



# Diary of the year to come

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## **Diary of the year to come-A cluster of anniversaries exhorts all Indians to be true to their conscience in 2019**

- The year that begins today is the 150th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi and the death of Mirza Ghalib.

### **Hundred years ago**

- What is it notably is the 100th anniversary of three historic happenings.
- First, a much-hailed enactment, the Government of India Act of 1919, which increased the participation of Indians in the Government of India.
- Second, a much-hated law, Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act of 1919, known notoriously as the Rowlatt Act or Black Act, which entrenched war-time restrictions on civil liberties — indefinite preventive detention or judicial review of those suspected of terrorism, trial without juries, jailings without trials.
- Third, a national trauma that arose from the vortex of protests against the Rowlatt Act — the massacre by army bullets of 379 according to the Raj, and some thousand men, women and children according to the Indian National Congress, at Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar.
- Rabindranath Tagore returned his knighthood a hundred years ago, this year.
- So this is the centenary of something that brought enchained India some hope, as well as huge despair and, hauntingly, mass death.
- And it is also the centenary of heroic courage, of sacrifice.

### **And 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

- This is the 50th anniversary of the Gujarat riots of September-October 1969, that involved massacre, arson and looting said to constitute “the most deadly Hindu-Muslim violence since the 1947 partition of India”.

### **Two sides of 1984**

- Thirty-five is not a particularly memorable number but when an event is of some moment, its 35th anniversary carries something of that moment's star-dust.
- The year was 1984, the month April.
- Squadron Leader Rakesh Sharma of the Indian Air Force ,the first Indian to be in outer space was going round the earth aboard the Salyut 7 Orbital Station.
- The ISRO-Intercosmos Indo-Soviet space programme had put six men into space, five from the U.S.S.R. and our own Rakesh, then all of 35 years old.
- Orbiting with stars Rakesh Sharma did not know that India had a date with another 'star' within two months that very year — Operation Blue Star, leading to Indira Gandhi's assassination and the killing of anything between 8,000 and 17,000 Sikh Indians at the hands of fellow Indians.
- This year is the 35th anniversary of that tragic sequence as well.
- On this anniversary of hopes and of griefs, of courage and of cowering, we must look at the opportunities that knock at our country's great and gaunt gate.

### **Meaning of liberation**

- The first is the liberation of our public life from fear.
- In the eighth decade of its independence, India ought to be afraid of nothing, save its conscience.
- The second is the liberation of our politics from the stranglehold of money.
- Which, in effect, means saving our national resources from the darkness of deceit and exploitation.
- The third — and most difficult — is the liberation of ethics from the hegemony of lifeless conformism.
- For far too long, centuries in fact, have custom, and callousness overwhelmed conscience in India.