure and would fight together if Russia ever attacked Estonia. The troops at the Tapa base are trained to repel a full-scale Russian invasion. But Western strategists believe Russia is likely to move in stages, testing NATO's response and unity with smaller operations. The violation of Estonian airspace is part of the Kremlin's larger plan. A few days ago, a group of Russian drones entered Polish airspace. NATO fighter jets shot down several of the drones. NATO then deployed more aircraft to its eastern border. NATO is due to meet later this week to decide what to do. Some members of the alliance believe that Russian aircraft should be shot down if they enter NATO airspace in the future. But others, particularly the United States, believe that this would create dangerous tensions. Russia is likely to gradually increase its provocations to test the divisions within NATO. There has long been talk of Russian troops entering one of the Baltic states, perhaps to protect ethnic Russians there. As NATO faces uncertainty, Russia is also in a quandary. Trump is so volatile that no one can predict how he will react to an international crisis. Many thought he would never authorize airstrikes on Iran. But he did so earlier this year. The Kremlin's ultimate goal is to prove that NATO's mutual security pledge, or Article Five, is useless. If Russia can do that,

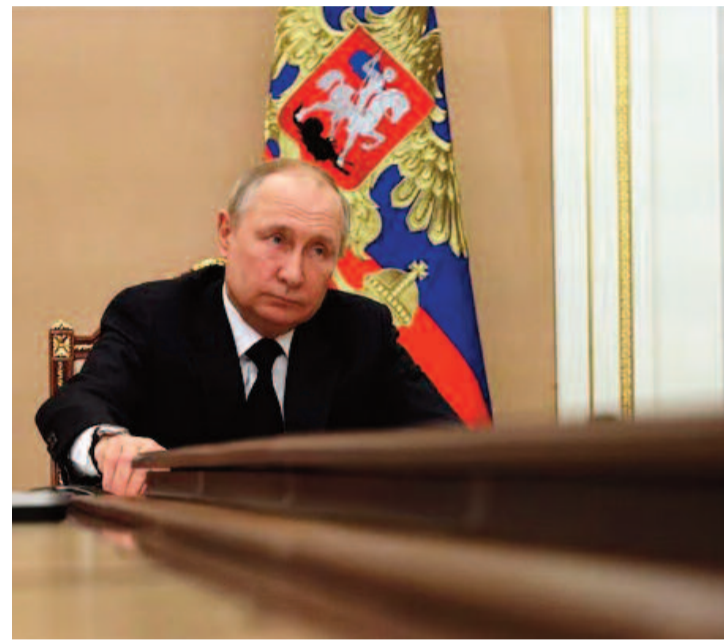
it will try to take over smaller European countries one by one without facing the combined might of NATO. Central to Moscow's gamble is uncertainty about Washington's support. The United States provides about 40 percent of NATO's military capabilities in Europe. It also has the most modern weapons. US troops are also stationed in the Baltics. But many questions remain about how Trump will respond if Russia ever launches a major attack on Estonia or another NATO member. "If there is an incursion and an attack... what can Putin expect? The US Sixth Fleet will come to the Baltic Sea, or a meeting will be called in Alaska?" Gabrielius Landsbergis, a former Lithuanian foreign minister, told me. There is internal tension between the Trump administration and the Baltic allies. Washington has complained about the "Estonianization" of European foreign policy. This is because the EU's current foreign policy chief, Kaia Kallas, is a former Estonian prime minister. Some in the Trump administration believe that Baltic leaders are too aggressive in their anti-Putin stance. They were recently accused of being "ideological" at a Pentagon meeting. On the other hand, the Baltic states also do not fully trust the United States. The major European countries are more consistent than the United States in confronting Russian aggression. However, these countries are terrified of the idea of war with Russia without the United States. This is evidenced by the hesitation over the formation of a European 'reliability force'. The deployment of this force in Ukraine is possible only if there is American sponsorship behind it. Just as NATO faces uncertainty, Russia is also hesitant. Trump is so unstable that no one can predict his reaction to an international crisis. Many thought that he would never authorize air strikes on Iran. Yet he did just that earlier this year. Even if the United States remains neutral in the Baltic crisis, troops from Britain, France, Germany and Canada are still deployed there. They have also pledged war. Countries like Poland and Finland, which have considerable military power, know very well that the fate of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania is closely linked to their own security.

So these countries are also likely to stand by the Baltic countries.

Putin would be taking a dangerous gamble in testing NATO's eastern border defenses. Unfortunately, the world learned in 2022 that Putin is capable of such reckless gambles. Russia has sent a group of drones into Polish airspace. In doing so, Russia has tested Europe's political will to provide weapons and security guarantees to Ukraine, despite the risk of a NATO military response and escalating tensions. The timing is no coincidence. Less than a week later, 26 countries led by France and the UK

leadership. Again, many believe that Russia's intention is to spread fear among the people of Europe and incite anti-war public opinion. Because populist governments can exploit the public's anger. Several NATO countries came forward to help the Polish air force shoot down the Russian drone. These included Italian radar aircraft, Dutch fighter jets and German Patriot missile defence systems. This is not the first time a NATO member state has violated the airspace of a NATO member state since Russia began its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. But this was the

most to the closest point to open conflict since World War II." European leaders must use the incident of a Russian drone entering Polish airspace. Pressure must be increased on Donald Trump to support a European-led "security force" for Ukraine. After the incident, Poland took action under NATO's Article 4. This article states that a member state can call for consultations if it believes its territorial integrity, political independence or security is under threat. In a statement after the meeting in Brussels, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte said alliance members had pledged to stand by Poland and condemned Russia's "reckless behavior." European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen directly blamed Putin for the incident. In a last-minute addition to her State of the Union address to the European Parliament, she said, "Today we have witnessed the reckless and unprecedented intrusion of more than 10 Russian drones into Polish and European airspace. Europe stands in full solidarity with Poland. Putin's message here is clear, and our response must be clear." European leaders must seize the opportunity to press Donald Trump to support a European-led "security force" for Ukraine. The rationale for increasing Europe's military capabilities to counter the Russian threat is also emerging. NATO member states are expected to send fighter jets and missile defense systems to bolster Poland's air defenses. How tough NATO should respond to Russian aggression and sabotage is also a topic of much debate. The Nordic and Baltic countries are pushing for a tougher stance. Their proposal would allow NATO patrol planes to shoot down Russian warplanes if they enter their airspace. They want European and US allies to provide Ukraine with long-range missiles and give Ukraine the freedom to strike deep inside Russia. Ukraine, meanwhile, wants NATO countries to shoot down Russian missiles that enter Ukrainian airspace from their own territory. But allies like Germany, Italy and the US are relatively cautious about the issue, fearing it could escalate the conflict. But given the way Putin is provoking Ukraine and its European allies, the West needs to send a clear message to Moscow now.



announced the formation of a "voluntary alliance" to ensure Ukraine's security. The alliance is intended to ensure Ukraine's security after a ceasefire. Meanwhile, Vladimir Putin has stepped up nighttime attacks on Ukraine, ignoring efforts to broker a peace deal brokered by Donald Trump. He has made it clear that he will not accept the presence of European troops in Ukraine. The Russian Defense Ministry has said that they had no intention of attacking any targets in Poland. But many see the sending of the 19 drones as a tactic to test the political will of Western countries. Because the drones have been sent at a time when there are doubts about how much Europe can rely on the United States to support Ukraine due to Trump's unstable

largest. The target was a country that is a major base for Western arms supplies. Earlier, Russian drones had crashed in Latvia and Lithuania, without causing any loss of life or property. In 2022, a Ukrainian defence missile mistakenly hit Poland, killing two Polish citizens. Russian warplanes and ships also frequently fly very close to, and sometimes even enter, the airspace and waters of the Baltic, North and Black Seas. NATO countries are playing a cat-and-mouse game with Russia over this. However, this is the first time since the war in Ukraine that a Russian drone has entered the airspace of a NATO member state that it has had to shoot down. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said in a speech to parliament, "This situation has brought

The message is also clear for the nearly half a million H-1B visa holders in the US: once you leave, there is no going back

Trump's \$100,000 talent tax vs. China's free invitation

According to the recent decision of US President Donald Trump, from now on, new H-1B visa applicants will have to pay \$100,000 every year. This is not just a mistake in immigration policy; it is a serious strategic mistake. Because this step will accelerate the US's backwardness in the talent competition. On the other hand, it will strengthen China's position more than before. For a long time, the biggest beneficiaries of the H-1B visa have been Asian professionals, especially Indians. As a result, this new rule has directly hit them. This fee of \$100,000 is unprecedented in the world. It is 25 to 30 times more than the cost of a visa in Canada or the UK. Only large corporations can afford this huge expense. Medium and small companies will lose their ability to hire international talent. This will concentrate the power to hire talented and skilled workers in the hands of technology giants, and the entrepreneurial environment in the US, which once attracted Asian engineers and entrepreneurs, will be damaged. It was only after Trump's announcement that the blow was seen. Large companies have quickly told their employees abroad to "come back to America immediately." This is evidence that the network of Asian professionals from Silicon Valley to Wall Street has been severely disrupted. The message is also clear for the nearly half a million H-1B visa holders currently in the United States: once you leave, there is no easy way back. In this situation, China is walking the opposite path. They are launching the K-visa program on October 1. It is designed to target young foreign science and technology professionals. It includes benefits such as easy access, flexible work arrangements and hundreds of thousands of dollars in government assistance. In addition, in larger programs, China is offering hundreds of thousands of dollars in signing bonuses, housing subsidies, job guarantees for spouses and permanent residency. In other words, where the United

States is creating barriers, China is removing all barriers and creating opportunities. The timing is also proof of China's strategic intelligence. When the United States is introducing a \$100,000 fee, China is launching the K-visa. This has Asian science and technology professionals looking to China as an alternative to the US. China's R&D spending has grown from just \$40 billion in 2000 to \$620 billion in 2021 (about the same as the US's \$710 billion). Combined with visa incentives and talent recruitment programs, China now has the biggest opportunity to attract professionals that the US has discouraged. The Trump administration argues that this will protect the wages of American workers. But research has repeatedly shown that highly skilled immigrants are not competitors to Americans, but collaborators. They increase productivity, bring new innovations, and create more jobs. A 2015 study found that hiring skilled immigrants actually increases employment opportunities for young American workers. The real consequences of this policy are even more dire. Instead of increasing American jobs for a fee of \$100,000, companies will move their operations to countries where skilled workers are readily available. And that's what China wants. As a result, the US will lose both talent and jobs, and its competitors will gain both. Startups and new companies will be the hardest hit. Google or Microsoft can afford this cost, but an AI startup with five employees cannot. This will leave room for innovation to go to big companies, and the environment for new entrepreneurs will become suffocating. Asian entrepreneurs who previously wanted to start a business in the United States will now look elsewhere. China's easy K-visa process and huge market will be more attractive to them. The impact of this change will be felt across generations. Asian science and technology graduates, who have long considered the United States to be the best place to build a ca-

reer, are now changing their minds. China's planned investment and new US restrictions are changing the direction of global talent flows. China's R&D spending has grown from just \$40 billion in 2000 to \$620 billion in 2021 (about the same as the US's \$710 billion). Combined with visa incentives and talent recruitment programs, China now has the greatest opportunity to attract professionals that the US has discouraged. Due to Trump's new policy, the United States itself is making mistakes that China does



not have to do anything separately. That is, China does not have to take any tough steps to take away talented people from the United States. The United States itself is pushing away talented Asian professionals by imposing huge fees of up to \$100,000. What is happening as a result? Asian scientists, engineers, or entrepreneurs who previously wanted to work or start a business in the United States are now being discouraged. On the other hand, China is saying, 'We welcome you, come and take advantage here.' In this way, the United States is losing its competitive power. And the talented people who were the focus of this policy will ultimately go to China or other countries and increase China's power. In other words, the United States is harming itself

with its own hands, and China is getting that benefit at no cost.

So much has been written about Donald Trump, but almost nothing has been written about his love of poetry. Yet there is at least one poem that he loves and regularly recites to cheering crowds. Last month, the White House made a documentary about Trump's recitation. The poem is called "The Snake." It is originally a song written by Oscar Brown Jr. This poem is very dear to Trump and it is close to his philosophy of life. The

voiced over in a White House documentary. At the same time, images of handcuffed brown-skinned people being led away flashed across the screen. I thought of 'The Snake' again as I listened to Trump's extraordinary speech at the United Nations this week. It's a perfect depiction of the relationship between Trump and the British aristocracy, with Trump the fearsome snake and the British aristocracy the woman. Last week, Trump was the most honored guest of British Prime Minister Keir Starmer. He enjoyed a royal banquet at Windsor Castle. During the event, King Charles called him his "closest relative". But on the return flight, Trump took a stab at his British hosts. Last week, Trump was the most honored guest of British Prime Minister Keir Starmer. He enjoyed a royal banquet at Windsor Castle. At that time, King Charles called him his "closest relative." But on the return flight, Trump took a stab at his British hosts. He made the extremely insulting remark of "I hope the Prime Minister is listening," and relegated the UK to the ranks of the "hell-bound" countries of the old world. Seeing this, I was reminded of the last two lines of the poem. The woman says to the snake, "You bit me, but why? You know your bite is poisonous and now I am dying."

For almost a year, Starmer has been holding Trump as tight as he can, with an unprecedented second state visit, a night in a castle and a day at checkers, photo-shoots with the royal family—all in the hope of dollars. Low taxes and high investment, that is Starmer's ROI (return on ingratiation). Last week he received his biggest prize, the US-UK technology deal. Downing Street declared it a 'record-breaking' investment. The BBC's renowned business editor Simon Jack agreed, calling it an 'absolutely astonishing deal'. But be prepared, there will be a ruckus and a shake of the heads at the Labour conference next week. The journalists will cover it seriously. They spent

more time last week looking at Melania's hat than delving into the figures and discussing the real economic or technical details. But if Labour members and other voters found out what they had actually signed up for, they would be outraged, not delighted. The truth is that a striped snake is slowly winding its way around your land, your data, your water supply and your electricity poles. And the moment is claimed to be for your own good. Not only that, but projects announced more than a year ago, such as Google's grand opening on the M25 or Blackstone's investment in Northumberland, are being re-examined. Such is the dirty standard of the British government. But even more surprising is Starmer's intention to take off his hat and declare foreign investors 'life-changing'. Most Britons will see it differently. The Glazers, Blackstone and Macquarie are all examples of 'foreign investment'. But Manchester United fans, Southern Cross care home patients and Thames Water customers will be able to tell MPs how well they have fared. So it seems that the same will happen with the £31 billion investment in the technology sector. The White House's own publication makes it clear that most of the US capital is not going into new businesses or shiny new offices. The main money is going to big data centres, which are crucial for artificial intelligence, but are not much talked about in British politics. The government is promoting them as 'AI factories', but in reality they are more like modern warehouses, where machines are kept, not people. They don't produce anything, they just store your data and mine. And they don't provide much employment. Check out the planning documents for Blackstone's new project outside Blyth, Northumberland, 10 data centres spread over more than 500,000 square metres. Blackstone estimates that construction will require a maximum of 1,200 workers at peak times and will take around 10 years.