THE HINDU

Interim bailout

A system for sharing the RBI's surpluses with the Centre must be quickly institutionalised

The decision of the central board of the Reserve Bank of India to transfer an interim surplus of ₹28,000 crore to the Centre should come as a big relief to the Modi government. Together with the ₹40,000-crore final surplus share for 2017-18, which the Centre received in the first half, the total receipts from the RBI this fiscal will be a tidy ₹68,000 crore. For a government strapped for finances and struggling to meet the revised fiscal deficit target of 3.4% of GDP, the RBI's largesse will be handy. The total surplus received by the Centre for 2018-19 is substantially higher than the ₹50,000 crore it got from the RBI in 2017-18, and this is the second successive year the central bank is making an interim transfer: last year it transferred ₹10,000 crore. Though there is nothing wrong in a shareholder demanding an interim dividend payout, the fact is that the Centre is advancing a receipt from the next fiscal to bail itself out in the current one. Should the RBI decide not to repeat this practice, the government's revenues will suffer because as much as ₹82,911 crore has been budgeted on this count for the next fiscal. Again, the central bank is not like a corporate enterprise, nor can the government compare itself with a company shareholder. The RBI's income and surplus growth cannot be measured in commercial terms since a large part of it comes from statutory functions it has to perform as a regulator.

The large payout this fiscal is bound to raise eyebrows, especially because of the recent history of conflict between the RBI and the Centre over the sharing of the former's accumulated reserves as dividend with the Centre. Pressure on this count was said to be a major reason for the resignation of Urjit Patel as RBI Governor. Though the practice of an interim payout started under Mr. Patel, there are inevitable questions over whether there was pressure from the Centre now for the transfer of a higher sum than last year. This is because the Centre had in the Interim Budget bumped up receipts under this head from the central bank, nationalised banks and other financial institutions to ₹74,140 crore from the original estimate of ₹54,817 crore made in the 2018-19 Budget. Clearly, the Finance Ministry knew what it wanted. There will, hopefully, be a system and a structure in place once the committee under former RBI Governor Bimal Jalan, that is now reviewing the economic capital framework for the RBI, submits its report. It was constituted to de-personalise and institutionalise a system for the sharing of the RBI's surpluses with the government, and is expected to come out with its recommendations by the end of the next month.

Clean power

A viable financial mechanism must be evolved to remove pollutants in power plants

The effort to clean up India's thermal power plants running on coal has never really taken off, despite the Ministry of Environment notifying emission limits for major pollutants such as suspended particulate matter, sulphur oxide, nitrogen oxide and mercury in December 2015. Considering that the cumulative impact of these pollutants on the health and wellbeing of people is severe, the Centre should have followed up the notification with a viable financial plan to help power plants acquire pollution control technologies. The economics favours such an approach for the larger plants, while for the smaller, older units, scaling down generation during the winter months when pollutants accumulate may prove beneficial. Originally, the compliance deadline was set for 2017, but that was missed and the plan now is to achieve the norms by 2022. Unofficial estimates prepared by one NGO, Greenpeace India, suggest the estimated cost of non-compliance by the original deadline has been about 76,000 premature deaths. Benefit-cost projections from another non-profit, the Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy, put the positive outcomes from achieving pollution control at coal-fired plants by 2025 at potentially 3.2 lakh lives saved from premature death, and 5.2 crore respiratory hospital admissions avoided in the next decade. These are outcomes that need to be pursued seriously. It is in this context that the latest proposal from the Power Ministry to provide the equivalent of over $12 billion (about ₹88,000 crore), mainly to remove sulphur from coal plant emissions, becomes important.

A viable financial mechanism must be evolved to remove pollutants in existing and upcoming power plants, without losing sight of the need to stop further long-term investments in a dirty fuel such as coal that contributes to carbon emissions. Optimally, the burden of incorporating pollution control should fall on the beneficiary-user, which in simple terms would translate into a tariff hike. On the other hand, achieving speedy implementation of the new processes covering both public and private power producers may require some form of immediate governmental support, such as grants. This is particularly relevant, given that power producers that have borrowed from several institutions, including state-funded ones, are reported to be under severe financial stress. India's coal use represents just over 54% of the present energy mix, and the fuel will continue to retain a high share of the overall generation. The challenge, therefore, is to identify the right instruments to fund the entire exercise, in the interests of pollution control and the wider social objective of extending electricity access to the unreached. There could be a positive spin-off from sulphur-removal, since it can yield commercially significant quantities of synthetic gypsum. But even if little else accrues from the effort, the benefits of clean air to public health would make the investment well worth the effort.

The importance of being humane

Opposition parties must make a new anti-torture legislation part of their common programme

GOPALKRISHNA GANDHI

Custodial torture is global, old and stubborn. Dismemberment was a method of torture practised with vigour in ancient India, crushing-by-elephant-foot another. The Arthashastra prescribes mental torture through swearwords with or without physical assaults. Death by a thousand cuts was ancient China's speciality. The Tang Code (652 CE) describes judicial torture in detail. Ancient Japanese methods of torture numb the human imagination. Their modern avatar in Japan's World War II of biological and chemical experimentation on humans – prisoners, mainly Chinese – in Unit 731 stop the blood-flow to one's heart.

Cautioned by history

So, does that mean sadism is an inherent part of human nature? It certainly shows that the inflicting of pain is an inseparable part of human history. More specifically, the history of power, of authority and control.

The practice of custodial power is about men – and sometimes, women – who are in positions of power, even if for a brief while and over a limited terrain, having custody over a powerless person. It is about the use of custodial opportunity to torture the captive's body and mind. And there, in that arena of wantonness, it becomes something of a sport for the human "Gods" that rule mere humans. "They kill us for their sport," Shakespeare said of "the Gods".

Custodial death, when not 'natural', is the extreme end-point of custodial torture. The death penalty, notwithstanding 'due process', is a close kin to this lawless and heartless game.

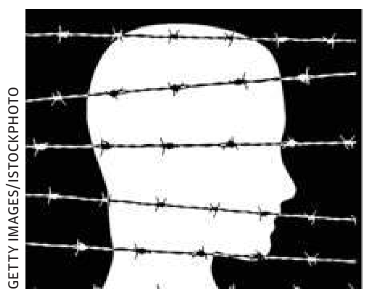
In Greece, the pinnacle of culture, Socrates was in 399 BCE sentenced to death by hemlock, which was known to act slowly, incapacitating the person in stages, climbing from the lower extremities limb by limb to the heart. A little further to the east, around 30 CE took place what is ironically the only hallowed case of plain torture. After being stripped and scourged, the victim's palms, known in anatomy to be among the most sensitive of human limbs, were nailed to the cross's horizontal beam, his feet to the vertical. "I thirst," Mary's son said.

Torturers are invariably sadists. Mary Surratt is not a well-known name. She was the first woman to be hanged in the U.S., in 1865, under due process. Her crime: being part of the conspiracy that led to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Minutes before her end, she complained to the hangman that her handcuffs hurt. They won't hurt long, he said. Peering down the 'drop', she then said she hoped they would send her down neatly. Sure thing, they said. Sure enough they botched it. Her frame doubled up. "She makes a good bow," the hangmen jested. Lincoln must have screamed in his grave.

Hitler's torturing of his prisoners would shame Satan, if such a creature exists. He was as real as his poison gases, tooth-extractors. Stalin's, Pol Pot's, 'Papa Doc' Duvalier's examples would have embarrassed Hell, if such a place exists. The power-centres of these tyrants were hellishly real.

Apartheid South Africa had its torturers trained in Algeria to inflict pain without leaving any signs on the body. Imam Haron, Steve Biko and the Naidoo family are among the better known of the many less known and unknown brutalised by the apartheid regime.

The butchering last October of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi tells us custodial torture and killing are no country's, creed's or



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

culture's monopoly. Nor that of any clime-time. Torture seems to be, like the roach, co-terminus with Time. And co-extensive with homo sapiens.

Custodial torture is about the here and now. As I write and the reader reads this, we can be sure that not far from wherever we are, someone is being tortured by somebody. I am not referring to criminals torturing their captives, but of that somebody who has ephemeral custody, semi-legal, pre-legal, legal, over that someone's body and mind.

India has practised and continues to practise the 'third degree' with impunity. Let only him deny it who has cause to hide it.

But if torture is real, human revulsion with torture is also real. And it has shape, definition. It has scope.

Meeting on December 10, 1984, the UN General Assembly stirred the world's conscience. It adopted the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Better known as the UN Convention against Torture, it sought to prevent torture around the world. More specifically, it "required states to take effective measures to prevent torture and forbade them from transporting people to any country where there is reason to believe they will be tortured (refoulement)". Most significantly, the Convention made state parties to undertake that "no exceptional circumstances whatsoever" will be "invoked to justify torture, including war, threat of war, internal political instability, public emergency, terrorist acts, violent crime, or any form of armed conflict".

In other words, it foresaw every possible subterfuge and subversion by states.

The Indian case

India took 13 years to sign the Convention, but sign it did, on October 14, 1997, during the 11-month-old Prime Ministership of I.K. Gujral. Hat's off to him. He did what Rajiv Gandhi, V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar, P.V. Narasimha Rao, H.D. Deve Gowda could not, did not, do. But signing is only the first step. Unless a convention is ratified and followed or preceded by domestic legislation that commits the ratifying party to compliance, the original signing carries no meaning. India has not ratified.

India's non-ratification of the Convention is both surprising and dismaying. What is the constraint? A state which signs the Convention has to have a domestic law on the subject to outlaw and prevent custodial torture. Without such a law, there is no meaning to signing the Convention. And so, late as it was, the UPA II government introduced a Prevention of Torture Bill in the Lok Sabha in 2010 and had it passed in 10 days. The bill as passed by the Lok Sabha was referred to a select committee of the Rajya Sabha. The committee gave its report recommending the Bill's adoption later the same year. Citing National Human Rights Commission figures of reported torture cases, the report said the figures showed custodial torture was rising. It also pointed out that the number of reported cases being only a fraction of actuals, the situation was serious.

But that Bill was unlucky. It lapsed with the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha. And was not revived by the 16th, the present Lok Sabha. Ratification of the Convention remains in limbo. Custodial torture remains in position.

In reply to a question (May 11, 2016) whether the government was planning to ratify the Convention, the Minister of State for Home did not answer either in the positive or negative but spoke of amending Sections 330 (voluntarily causing hurt to extort confession) and 331 of the Indian Penal Code. The nature of these amendments has not been delineated and so, almost nine years after the report of the Select Committee and 21 years after signing the Convention, India is yet to legislate a law that will outlaw torture an enable it to ratify the Convention.

What is the constraint? Why is the Indian state unwilling to say, 'no custodial torture in India'? The answer can only be that the power over a captive's body and mind is not easily given up.

Waiting for a nudge?

Senior advocate Ashwani Kumar, former MP and Minister, moved a PIL in the Supreme Court in 2016 asking it to get Parliament to move forward in the matter. After a full day's exclusive hearing in the case, the court has reserved its orders. Can the Supreme Court indeed "nudge" Parliament? It knows best, in its wisdom and experience. This much, however, one can hope: In a matter that concerns 'life and liberty', the Supreme Court is the guardian of the Constitution's guarantees. And when the one being guarded says, 'I thirst,' the guardian can only bring to its parched lips the waters of life. Whatever be the outcome of Mr. Kumar's PIL, it is imperative that the democratic opposition makes the ratification of the Convention and a new anti-torture legislation part of its common programme. The 17th Lok Sabha must take a stand on this matter. It has a choice: to join the civilised world in moving away from ancient barbarism or stay in the dungeons of blinding, benumbing brutality.

Gopalkrishna Gandhi is a former administrator, diplomat and governor

The Saudi-India-Pakistan triangle

New Delhi should not be overly optimistic about prying Riyadh away from Islamabad

MOHAMMED AYOOB

There seems to be much exultation in New Delhi that the visit by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, or MBS (*left in picture*), will lead to further strengthening of Saudi Arabia-Indian ties, a process that had begun with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Riyadh in 2016. Some of this jubilation is based on rational calculations regarding Saudi interest in expanding trade and investment in India and collaboration in the energy sector. Saudi Aramco is interested in partnering with the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company in developing an integrated refinery and petrochemicals complex at Ratnagiri in Maharashtra, a $44 billion joint venture with Indian public sector involvement. Saudi Arabia is already one of the three largest suppliers of oil to India.

However, much of the euphoria is based on wishful thinking and vague statements such as Riyadh's declaration that India is one of eight countries with which it wants to intensify its strategic partnership in various fields. The Indian self-delusion is demonstrated, above all, by the speculation in policy-making circles in New Delhi that the Saudi stance on Kashmir has now changed and its tilt toward Pakistan corrected.

The latter assumption is nothing more than a pipe dream. The Saudi Foreign Minister's statement in Islamabad during MBS's visit that Riyadh is committed to "de-escalating" tensions between India and Pakistan over Kashmir must not be read as an endorsement of the Indian stand but as an attempt to intervene in the dispute rather than accept its bilateral nature.

Key reasons

New Delhi should, therefore, not be overly optimistic that growing Saudi-Indian relations in the economic sphere will succeed in prying Riyadh away from Islamabad. There are various reasons that lead to this conclusion. First, Pakistan is far too important to Saudi Arabia for internal security reasons for Riyadh to sacrifice its stake in Islamabad in order to appease New Delhi. The Pakistan Army has more than once acted as the Saudi rulers' praetorian guard and given the uncertain hold of MBS on his country, despite impressions to the contrary, he may need the services of Pakistani mercenaries in the near future.

Second, Afghanistan has been a point of strategic convergence for Pakistan and Saudi Arabia going back to the 1980s when the Saudis

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used Pakistan as a conduit for material assistance to the Islamist forces fighting the Soviet Union and its proxy government in Kabul. With U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and the consequent expansion of Taliban influence very much on the cards, Pakistan's strategic value as the Taliban's patron has grown exponentially. Saudi Arabia is interested in curbing Iranian influence in Afghanistan and needs Pakistan to contain Tehran's ability to influence events in that country after the American withdrawal through its Tajik and Hazara allies.

The Iran angle

Iran is Saudi Arabia's chief adversary in West Asia. The Saudi-Iranian rivalry is being played out across the region, from Syria to Yemen. Riyadh perceives Pakistan as a major asset it can use to check the spread of Iranian influence despite the Nawaz Sharif government's refusal to commit Pakistani troops in the Yemen war on behalf of the Saudi-led alliance. It sees Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan (*right in picture*) and Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa as more amenable to Saudi persuasion. Pakistan on its part perceives MBS as a valuable interlocutor on its behalf with the U.S. because of his excellent rapport with U.S. President Donald Trump. Islamabad deems this essential in light of the recent strains in U.S.-Pakistani relations over Pakistan's support to terrorist groups targeting U.S. forces in Afghanistan that led to stern rebukes from Mr. Trump and suspension of American military aid to Pakistan.

Moreover, Pakistan's relations with Iran, never easy, have hit a new low following the recent terrorist attack in the Sistan-Baluchistan Province that killed 27 Revolutionary Guards. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei pointed the finger at "the spying agencies of some regional and trans-regional countries", an obvious reference to Pakistan and the U.S. The commander of the IRGC said, "The government of Pakistan must pay the price of harbouring these terrorist groups and this price will undoubtedly be very high."

As Pakistan's relations with Iran deteriorate, it is likely to move further into the Saudi orbit. Increasing Sunni fundamentalism, bordering on Wahhabism, in Pakistan also makes it a natural ideological ally of Saudi Arabia and an ideological foe of Shia Iran.

Aid bailout

Saudi economic largesse matters greatly to Pakistan, which is in dire economic straits and has been forced to turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for loans that are bound to come with strict conditionalities. Over and above the $6 billion already promised by Saudi Arabia, MBS has promised a further $20 billion in Saudi investment in Pakistan. A large part is earmarked for investment in the construction of an oil refinery in Gwadar on the Makran coast, which is being developed as a strategic port by China and features prominently in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) plan.

In the context of this strategic and economic nexus between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, it will be unwise for New Delhi to seriously believe that it will be able to wean Saudi Arabia away from Pakistan. India should take advantage of any benefit that accrues from India's economic relations with Saudi Arabia but should not pin much hope on Riyadh in the political-strategic sphere.

Mohammed Ayoob is University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Michigan State University and Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Center for Global Policy, Washington DC

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

After Pulwama

No one wants a full-scale war now, which, by all accounts, would be disastrous for both India and Pakistan (OpEd page, "India's options after Pulwama", February 19). Defence officials in India ought to brainstorm to counter the enemy's covert and overt plans. Border incursions should be stopped completely. As far as trade and travel are concerned, all kinds of punitive measures must be implemented without a time frame, till the aggressor feels the heat. Being able to convince China and Saudi Arabia about the sinister intentions of Pakistan may prove to be difficult. Finally, targeting and eliminating the non-state actors of terrorism is the good suggestion.

A.M.N. Pandian,
Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu

■ Is it the fear of collateral damage that is holding India back from acting against Pakistan, as the writer seems to hint at? If we do not instil fear in terrorist groups that are entrenched in Pakistan, we are only going to be suffering more losses. While improving security measures and preventing radicalisation of our youth is a desirable long-term plan, our military also needs to act – act promptly and adequately to make enemies realise that fostering terrorism on our soil is no more an option.

Atul Kriti,
New Delhi

Plastic ban

As a German tourist who was travelling in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry for three weeks (December 2018/January 2019), I want to express my deepest respect for the enormous challenge the authorities faced in banning single-use plastics in such a short time. I think it is important to do it as quickly and strictly as possible not only because it is a global issue but also out of the need to preserve the beauty of India. My wife and I tried to do our little bit to clean Mamallapuram beach, south of Chennai. We collected a few bags of plastic in less than 10 minutes, but of course could only cover a few metres. We now fly back to Germany where the issue is less visible but as big and challenging as it is in India. All nations have to rethink their behaviour as far as the environment is concerned. India has taken an excellent step – in my opinion.

Armin Kraus,
Wuerzburg, Germany

Chemistry table

As a chemistry educator, I was delighted to come across an article in an Indian newspaper which focussed on an essential aspect of science ('Science & Technology' page, "The Table that defines chemistry turns 150", February 10). Apart from history, the periodic table is an important tool in chemistry to explain various fundamental concepts. Unfortunately, to most students, it is a topic for rote learning as there is hardly any emphasis on interactive classroom activities.

Anuradha Mukherjee,
Bengaluru

■ It took me back to the time when I had finished school and applied for college admission, in 1976. Eventually I went on to do my post-graduation in chemistry. On my first-ever visit to the leading book store, I came across a interesting title, *107 Stories About Chemistry*. I still remember the Russian authors depicting the arrangement of elements in the form of a story. Chemistry was made interesting.

S.V. Venugopalan,
Chennai

Think tank ranking

The Hindu is a cherished national daily, especially among students, largely because of its quality news items, informative editorials and thought-provoking articles. Therefore, it is no surprise that *The Hindu* Centre for Politics and Public Policy, has achieved global recognition ("*The Hindu* Centre among top think tanks", February 19). Earlier it was quite a task getting the daily – it used to reach here by air and as back-dated copies – but with the commissioning of a printing press in Patna, the problem has been solved.

Tushar Anand,
Patna, Bihar

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THE WEDNESDAY INTERVIEW | ARUN K. SINGH

'We can defeat terrorism by upholding the unity of our society'

The former diplomat on the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, India-Pakistan ties, and the security situation in Kashmir

VARGHESE K. GEORGE

Arun K. Singh was Indian Ambassador to the U.S., France and Israel, and served in various capacities in the Ministry of External Affairs, including dealing with Afghanistan post-2001. Now a teacher, commentator and keen observer of geopolitics, Mr. Singh discusses in this interview the evolving situation in Afghanistan and how it is linked to the security scenario in Jammu and Kashmir. Excerpts:


R.V. MOORTHY

The U.S. appears to be planning an exit from Afghanistan after making a deal with the Taliban. How do you assess the evolving situation?

■ The U.S. under President Donald Trump clearly wants to pull out of Afghanistan. This is not something new. Even under former President Barack Obama, there was a concerted attempt to pull out of Afghanistan. There is a certain amount of wariness in American society about this prolonged involvement in Afghanistan. It has now gone on for almost 18 years. There have been costs, economic and social. Obama was not able to do it, partly due to the push from the U.S. military and partly because he was worried that if there was a major terrorist attack in the U.S. after the pullout, and sourced from Pakistan or Afghanistan... that would have been devastating. The U.S. also did not want to convey the message that it lost in Afghanistan. Then there would have been wider consequences.

Trump and his politics are different. I think he is in a position to handle the consequences of pulling out even if there is a subsequent attack in the U.S. Their challenge now is that the military is pushing for a slow drawdown, as they don't want to create the impression that they have been defeated and leave, like they did in Vietnam. They would like to make an agreement on a political solution, and even if that collapses after a few months, the U.S. cannot be held responsible.

This is causing a lot of anxiety among groups within Afghanistan. The Afghan President has concerns. The Taliban is reaching out to different countries and groups within Afghanistan, barring the government. Much will depend on whether the Taliban is negating what happened over the last 18 years or accepting the broad parameters of the Afghan Constitution; whether it accommodates others, shows more moderation and also talks to the government. If it is not willing to do that, there will be further instability.

What chances do you see of the Taliban moderating and accepting the broad parameters of the present Constitution?

■ At the moment it looks difficult. The Taliban has managed to create an impression that the present effort is not succeeding, and it has an edge militarily. It also perceives the U.S. as being keen to withdraw from Afghanistan. I don't think it would be willing to make much compromise. Also, there is the question of whether Pakistan is willing to accept an independent and autonomous Afghanistan. Pakistan will be tempted to think that it sustained the Taliban for 18 years and now if the Taliban is back in power, it can re-establish its pre-2001 equity in Afghanistan. That then raises the question of how much independence the Taliban will be able to exercise with regard to Pakistan.

Regardless of how the U.S. withdrawal happens, the Taliban will consider this as its victory, right?

■ The Taliban will consider it a victory, many in Pakistan will also consider it a victory. Since 2001, Pakistan has been under tremendous pressure from the U.S. to give up support for the Taliban, for the Haqqani network. Pakistan has managed to sustain its support for these groups, risking its ties with the U.S.

After the exit of the Soviets from Afghanistan, Islamists had claimed they would defeat the Western capitalist system. Will they feel vindicated?

■ Yes, they will. There will be a reinforced argument that the radical Islamist forces defeated the Soviets, and now they have defeated the world's most powerful country. It will certainly encourage extremist tendencies in the Islamic world. We will see the impact of this in different parts of the world. In Syria, Iraq, and other parts of the Gulf, Africa, and even European countries.

> **It is clearly at the behest of Pakistan that China is giving Masood Azhar cover. All the reports suggest there are very deep links between Azhar and the ISI.**

For the Islamists, Kashmir is also part of the same continuum. How do you think the situation in Afghanistan will influence the situation in Kashmir?

■ Clearly, there are some links. If you see reports about the Pulwama attack, people who were fighting in Afghanistan earlier put together the IED that was used. Afghanistan was, in the past, used to train terrorists for action in India. When the IC-814 hijacking happened [in 1999], the released terrorists were taken to Kabul and they reportedly had meetings with Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden. There is a link between Afghanistan and Kashmir: the entity that controls both is the ISI [Inter Services Intelligence]. In the 1990s, when the challenges in Kashmir flared up, one of the factors fanning those was the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Besides being a morale booster, this could also lead to redeployment of personnel from the Afghan front to Kashmir.

■ Yes, unless there is continued instability in Afghanistan. If they get free, they could be deployed elsewhere.

Pakistan is at the centre of all these calculations. The U.S. was categorical in calling out Pakistan after Pulwama. How does it square with its priorities in Afghanistan?

■ India must continue to explain to the world the challenge that Pakistan is posing to global stability. Not every country faces those challenges in the same fashion as India does. We are right next door. But it is not just India. Recently, Afghanistan and Iran came out with statements directly accusing Pakistan. Attacks in the U.S. and the U.K. have been sourced to Pakistan. At the same time, we should be aware of the limit to what one can achieve in the short term. Each country looks at its relationship with Pakistan from the perspective of its own interest. Of all statements from other countries on Pulwama, one can say there is widespread support for India, but very few countries have directly named Pakistan. The U.S. specifically named Pakistan and asked for measures against terrorists; in the French statement, there is a reference to cross-border terrorism. All the other countries made general statements on terrorism. So one has to understand the limits. Three countries are critical for Pakistan. One is China, for political support, military equipment and investment. China will not discontinue its support. Saudi Arabia will continue its support for Pakistan, which it sees as a large Muslim country where its interests are critical. When MBS [Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman] was under international pressure, [Pakistan Prime Minister] Imran Khan went to support him. Similarly, the U.S., despite all the current challenges in the relationship, does not want to burn all its bridges with Pakistan. Despite all that has happened, it has not declared Pakistan a terrorist state as that would disrupt diplomatic engagement.

India-China ties also keep oscillating. How will China respond to the current tensions between India and Pakistan?

■ We will have to wait and watch. China has not come 100% to the side of Pakistan. China sees Pakistan as a useful partner to challenge India, but it will not come fully in support of Pakistan and against India. In Kargil, in 1971, it did not fully support Pakistan. It also made the right noises along with the international community during Kargil and after 2008, asking Pakistan to control terrorism. It would not want to lose India completely. Due to two issues – China's opposition to India's membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group and on the question of declaring [Jaish-e-Mohammed chief] Masood Azhar a global terrorist – the mood about China in India is negative. But I think it would be very careful to not get 100% on the side of Pakistan.

Why do you think China is staking so much on one individual, Masood Azhar?

■ I think it is clearly at the request of Pakistan. All the reports suggest that there are very deep links between Azhar and the ISI. Pakistan does not want to be in a position where it is compelled to take action against him. Azhar has remained loyal to the Pakistani establishment through thick and thin, and has been a great leverage for it in Afghanistan and India. It is clearly at the behest of Pakistan that China is giving him cover.

Given this context, how should India approach the conflict in Kashmir?

■ There are two dimensions to the problem in Jammu and Kashmir. One is the external – cross-border terrorism, state support from Pakistan, the situation in Afghanistan, etc. Then there is an internal dimension – the relationship between the Central government and the State government and the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The two have to be addressed, broadly speaking, in separate tracks. The radicalisation of youths in the State must be addressed urgently and politically. It has to be a battle of hearts and minds.

After every terrorist strike, there is a flurry of comments that broadly say India is paying the price for being soft. The argument is that India should have used more military force earlier. How do you see that?

■ A challenge like this has to be handled in a long-term framework, though short-term steps are necessary. In 2001-2002, after the attack on our Parliament, the government took a lot of short-term measures – diplomatic and military, including mobilisation at the border. It had some impact and a message was conveyed to the world and Pakistan. President Pervez Musharraf made some moves, such as banning Lashkar-e-Taiba and JeM. But short-term measures cannot do away with a problem of this nature. If one were to look at what the U.S. has done since 2001, nobody would accuse it of being a soft state or not having used power. But despite having used all that power, it has not quite achieved the objectives it set out to achieve. Or look at France and its use of hard military power in Africa. That has its utility, but that cannot resolve a problem. So it has to be a sustained effort, a multidimensional effort. It has to be handled with care and patience. One clear objective of Pakistan is to use terrorism to create a divide among communities in India, and that must be thwarted. If the people of India show unity and solidarity as these challenges are mounted, that would be a clear defeat of terrorism.

SINGLE FILE

Real tests of leadership

Where does Rahul Gandhi stand on jobs, secularism and democracy?

ANITA INDER SINGH


PTI

Rahul Gandhi's leadership of the Congress is being tested. Where does he stand on jobs, secularism and democracy? His promises of farm loan waivers and a minimum income guarantee scheme are populist. In the long run, more Indians will need jobs and the economic changes necessary to create them. If voted to power, what will the Congress do to generate employment? Unless he spells out his plans in detail, Mr. Gandhi's talk of progress will ring as hollow as that of the ruling BJP.

Mr. Gandhi's idea of a minimum income guarantee resonates with the BJP's idea of a universal basic income (UBI), which was presented by Arvind Subramanian when he was Chief Economic Adviser. It was rejected by then Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog, Arvind Panagariya, on the grounds that India lacks the fiscal room to implement such a scheme. The only country that has experimented with a UBI is Finland, which has a per capita income of about $41,000, compared to India's $2,134. Finland's UBI reportedly made more people happy, but did not create jobs. It also imposed an extra burden on the state. More generally, many Scandinavians and Germans would probably say that a country has to create wealth in order to create welfare. How does that sound to Indians?

Then there is the question of religious issues. Recently, the Congress government in Madhya Pradesh invoked the National Security Act against three men accused of cow slaughter. While Mr. Gandhi's Congress is making the BJP's authoritarianism an election issue, this act shows that the Congress government can be as high-handed as the BJP government it seeks to displace.

Especially at a time when high unemployment figures are making headlines, it should be remembered that the cow slaughter ban not only impacts the beef export industry, which is worth about $4 billion, but also implies coercion against those Indians who are not Hindus. Will Mr. Gandhi's soft Hindutva build new social bridges? Divided on the issue, some Congresspersons have asked whether cows are more important than human beings. It is precisely these divisions that will test Mr. Gandhi's mettle.

Mr. Gandhi has also lambasted the BJP's use of Aadhaar as an instrument of authoritarianism, intended to disempower citizens. Will the Congress do away with the relevant legislation on Aadhaar if it comes to power? What will the party do to ensure that a Congress government will not misuse authority in an analogous manner?

All these issues – jobs, equality, and secularism – are intertwined. Voters would like to know how Mr. Gandhi's Congress will handle them. To paraphrase Martin Luther King Jr., leadership is about moulding consensus and showing the way.

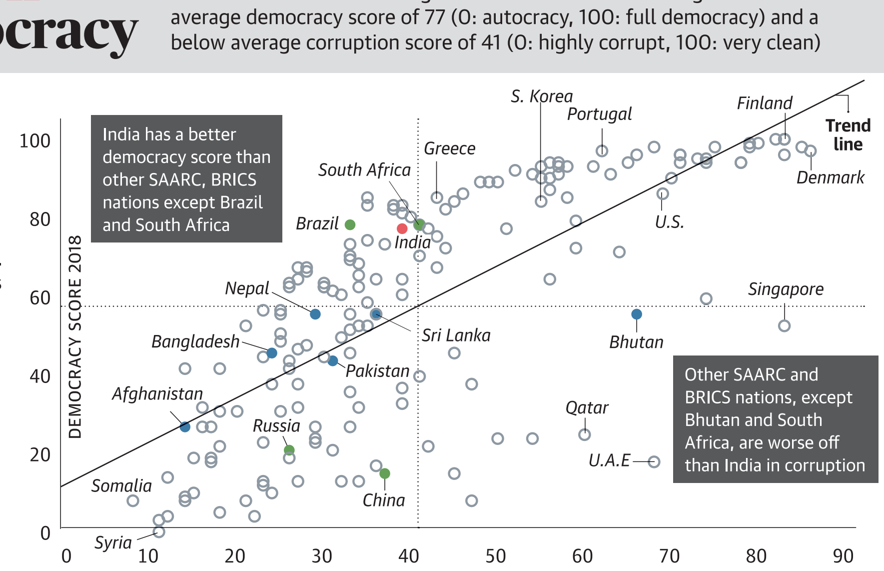
The writer is a founding professor of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution in New Delhi

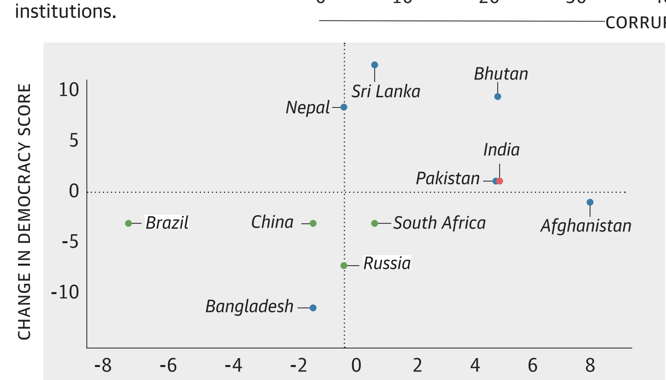
DATA POINT

Corruption and democracy

Nations which are relatively more corrupt tend to have weaker democratic institutions. India was among the aberrations in 2018. It registered an above average democracy score of 77 (0: autocracy, 100: full democracy) and a below average corruption score of 41 (0: highly corrupt, 100: very clean)

Freedom House calculates the democracy score by analysing a nation's electoral process, freedom of expression, functioning of the government, the rule of law, individual rights, etc. Transparency International's corruption score is based on perceived levels of public sector malfeasance according to experts and business people. The trend line shows that there is a positive correlation between the two — that is, the better a country fares in democratic variables, the less corrupt are its institutions.





Peer group

The graph shows the change in both scores in 2018 when compared to 2013. India's corruption score improved by five points and its democracy score improved by one point during this period. Pakistan too improved by the same number of points on both scores. None of the other BRICS nations changed for the better on both scores during this period.

Source: Transparency International, Freedom House

FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 20, 1969

Surplus railway budget

The Railways have for the first time in the last four years come out with a surplus budget and that too without resort to increase in passenger fares and freights. Presenting the budget to the Lok Sabha [February 19, New Delhi], the new Minister of Railways, Dr. Ram Subhag Singh, estimated a small surplus of Rs. 1.91 crores in 1969/70 after fully discharging the Railways' dividend liability, to the general revenues at Rs. 159 crores, the highest so far. The Railway Minister said that the Railways expected to lift about nine million tonnes of additional revenue earning traffic and carry an extra three per cent of passenger traffic in the coming year.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 20, 1919

Hinduism and Sea-Voyages.

(Correspondence)

Sir, We are under the deepest debt of gratitude to Mr. Kasturi Ranga Aiyangar for the clear terms in which in his Conjeeveram speech he determined the principles of solution of conflicts between Orthodox Hinduism and Nationalism. "I have no hesitation in saying that if there be any conflict between the principles of Nationalism and Hinduism, which I believe there is not, I will pursue the path marked out by the former." It is hoped that no narrow construction will be placed on this statement saving only sea-voyages involved in political deputations from the prohibitions of orthodoxy by the weight of his authority. I trust that not only political deputations to England, but every action aimed at "the elevation and the good of the masses of our countrymen and the attainment of national unity and progress" will be included in the category of things not to be obstructed, but to be encouraged by those who heard or read this splendid exhortation.

C. Rajagopalachari.

Salem, February 18.

CONCEPTUAL

Turkheimer's laws

BIOLOGY

This refers to a set of laws regarding the heritability of various behavioural traits and the relative influence of genes and environment on human behaviour. The first Turkheimer law states that all human behavioural traits are heritable. The second law states that the influence of genes on human behaviour is greater than the family environment. The final law argues that a significant number of behavioural traits may be explained neither by genes nor the family environment. Turkheimer's laws were proposed by American psychologist Eric Turkheimer in his 2000 paper "Three Laws of Behavior Genetics and What They Mean".

MORE ON THE WEB

Why is Mohammed bin Salman's India visit crucial?

http://bit.ly/SaudiPrinceinIndia

The Tribune
ESTABLISHED IN 1881

The Pulwama massacre

We need measured diplomacy and purposeful action

THE withdrawal of the most favoured nation (MFN) status to Pakistan is largely of symbolic value. Pakistan had never reciprocated with MFN status for India, which means it maintained discriminatory trade barriers against India. The 200 per cent duty on imports from Pakistan may pinch slightly more. Along with it, the recall of the High Commissioner in Islamabad, and the briefing by the Foreign Secretary to envoys from all major countries may have achieved its initial purpose of exposing the deep decline in bilateral ties. There have been other successful initiatives in the past: persuading China to drop its objections to Pakistan getting listed by the Financial Action Task Force and the sharp drop in US military aid, though that can also be traced to the shift in the Afghan security calculus.

Indian diplomacy is offering an alternative to inter-state hostilities, but Pakistan PM Imran Khan, who would tweet on every minor communal discord in India, is deafeningly silent. Even the Kartarpur initiative was marred by the hidden communal agenda of stopping non-Sikh pilgrims. With peace remaining elusive, the Pakistan government will fail to fulfil its promise of economic prosperity to the electorate if India relentlessly turns the diplomatic screws. However, the Pakistani media's glorifying reportage of the Pulwama massacre bodes ill. For, like the Indian media, it has rapidly slipped down the slope of jingoism, turning the dominant political narrative fervidly anti-India.

It is getting tougher for India to do business with such a neighbour. This reinforces the need to remind China about the languishing Wuhan spirit of reconciliation, to recognise India's restraint and allow the UN to list Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar a global terrorist. India will lose its moral and diplomatic upper hand if it reduces its anguish to mere breast-beating jingoism. There is really no need to talk about retaliation or to settle scores overnight. What needs to be done should be done quietly and purposefully without the government or the Opposition trying to take political mileage out of this ghastly incident.

Populist Punjab Budget

No new taxes; more funds for farm loan waiver

AN election year is synonymous with a populist Budget. The one presented by Punjab Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal is no exception. With the Lok Sabha polls barely two months away, he has predictably avoided burdening the voters with new taxes. After a long delay, the Congress government has decided to rationalise VAT rates on petroleum products to bring these on a par with the charges in the neighbouring states. The consequent reduction of petrol and diesel prices will provide relief not only to the consumers, but also to the fuel station owners who have been suffering heavy losses.

The support of the agrarian community had propelled the Congress to victory in the Hindi heartland states of Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh last year. The party, which had stormed to power in Punjab in 2017 on the back of the farm loan waiver promise, is continuing with the sop opera despite fiscal constraints. For 2019-20, a sum of Rs 3,000 crore has been allocated for writing off loans of landless farm labourers and the families of farmers who have committed suicide. The decision is obviously aimed at wresting the initiative from the Shiromani Akali Dal, which is going all out to win back its key vote bank. The SAD top brass had recently led a protest march by the kin of deceased farmers and repaid the debt of Budh Singh, the embittered mascot of the Congress' *karza maafi* scheme. The Capt Amarinder Singh government is banking on this Budget to thwart attempts by the rival party to regain popularity among the farmers.

The higher allocation of funds for agriculture, health and education sectors, besides rural and urban infrastructure, is a welcome step, but the hefty subsidy bill (over Rs 10,000 crore) for providing free power to the farm sector and the industry is a major drain on the exchequer. With the state's debt burden set to rise by more than Rs 17,000 crore, the government cannot keep blaming its predecessor for the financial mess. What's needed is a workable road map to mobilise resources, curtail expenditure and ensure better tax compliance.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

If we don't end war, war will end us. — **HG Wells**

ON THIS DAY...100 YEARS AGO

The Tribune.

LAHORE, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1919

Are the Agitators to Blame?

WHEN this happens it is the fashion with officials to hold the agitators to blame, just as Pitt and Barke were in their day blamed for inciting rebellion in America. That is what Sir William Vincent does, and this is his second mistake. In reality the agitators are just as little to blame as the member himself. They do their duty in protesting against actions which they regard as wrong and prejudicial to the interests of the country, and so long as they confine themselves to legitimate and constitutional methods, it is absurd to hold them accountable for the manner in which their protest may be utilised by other people. If it be said, as the Hon'ble member did say that "it is the political agitators who arouse visions in the minds of non-politically-minded persons," the reply is that the member should go to the root of the thing and suppress English education, the study of England's glorious literature and history in our schools and colleges.

Absorption of Rupees in India.

FROM the reply by Sir James Meston to the Hon'ble Mr. Shukul at the meeting of the Imperial Legislative Council it appears that the demand for rupees is continuing and the difficulty of encashing currency notes in the treasuries has not ceased. The mints in India are continuing to work at high pressure and over 8 crores of rupees were coined in December alone. The amount of silver purchased by the Government during the current year will be worth nearly 60 crores. We hope that the proposed gold mint will be established soon and the issue of sovereigns will be commanded as early as possible. Note circulation has been increased so rapidly that it has created an abnormal craving for silver coins and has raised the price of commodities.

It's not a win-win option

The military instrument needs to be used with immense care

MANOJ JOSHI
DISTINGUISHED FELLOW, OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION, NEW DELHI

DO OR DIE: In the election year, Modi has compulsions for quick action.

> The government must ensure that the 'choices' are tightly controlled by the political authorities. The responsibility for the outcome will rest on its shoulders.

THE dilemma over military responses to the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) attack in Pulwama that took the lives of 40 CRPF jawans is not new. India has been there and done that. Following the attack on Parliament House on December 13, 2001, India mobilised its entire army and threatened war for an entire year, but finally called it off.

After the Mumbai strike of November 26, 2008, PM Manmohan Singh sought military options, but was told that they were not quite prepared for the possibility of a larger war that may be triggered by a retaliatory strike.

And now, PM Modi has declared that the security forces have been given a free hand to decide the time, place and the mode of the future course of action, adding that this was an India with a new policy and practice.

What is new, in many ways, is the extent of public anger and the somewhat blatant efforts to make political use of the event. Modi's statements indicate that a strike is a question of when, not if.

An important factor that restrained India in 1992 (following the Bombay blasts) or in 2001 and 2008 is absent. The US played a major role in preventing an Indian retaliation, in the main out of concerns over Pakistan. Now, to go by the message being conveyed by the incendiary US national security adviser John Bolton is 'go ahead'.

So, what will the new policy and action be?

First, the Prime Minister needs to understand that such things cannot be left to the security forces. Military action is, as Clausewitz put it, a continuation of politics by other means. In today's post-nuclear era, when all-out war is not desirable, it is important to use the military instrument with great care, along with 'a mix of diplomatic, economic and informational implements'.

More than ever, the present situation demands a careful mix of various means and strong political guidance and control. Just how this works was evident in the Indian response to the Kargil incursions. PM Vajpayee ordered the Army and later the Air Force in, but kept a tight control on them, ensuring a major Indian military and diplomatic victory. Not only were the Pakistani intruders pushed back, but also the international community internalised the notion of the sanctity of the Line of Control that divides the Indian and Pakistani forces in J&K.

A lesser-known fact is that the Indian Navy took up aggressive positions in the Arabian Sea and threatened to blockade Karachi in the event of a larger war.

In the long term, many options are there, including a stepped-up covert war and even an economic one. India could up the ante in Afghanistan, or for that matter in the UN Security Council. But Modi also has electoral compulsions for quick and kinetic action.

Air strikes are the easiest. An IAF aircraft can launch a Popeye air-to-surface missile with a 340-kg warhead from Indian airspace and it can travel 70 km or so to a target across the LoC. India has longer range options with the air-launched version of the Brahmos missile that can travel 400 km with a 200-kg warhead.

The second option is an overland 'surgical strike'. Again, to be effective, it must be sufficiently violent. The so-called surgical strikes of September 26, 2016, were not, because Pakistan was able to pretend they never occurred. More important, Rawalpindi was clearly not deterred because its cross-border attacks on India did not stop. Indeed, one took place two months later on Nagrota, the HQ of 16 Corps.

The problem is targets. In the surgical strikes, India took out a couple of huts being used as launchpads and killed their occupants. But using a 200-300 kg warhead for that would be overkill. It is not clear whether we have exact coordinates of larger facilities used by the Jaish. If we do target them, we would have to be sure that they are, indeed, Jaish targets, and then the IAF would have to ensure accuracy, because in the crowded South Asian terrain, a small error could lead to hundreds of non-combatants being killed.

Since the terrorists operate in small groups and stay in scattered facilities, identifying and targeting larger facilities inland and retrieving a commando group without getting entangled with the dense Pakistan army positions would be a daunting task.

Both these options are made with the presumption that India would seek to differentiate between the Pakistan army and the terrorists. Were India be willing to strike at Pakistani military facilities, we would be into an entirely different ball game. Make no mistake, the Pakistan army will retaliate against any deliberate targeting of its facilities.

If New Delhi decides to play that game it could well also order a blockade of Pakistani air and maritime space. India does not have to be able to enforce this directly, but the threat of being sunk or shot down would be sufficient for air and maritime traffic to be severely disrupted. But this would unleash a different dynamic and affect third countries, thus complicating the outcome.

Whatever the choices are, it is imperative that the Modi government ensure that they are tightly controlled and managed by the political authorities. The Army may have the freedom to decide the nature, time and place of the action, but the responsibility for the outcome will rest on the shoulders of those who wield the instrumentality.

Reclaiming old grandeur

ANEET KANWAL RANDHAWA

ONE has to break the mundane to enter the realm of the interesting. I recently had the opportunity to meet a heritage conservationist. I had a rudimentary idea about what her field was all about, but it was an eye-opening experience to learn about a wide array of fields it encompasses.

As a nation, we have been a witness to a spectacle of our decaying heritage without doing much about it. A lot of our heritage has been irretrievably lost. A lot of it is in comatose stage, yearning for saviours. And that is where the conservationists come into the picture. The 'colossal wreck, boundless and bare' among the 'lone and level sands' is made to come alive again with their expertise and is preserved for posterity.

Restoration of ancient monuments is one of the important aspects of the field but it also encompasses archival photographs and document restoration, restoration of clothing of heritage value, restoration of wall paintings and much more. A conservationist has to be a bit of a historian, an architect and a civil engineer. The focus should be on restoring the originality sans any additions or alterations.

A substantial part of our heritage overlaps with faith. So, a sensitive mind is also one of the unstated qualifications of a conservationist. Some items may have sacred value for a particular community, and as a consequence require careful handling. In this context, hearing the experiences about the restoration of wall paintings of Sri Harmandir Sahib and Chola Sahib of Guru Hargobind, which he had adorned when he was freed from the Gwalior prison, were particularly enlightening. The conservationist had to work under the roving eye of people associated with the faith and eventually win over their suspicions.

It may sound alluring to be a heritage conservationist, and yet, like any other field, it has its own pitfalls. A substantial part of our heritage is possessed by the government, and so, a conservationist cannot escape its apathy. There are irrational comparisons when a restoration project is to be allotted. The comparison on the basis of turnover of firms is one such bizarre rationale. The field is about expertise and a monetary base for comparison is unjustifiable. Another lamentable fact is that there is no uniform government policy to decide what is to be restored. Quite often, political considerations decide if it has to be a temple, church or a gurdwara.

But despite the pitfalls and the costs incurred on them, heritage conservationists are doing yeoman service. They have an intangible worth. Much attention should be paid to crumbling edifices, peeling plasters, brittle documents and fading wall paintings before they are written off their mutilated existence. An expert hand of a conservationist can make them come alive again. May his tribe increase.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

As Indian as others

Refer to 'An unequivocal message' (Feb 18); problems being created for Kashmiri students by miscreants should be strictly curbed. Kashmiri students are as Indian as students of any other state. It is the responsibility of each citizen, civil society, local administration and the police to protect them at this critical juncture. Maintaining our national spirit, all communities, cultures and religions must be respected. Anyone targeting or trying to isolate and attack Kashmiri students must be dealt with sternly. Otherwise, the fundamentalists may succeed in influencing these students, which is in no one's interest.

SUBHASH VAID, NEW DELHI

Take away privileges

Reference to 'Security cover of 4 separatists goes' (Feb 18); we have been pampering these Kashmiri leaders, despite their being Pakistani agents. They mourn only when any terrorist is eliminated and have no sympathy for security personnel who sacrifice their lives to protect them. All privileges to Kashmiri leaders, including Mehbooba and Abdullahs, who have secret sympathy for Pakistan, must be withdrawn. If J&K is an integral part of India, why shouldn't it be treated like any other state? It was Nehru's blunder that allowed preferential status to Kashmir. There will be no more shutdown calls by Pakistani agents who get paid to hire stone-pelters and arrange funeral marches for slain terrorists.

LJS PANESAR, BY MAIL

Degree of free hand

I disagree with the writer that the Army should not be given a free hand ('Ad hoc response won't work'; Feb 18). What is happening in the Valley since 1947? There is no peace, what to talk of prosperity. Whatever the state produces is negligent so far as exports are concerned. The Central government should impose curfew on affected areas and let the Army not only flush out, but also eliminate terrorists. But I agree that 'no hasty or emotionally charged step should be taken'. The country is in the grip of mourning. Withdrawal of the MFN status to Pakistan is a welcome step. More similar strict steps are required to be taken immediately to assuage the sentiments of the people.

UJAGAR SINGH, CHANDIGARH

Don't target students

Violence is not a solution to any problem. People targeting Kashmiri students should shun it. Students living outside their state for studies are innocent and not concerned with the turmoil in J&K. Targeting them would lead to the success of nefarious designs of terrorists to create a rift in the country. Peace must be maintained throughout the country and nobody should be allowed to harm innocent Kashmiri students for the fault of terrorists.

SANJAY CHAWLA, AMRITSAR

Punjab's gesture

Capt Amarinder Singh giving an assurance of security to Kashmiri students is a step in the right direction ('Capt assures protection to students, 125 reach Mohali'; Feb 18). He said not every Kashmiri can be blamed for the Pulwama attack. This directly hits the thinking of every citizen of India, as it is not the time to misinterpret or blame anyone, but to fight against terrorism. The Kashmiri youth will understand that we are not against them, but against terror activities.

VAISHALI MISHRA, SHIMLA

Consider all aspects

The Pulwama suicide bomber was a local. The internal dimensions of the Kashmir crisis must also be addressed. There is widespread alienation as well as jihadi intimidation in Kashmir, buttressed by a radical narrative online. This should be countered by an equally strong narrative that is secular. Kashmiri students looking for education and safe spaces outside the state should be protected rather than threatened or beaten up in retaliation. The overall policy should be proactive, sustained and well coordinated among internal and external dimensions.

VANDANA, CHANDIGARH

Damaging Aravallis

The Haryana Government's recent move to amend the Punjab Land Preservation Act (PLPA), and allow development works in about 1,000 acre is ill-conceived ('Aravallis endangered', Feb 18). The Supreme Court has already expressed grave concern about the extensive damage to the ecosystem of the Aravallis in the Delhi-NCR region. Nature should not be sacrificed at the altar of development, urbanisation and revenue. Haryana should review its decision, to protect these hills, improve the ecology of the area and make it human-friendly for future generations.

DS KANG, HOSHIARPUR

Letters to the Editor, typed in double space, should not exceed the 200-word limit. These should be cogently written and can be sent by **e-mail to: Letters@tribunemail.com**

Cops, cons, politicos and the drug trade

VIKASH NARAIN RAI
FORMER DIRECTOR, NATIONAL POLICE ACADEMY, HYDERABAD

Drug trafficking is a fast-paying 'macho' crime. Its operatives cannot keep themselves away from the lure of violence for long. A combination of these factors led to the Bhola drug racket. The worldwide experience, however, is that little policing sometimes produces drug-free communities, while heavy policing fails to do so at times. Success in confronting the drug menace depends more on the community's self-defence than on robust policing.

THE conviction of dismissed DSP Jagdish Singh Bhola has affirmed the complicity of cops in drug trafficking in Punjab. However, it's the onslaught of the illegal drug trade that poses a greater threat to society than the role of conniving policemen. The politician and the policeman are visible segments of the lucrative business, and accountable too. However, the challenge is to curb the demand for drugs. It can be done in two ways: first, provide treatment to people using drugs; second, decriminalise the possession of a small quantity of drugs, as Portugal has done, treating it as a public health issue and not a criminal one.

The drug trade is perceived as a menace not just for the users, but also for the community as a whole, because of two factors: it is a visible crime, capable of leaving a long-term crippling impact on the psyche of society; its operatives cannot keep themselves away from the lure of violence for long, thus upsetting society's calm and eating into its law and order resources. Drug trafficking is a fast-paying 'macho' crime (the global illegal drug trade may be estimated at nearly 1 per cent of the total global trade). A combination of these factors led to the Bhola drug racket. The worldwide experience, however, is that "little policing sometimes produces safe (drug-free) communities, while heavy policing sometimes fails to do so." Success in confronting drug trafficking depends more on the community's self-defence than on robust policing.

The police-drug department-politician nexus decisively weakens the resolve of the community in its fight against drugs. According to a study conducted by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS-Delhi) in 2015, there were more than 2 lakh addicts in Punjab. The mushrooming of ill-equipped de-addiction centres across the state, practising forced withdrawal, mirror the escapist and defeatist nature of the resultant response. In the Bhola case, Himachal Pradesh's Baddi, a 'tax haven' pharmaceutical hub near Chandigarh, has emerged as the epicentre of addictive drugs. Bhola was a key figure in the drug cartel, which was diverting chemicals meant for medicinal purposes to illegal factories in Baddi to manufacture synthetic drugs for consumption in the international market. In 2013, the Punjab Police busted the racket and recovered synthetic drugs in bulk, including heroin, methamphetamine, ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, besides cash, arms and luxury cars from the accused persons, including NRIs and their business and political associates.

PHARMACEUTICAL HUB: In the Jagdish Bhola case, Himachal Pradesh's Baddi has emerged as the epicentre of addictive drugs.

Bhola will still be called small fry when we consider the volume and value of the drug trade in India. Even what Baddi actually offers and signifies is much bigger. Take the example of phensedyl, an addictive cough syrup. It is manufactured and bottled in Baddi, and its consignments, worth crores annually, are consumed in Bangladesh as a cheap substitute for banned liquor. On paper, the supplies of phensedyl are booked for destinations within the country and shown consumed in domestic markets. But the supply trucks are able to carry the loads to West Bengal, Assam and Tripura borders of Bangladesh. Apart from stealthily availing the smuggling options, several drug outlets in the border towns of these states are used to camouflage the arrival of phensedyl in huge quantities. This is done by showing mind-boggling consumption of this cough syrup by the sparse local population. According to a survey, over 20 lakh people of Bangladesh are addicted to this drug in their border towns. After years of diplomatic persuasion by Bangladesh, the Indian government banned the drug in March 2016, but within a couple of weeks, the Delhi High Court granted an interim injunction to the drug makers. How many government departments and what level of patronage on both sides of the border is involved, and how much money must be changing hands, is anybody's guess.

Like Indian jails, US prisons are full of drug users. Colorado state, like Punjab, is grappling with an opioid crisis. A report says, "In Colorado's prisons, about three-quarters of inmates are addicted to drugs or alcohol when they begin incarceration... The county jails were not set up to treat people with addictions and so they are often put through forced withdrawal, which not only increases medical risks, but is also one of the least effective ways to ensure someone stays clean and sober."

Today, most medical experts in the US view addiction more as a disease than a choice. Back in the 1980s and 1990s, America witnessed a phase of drug hysteria and skyrocketing rates of incarceration. The policy was given a global push in the wake of the Iran-Iraq war and the Soviet-Afghan war, presumably to control the drug flow towards the West. The then Rajiv Gandhi government, fearing the increasing role of drug money in Sikh and Kashmir militancy, was persuaded to join the bandwagon. In 1985, the 1878 Opium Act was replaced by the draconian NDPS Act, ostensibly to cover psychotropic substances as well, prescribing a minimum punishment of 10 years for possessing commercial quantity (250 gm or more), in addition to huge fines, without distinguishing between soft and hard drugs. Even though it was argued that the soft drugs were gateway drugs, it only served, as anticipated, as a catalyst for operators to shift to hard drugs, which fetched more profit.

The stringent application of prohibition laws has always failed society. Total prohibition is too lucrative a business, as Bansi Lal's Haryana learnt and Nitish Kumar's Bihar will be learning in due course. 'Dry Gujarat' today allegedly generates a huge turnover in banned liquor. Yogi Adityanath's Uttar Pradesh, famous for 'macho policing', witnessed a major hooch tragedy recently. The enforcement of the NDPS Act over the past three and a half decades has generated several hundred times more money and compromised many times more policemen than for all drug trafficking activities put together in India.

In contrast, in Portugal, since decriminalisation in 2001, getting caught with a 'personal' drug attracts a small fine and maybe a referral to a treatment programme — not jail time and a criminal record. Among Portuguese adults, there are three drug overdose deaths for every 10 lakh citizens. The corresponding numbers in other European countries range from 10.2 in the Netherlands and 44.6 in the UK to 126.8 in Estonia. Punjab, where the present government has proposed death penalty for drug peddlers, is said to be witnessing hundreds of deaths annually due to drug overdose and the withdrawal syndrome. The irony of a police scandal of the magnitude of the Bhola episode, amid the cries for an all-out war on drugs, cannot be missed by the people of Punjab.

How war veterans transformed Haryana

RANBIR SINGH
SENIOR FELLOW, INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, NEW DELHI

The recruitment of a large number of youth from the region during WW-I not only provided economic benefit to their families, but also helped in bringing socio-cultural changes in Haryana. This happened because the soldiers got exposure to modern ideas through postings in areas which were socially and culturally advanced.

BEFORE World War I (1914-18), Haryana was a drought-prone and famine-ridden region of the Punjab province. Tagged with Punjab in 1858 as a 'punishment' for the participation of its princes and people in the 1857 revolt, it was subjected to repression and discrimination by the British rulers. It was denied canal irrigation as well as facilities for education. It had no college; high schools were located only at the district headquarters. There were primary and middle schools only at the tehsil level. Very few students from Haryana could afford to go to distant Lahore for higher education.

The recruitment of a large number of youth from the region during WW-I not only provided economic benefit to their families, but also helped in bringing socio-cultural changes in Haryana. This happened because the soldiers from the region got exposure to modern ideas through postings in other parts of India which were socially and culturally advanced. They also got an opportunity to go abroad to fight for the British. Some of them visited France and other European countries. They worked with the Indian Army's British officers, who became role models for them. This enabled soldiers from the Haryana region to change their lifestyle and acquire a progressive outlook. They also began to recognise the importance of education.

INITIATIVE: After World War I, ex-soldiers established institutions such as Rohtak's All India Jat Heroes Memorial School. It was later upgraded to the college level.

These soldiers introduced trousers, coats, half-pants and shorts in the area where people used to wear *kurtas* of home-spun *khadi* and *dhotis* of *malmal*. Even the headgear was changed by them. The lacklustre *khandkas* were replaced by the elegant *saffas* (turbans). Hats and caps were also brought by former soldiers. The traditional dress of women — *kurti* and *ghagra* — was gradually replaced by *kurta* (shirt) and *salwar*. The footwear also underwent a transformation in a phased manner. The *juttis* were replaced by fleets, *gurgabis* and shoes. The eating habits of the residents of Haryana, too, were changed by them. *Mandas* (wheat *chapattis*) were served to the guests instead of *chapattis* of *gochani* (mixture of wheat and grams), barley, *bajra* and maize. The practice of serving cooked vegetables instead of only pulses and chutney was introduced by them. Some of those who went on to become Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs) began to consume rum and meat during the war and continued to have these even after demobilisation.

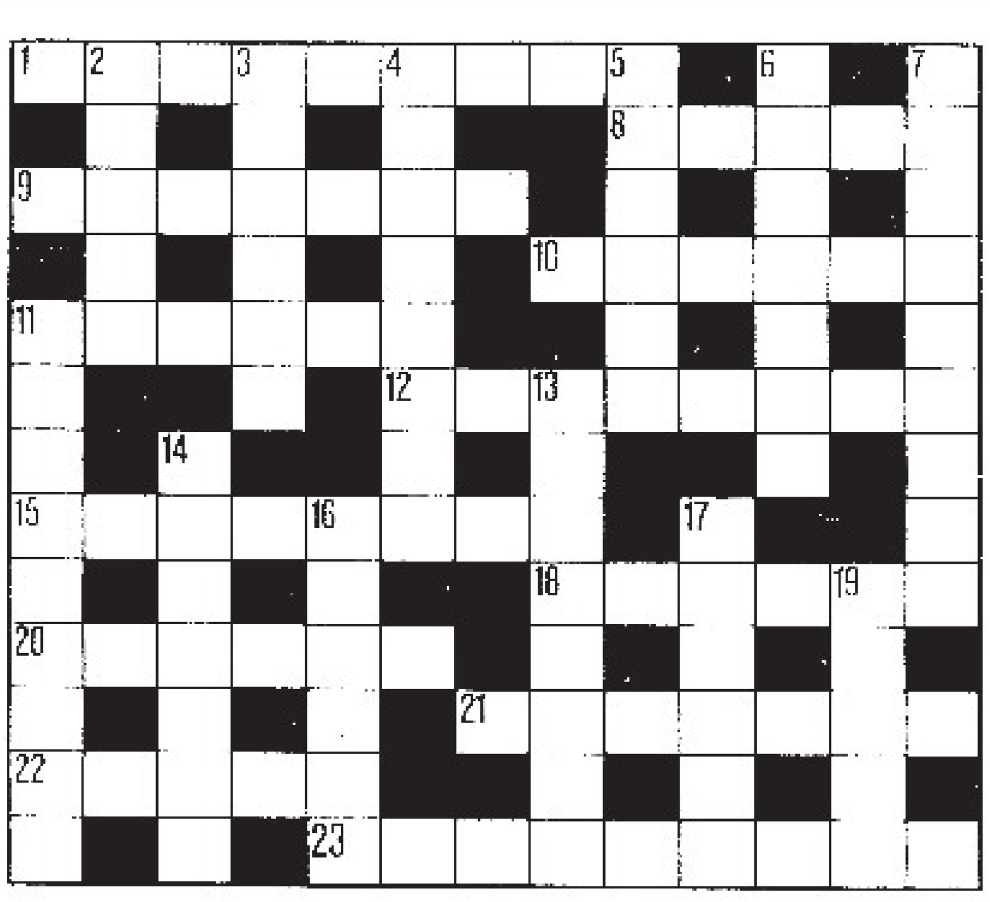
The soldiers also promoted hygienic practices in rural areas. The use of soap for bathing and washing clothes, and the construction of bathrooms (*gusalkhana*) and toilets (*pakhana*) took place due to their initiative. They also constructed *baithaks* (drawing room) in place of *darwajas*. They also began to build pucca houses with a modern design instead of the kutcha houses (made of mud), having *saals* (halls) and *obries* (small dark room).

The *faujis* introduced bicycles and motorcycles (*fitfitias*) as modes of transport to replace horses and bullock carts. They popularised bus and train travel in a society where even long journeys were mostly covered on horseback, by bullock cart or on foot.

The army personnel even modified the vocabulary of the people in rural areas. The polite *aap* made a place for itself beside *tunh* and *tanney*. They introduced villagers to the gramophone and the radio, besides weekly newspapers such as *Jat Gazette* and *Haryana Tilak* and Urdu dailies like *Partap*. The use of post offices to keep in touch with one's kin was popularised by them.

Above all, the war veterans contributed a lot towards improving the standard of education in Haryana. They sent their children for higher education to Lahore, Lyallpur, Delhi and Agra, but at the same time opened institutions. All India Jat Heroes Memorial School (Rohtak) and Bryne Ahir High School (Rewari) — both later upgraded to the college level — were established by them. It is hard to disagree with a doyen of Haryana history, Prof KC Yadav, who regards World War I as a game-changer for Haryana.

QUICK CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1 Objectionable (9)
8 Goods requested (5)
9 Hesitant (7)
10 Monotony (6)
11 Feel regret (6)
12 Rigorous control (4,4)
15 To show (8)
18 Moral lecture (6)
20 Rogue (6)
21 Sediment in coffee (7)
22 Come to know (5)
23 Group generating ideas (5,4)

DOWN
2 Culpability (5)
3 Start (6)
4 Almost immediately (2,2,4)
5 Grave (6)
6 Fleet commander (7)
7 One-humped camel (9)
11 Complicated procedure (9)
13 Fleeing from the law (2,3,3)
14 Rare (7)
16 Display ostentatiously (6)
17 Quantity (6)
19 Burdened (5)

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

Across: 1 Papyrus, 4 Comic, 7 Etna, 8 Turn down, 10 Short-lived, 12 Banish, 13 Stooge, 15 Free-for-all, 18 Sabotage, 19 Wild, 20 Match, 21 Romance.
Down: 1 Press, 2 Pinpoint, 3 Studio, 4 Convention, 5 Mood, 6 Censure, 9 At a stretch, 11 Vocation, 12 Blossom, 14 Ledger, 16 Ladle, 17 Abet.

SU DO KU

5	4			1	2			7
	6					4		
							2	3
9	3	5	4					
					1	5	8	2
2	9							
		4					3	
3			6	4			1	8

MEDIUM

CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 19, 2019 TUESDAY

- Vikrami Samvat 2075
- Shaka Samvat 1940
- Magh Shaka 30
- Phalgun Parvishte 7
- Hijari 1440
- Shukla Paksh Tithi 15, up to 9:24 pm
- Soubh Yoga up to 11:48 am
- Aashle Nakshatra up to 11:03 am
- Moon enters Leo sign at 11.03 am
- Magh Purnima
- Shri Gururavidas Jyanti.

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

3	8	7	9	6	4	5	1	2
5	6	1	3	2	8	7	4	9
9	2	4	5	1	7	8	6	3
8	3	6	4	7	2	1	9	5
4	5	2	6	9	1	3	8	7
1	7	9	8	3	5	4	2	6
6	9	8	7	4	3	2	5	1
7	1	5	2	8	6	9	3	4
2	4	3	1	5	9	6	7	8

FORECAST

SUNSET: TUESDAY 18:13 HRS
SUNRISE: WEDNESDAY 06:59 HRS

Sunny | Partly Cloudy | Cloudy | Rainy | Foggy

CITY	MAX	MIN
Chandigarh	21	12
New Delhi	24	13
PUNJAB		
Amritsar	20	08
Bathinda	23	10
Jalandhar	20	09
Ludhiana	19	09
HARYANA		
Bhiwani	22	13
Hisar	23	13
Sirsa	22	12
HIMACHAL PRADESH		
Dharamsala	14	04
Manali	08	–03
Shimla	10	0
JAMMU & KASHMIR		
Jammu	20	10
Leh	02	–06
Srinagar	09	0
UTTARAKHAND		
Dehradun	22	11
Mussoorie	12	02

TEMPERATURE IN ^{0}C

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TELLING NUMBERS

4,705 Indians in Middle East jails, half of them in Saudi Arabia

HOW MANY JAILED WHERE

Saudi Arabia	2,224
United Arab Emirates	1,606
Kuwait	483
Qatar	212
Bahrain	121
Oman	59

Source: Ministry of External Affairs reply in Lok Sabha

A TOTAL of 4,705 Indian nationals are in prisons in the Gulf countries, the Ministry of External Affairs said in Lok Sabha during the recent Budget Session. Saudi Arabia, with 2,224, accounts for nearly half these prisoners, followed by the United Arab Emirates with 1,606, which is more than one-third of the 4,705. Replying to a question by Congress member M K Raghavan, Minister of State for External Affairs V K Singh said: "Apart from extending them all possible consular services, Indian Missions and Posts abroad also assist in extending legal aid wherever needed. Missions and Posts also maintain a local panel of lawyers where Indian community is in sizeable numbers. Legal assistance is also provided to Indian nationals abroad including those in prison on a means tested basis through the Indian Community Welfare Fund. No fee is charged by our Missions and Posts abroad in such cases," Singh said.

Earlier during the session, TDP member Jayadev Galla asked about the number of Indians living illegally in the Gulf countries. Singh replied that these numbers have not been shared by the Gulf counties. He described an amnesty scheme in the UAE for overstaying foreigners to regularise their visa status between August 1 and December 31, 2018. "During this period, a total of 6,823 Indian citizens sought consular help from the Indian Mission, of which 1,949 were from Telangana, 1,064 from Andhra Pradesh and remaining from other parts of India. Consulate issued 4,034 Emergency Certificates free of cost for their return to India and 2,802 short-validity passports for those who wanted to rectify their status and continue to remain in UAE. Consulate also provided free air tickets to 230 Indians for their return to India during the amnesty scheme," Singh said.

THIS WORD MEANS

GREAT WHITE SHARK

Iconic predator of the seas. Now, its decoded genetic structure throws up clues for fighting cancer

AS A predator, the Great White Shark is iconic, due in no small measure to the 1975 film *Jaws*. A major study has now decoded its entire genome and found that it could hold new clues to the fight against cancer. The study revealed the genome's huge size (1½ times the size of the human genome) and also a plethora of genetic changes that could be behind the long, evolutionary success of large sharks. The researchers found indications of molecular adaptation in numerous genes with important roles in maintaining genome stability. This is a mechanism that counteracts the accumulation of damage to the DNA of a species, thereby preserving the integrity of the genome. The opposite phenomenon, genome instability, which results from accumulated DNA damage, is known to predispose humans to numerous cancers and age-related diseases.

The discovery was significant because theoretically, the risk of developing cancer should increase with both the number of cells (large bodies) and an organism's lifespan. However, contrary to expectations, very large animals do not get cancer more often than humans, suggesting that they have evolved superior cancer-protective abilities.

"There's still tons to be learned from these evolutionary marvels, including information that will potentially be useful to fight cancer and age-related diseases, and improve wound healing treatments in humans, as we uncover how these animals do it," Nova Southeastern University quoted researcher Mahmood Shivji as saying. The findings are reported in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, USA.

Source: Nova Southeastern University

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Why is China shielding Jaish?

In blocking global action against Masood Azhar, Beijing wants to protect its 'all weather' ally in South Asia and its business interests in CPEC. It also wants to keep India under pressure, and make a point to the US.

APURVA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

SOON AFTER a suicide bomber killed 40 CRPF personnel in Jammu and Kashmir on February 14, the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad claimed responsibility. The terrorist organisation has carried out multiple attacks on India over the last nearly two decades, but its leader, Maulana Masood Azhar, eludes international sanctions.

The reason is China. Beijing has refused to lift its "technical hold" on a proposal to declare Azhar a global terrorist under UN Security Council Resolution 1267, which prescribes a sanctions regime against designated terrorists and terrorist groups. India's proposal, put forward in February 2016 after the Pathankot attack, to designate Azhar as a global terrorist under the 1267 regime has been blocked four times by China, most recently in January 2017.

Why is China so keen to shield Azhar, blocking a global consensus at the behest of Pakistan? Its standard line is that it wants to "uphold the authority and validity of the 1267 Committee". But its real reasons are far less lofty — and range from protecting its "all weather" ally in South Asia to its business interests in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and from making things difficult for its Asian rival India to making a point to western powers led by the United States.

Where does the CPEC come in?

This is the brightest jewel in Chinese President Xi Jinping's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to connect Asia, Europe and Africa by building and upgrading road, rail, and sea infra on a massive scale. CPEC runs across the length of Pakistan, linking Kashgar in China's Xinjiang province to the Gwadar deep-sea port on the Arabian Sea near Pakistan's border with Iran. Chinese firms have invested close to $40 billion in around 45 CPEC projects, about half of which are nearing completion. China is determined to protect this gigantic investment of money, personnel and time. Access to the sea through Gwadar will remove the need for it to take the long route west through the Straits of Malacca and around India, and dramatically increase its proximity to the oil shipping lanes through the Strait of Hormuz.

Good relations with Pakistan, and international protection for ISI proxies like Jaish provide China with insurance against terrorist attacks on CPEC infrastructure and the thousands of Chinese working on them. The project has been targeted by Baloch separatists as well as the Pakistani Taliban, who have claimed to be protesting China's treatment of its Muslim Uyghur minority in eastern Xinjiang. Pakistan has attempted to reassure Beijing on the security of CPEC. In 2015, it established a 20,000-personnel Special Security Division drawn from the Army and paramilitary forces, and headed by a Major General-rank officer, exclusively to secure CPEC in addition to the local police.

President Xi Jinping with PM Imran Khan in Beijing last November. *Reuters.*
Below: **Maulana Masood Azhar, leader of the Jaish-e-Mohammad.** *Archive*

But if security has been provided, why does China still not budge on Azhar?

China has had a tacit understanding with the Afghan Taliban from the days of their predecessors in the 1970s, said Prof Srikanth Kondapalli of the Centre for East Asian Studies at JNU's School of International Studies. The Chinese military had trained the *mujahideen* against the Soviets, and China subsequently made a deal with the Taliban (many of whom, including Mullah Omar, were former *mujahideen* commanders) that "as long as they don't support the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, they won't harm them". This deal, Prof Kondapalli said, is still on: "Don't train the Uyghurs and we won't interfere."

Nearly 10 years ago, a top leader of the Islamist Uyghur East Turkestan Islamic Movement who was allegedly involved in a bombing in Xinjiang was tracked to Pakistan, which handed him over to Beijing. "Compare this with Pakistan's response to India's demands that it hand over terrorists wanted in India," Prof Kondapalli said. "Broadly this is the situation."

On Azhar, China insists there isn't enough evidence to designate him a "global terrorist", though the rest of the P5 believes otherwise. "China takes a different position because of the larger understanding it has with such organisations... as long as you don't disturb me, we will not penalise you. If you are expanding your international base, it must not be at my expense. That's China's attitude," he said.

Also, China enjoys overwhelming popularity on the street in Pakistan — surveys show 88% Pakistanis view China favourably, compared with only 33% Indians. It is not in Beijing's interest to disappoint this constituency by giving in to India's repeated demands to list Azhar. China, experts said, remains conscious that relations between Pakistan and the US had been strongly impacted by the killings, first by al-Qaeda of American-Israeli journalist Daniel Pearl in 2002 and then, by US special forces of Osama bin Laden in 2011.

Does China's stand have to do with India's emergence as a competitor ?

Yes. India is part of a short list of economic giants who have refused to participate in the BRI. New Delhi's opposition stems from the CPEC, which runs through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. And since China views India as a competitor, Beijing looks to tie down New Delhi to South Asia using issues like Azhar. By supporting Pakistan on UNSC Resolution 1267 and blocking India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group by tying its bid to Pakistan's, China seeks to needle and frustrate India. Such tactics are also intended to send out a message to the US, which seeks to build a relationship with India to contain China in the Indo-Pacific.

Has this always been China's position?

Before Azhar, Beijing had blocked on three occasions India's moves to designate Jamaat-ud-Dawa chief Hafiz Saeed as a terrorist. But in 2008, as global outrage intensified in the aftermath of the 26/11 attacks, Beijing was forced to back international action against Saeed. But 26/11 was an extraordinary attack; it remains to be seen if India can drum up enough international support over Pulwama to push China on Azhar.

Is there a reason for Beijing to budge?

Not budging on Azhar will probably not directly affect China's bilateral ties with India. But Beijing may have to contend with the abstract impact of a shift in public opinion. The gains from last year's Wuhan Summit may dwindle if public opinion turns against China. "This time, it is not really defensible... they (Jaish) have said they were involved. China's image will take a beating and the Indian public will have an increasingly negative view of China," Prof Kondapalli said.

State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi was in India in December for the high-level people-to-people and cultural exchange mechanism. "They want to sell the China story and tap the Indian consumer market... this may boomerang. In diplomacy, this cannot be quantified, but it is very significant," Prof Kondapalli said.

If India does want to raise the pitch against China, it could begin by taking a page from America's playbook and initiate action against Chinese companies like Huawei. "It will not affect India-China ties, but the overall talk about China in India will reduce. With the negative public opinion, there may be restrictions on some companies, like what (US President) Trump did," he said.

Chhattisgarh PDS case: what it is, why now

DIPANKAR GHOSE
RAIPUR, FEBRUARY 19

A SPECIAL investigating team (SIT) of Chhattisgarh Police recently registered a case against two senior IPS officers in an alleged scam that took place in the Public Distribution System (PDS) when the previous government was in power. What is this scam, and why is it politically significant?

The allegation

In 2015, the then BJP government faced allegations of corruption in the PDS, which until then had been seen as a model for other states. The allegations were that kickbacks were paid by rice millers and agents to allow the distribution of substandard rice through the state's PDS. The agency in charge of distribution is Nagrik Apoorti Nigam (NAN).

Two govts, two probes

With the Opposition raising an uproar, the then BJP government started an investigation by the Anti-Corruption Bureau and the Economic Offences Wing. The ACB raided NAN offices, recovered cash and documents, and eventually charged several officials including two senior IAS officers, Alok Shukla and Anil Tuteja. The recoveries reportedly included a "diary" with details of kickbacks paid, and references to various individuals including, the Congress alleged, aides of then CM Raman Singh including "CM Madam". The ACB clarified that these references were not to family or aides of the then CM but to officials; the Congress has maintained that the ACB probe was a sham and protected political beneficiaries of what they have alleged was a Rs-36,000-crore scam.

In their campaign for the Assembly elections, Congress president Rahul Gandhi and now Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel raised the issue of the scam. Within days of taking oath, Baghel announced an SIT. The Congress said the SIT would look at political beneficiaries.

Many questions have been raised on the Congress government choice for IG, ACB and EOW — S R P Kalluri, who is leading the SIT. During the BJP's tenure, Kalluri was accused by human rights activists, tribals in Bastar and even Congress leaders including Baghel, of human rights excesses and intimidation. The BJP, meanwhile, has questioned why Baghel is using multiple SITs for the "politics" of revenge.

The new case

The SIT has registered a case against former Additional DG of the ACB and EOW, Mukesh Gupta, and SP of ACB and EOW Rajnesh Singh. This has caused a flutter for two reasons — the seniority of Gupta, a DG-ranked IPS officer, and the fact that he had headed the probe into the alleged NAN scam until Kalluri was given charge. Gupta and Singh, now suspended, have been accused of criminal conspiracy, forgery, and illegal phone-tapping. SIT officers allege that Gupta and Singh fiddled with government records to legitimise phone-tapping, a charge Gupta has denied. R K Dubey, a DSP with the EOW, was named in the FIR as having written a statement claiming that he changed records under threat and instruction from Gupta and Singh. A day after the FIR was registered, however, Dubey approached the special NAN court in Raipur and the Bilaspur High Court and wrote an affidavit to the DGP claiming that he was being forced by the SIT to give false statements against Gupta and Singh, and that his life was in danger. The Bilaspur High Court said it could not intervene in the case but added the state should not pressure any citizen to give a statement in a particular way.

More politics ahead

In the Lok Sabha elections, the Congress effort will be to present a narrative that the previous BJP government had been corrupt. When in Opposition, Baghel had often attacked Gupta, calling him close to the BJP regime, and alleging he was working to protect then CM Singh and his aides. Now, the appointment of Kalluri and the rapid pace of investigations are being widely viewed as moves undertaken with a political objective.

DECISION 2019 THE QUESTIONS THAT MATTER

Despite their continuous differences, why can Shiv Sena and BJP not stay apart in Maharashtra?

Pressure to pool votes, amid national and local concerns

48 Lok Sabha seats make Maharashtra second only to Uttar Pradesh in terms of size. In the last Assembly elections, contesting separately had left neither BJP nor Shiv Sena with a majority. Both are also wary of rival alliances in Maharashtra and elsewhere.

SHUBHANGI KHAPRE & VISHWAS WAGHMODE
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 19

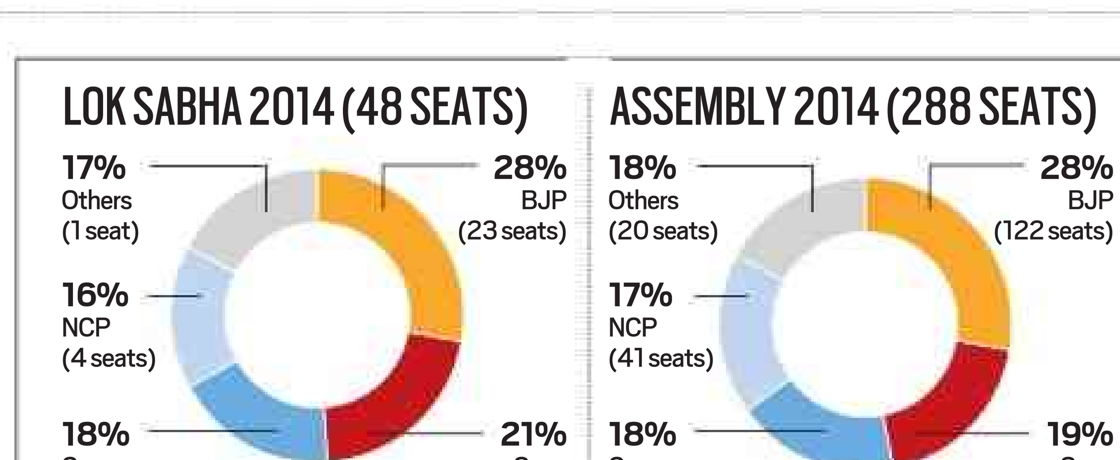
ON MONDAY, the Shiv Sena and the BJP announced an alliance for elections to the Lok Sabha and the Maharashtra Assembly. The BJP will contest 25 Lok Sabha seats and the Sena 23 — Maharashtra has 48 — followed by both parties contesting an equal number of seats in the 288-member Assembly.

Given the differences between them, what brings the BJP and the Shiv Sena together again?

Both the BJP and the Shiv Sena have stated that a triangular fight would not have been good for either of them, especially when the Congress and the NCP have announced they will be alliance in the Lok Sabha elections. The Congress-NCP alliance hopes to make deeper inroads into rural Maharashtra, which accounts for about half the state's 48 seats.

How strongly have the two parties performed in recent elections?

In 2014, the BJP and the Sena won 41 Lok Sabha seats between them (another NDA partner won a 42nd), which was miles ahead of the Congress-NCP's 6 seats. However, the Congress (18%) and the NCP (16%) added up to a vote share of 34%, which was more than the individual shares of either the BJP (28%) or the Sena (21%). It underlined the importance of the BJP and the Sena pooling their votes. In the Assembly elections that followed, the individual vote shares changed very marginally (*see graph*). With the BJP and the Sena having contested without an alliance, neither party had a majority on its own and had to come together again to form a government. In Maharashtra where coalition politics has dominated since 1995, no party can rely on a triangular or four-sided contest. In a series of meetings held between Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Sena president Uddhav Thackeray, the central issue discussed was how to ensure that their votes remain undivided.



BJP-Sena, Cong-NCP had alliances in Lok Sabha polls, fought separately in Assembly polls

What, then, was coming between them?

When Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray declared two years ago that they would go solo, he was positioning the Sena as an aggressive Opposition party in the state, and hoping to occupy the space held by Congress-NCP. The Sena had to look for Opposition space after the BJP had emerged the single largest party in Maharashtra. Later, the Sena had to backtrack because of pressure from most of its 18 Lok Sabha members and 63 MLAs, who were keen on an alliance with the BJP. Had they contested separately, the Sena would have faced a challenge in keeping its own house in order and holding back possible defections.

Does this coming together have any significance beyond Maharashtra?

Maharashtra's 48 Lok Sabha seats, second only to UP's 80, make the state crucial to the BJP's efforts at returning to power. With the BSP and the Samajwadi Party having joined hands in UP, it challenges the NDA's 73 seats won in 2014. Besides, various regional forces have rallied around the Congress.

What is the shape of the arrangement?

The Lok Sabha seat-sharing formula more or less conforms to previously stated positions, except that the BJP has agreed to concede the Palghar Lok Sabha seat to the Sena, giving it 23 and keeping 25. The Assembly shares, on the other hand, reflect more concessions. Although the BJP won 122 seats in 2014 to the Sena's 63, it has agreed on an equal share after setting aside a few seats for smaller allies.

Now that they are together, what next?

The immediate challenge for both parties is to convince their cadre about the need for unity. The Sena is likely to tell *sainiks* about important posts it is likely to get in the power structure, and that it has forced the BJP to agree to various demands, including stopping of work at the refinery in Ratnagiri. Sena poll managers agree, however, that convincing voters would be more challenging, given the Sena's previous statements against the BJP-led government at the Centre. Now, the Sena has cited the Pulwama terror attack as the reason to rejoin hands with the BJP. Sena chief Thackeray and BJP president Amit Shah have declared that the alliance is in the larger interest of the nation and Hindutva.

NEXT
#19 What national and regional factors are at play in Lok Sabha and Assembly polls in Haryana?

WORDLY WISE

THE SUPREME ART OF WAR IS TO SUBDUE THE ENEMY WITHOUT FIGHTING.

— SUN TZU

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

TRUTH ABOUT TERROR

Pak PM must know he has no plausible deniability on terror. Saudi Crown Prince cannot turn a blind eye to the problem

PAKISTAN PRIME MINISTER Imran Khan is either very naive or plain disingenuous. In his first response to India holding Pakistan responsible for the February 14 Kashmir attack, he demanded "actionable evidence" and asked what his country had to gain from a terrorist attack in India from its territory. He should know that Pakistan does not have credible deniability on this attack. The Jaish-e-Mohammad, which took responsibility minutes after the devastating suicide bombing, is based in Pakistan's Punjab province. To say that the JeM was banned in 2002 is not good enough. After the 2016 Pathankot attack, also the JeM's handiwork, the Pakistan government took the Jaish leader, Masood Azhar, into protective custody. PM Khan appeared reasonable when he said he was prepared to discuss terrorism with India. But if he really understands that his country stands to lose from terrorism, the first thing to do is to crack down on the JeM, Lashkar-e-Toiba, and other such groups flourishing in his country. Shortage of evidence has never been the problem for Pakistan in tracing the perpetrators of terrorist attacks in India. In the 26/11 case, it had its own investigation, but still did nothing. The problem is that Pakistan believes using terrorists as proxies is the most effective way to achieve its regional strategic objectives.

The arrival of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia at this moment is an opportunity that India must use well. India's relations with Saudi Arabia are wide-ranging, from trade and investment to defence and security. In 2010, the two countries enhanced their ties to the level of a "strategic partnership". The Islamic kingdom is India's fourth largest trading partner. Bilateral trade is in the region of $28 billion. India imports 19 per cent of its oil requirement from Saudi Arabia. As the country with the third largest Muslim population, there is a religious-cultural aspect to India's ties with the custodian of Islam's holiest sites. The Indian workforce in Saudi Arabia tops 3 million. Prince Mohammed bin Salman's visit to India will no doubt seek to build on this already strong relationship.

What India needs to press home to the Saudi Prince is that his praise for Pakistan's efforts against terrorism on his visit to Islamabad earlier was tone deaf. It is no secret that Islamist extremism was exported and funded from Saudi Arabia. The JeM, a Sunni Deobandi group, has drawn both money and ideology from al Qaeda and Taliban. If MBS, as he is known, is truly the reformer he claims to be, India must hold him to his agenda. The entire region is a powder keg because of the terrorist groups that operate from Pakistan, launching attacks in Iran one day and India the next. And with the ISI created Taliban hoping to regain power in Afghanistan in a negotiated deal with the US, the situation in South Asia is extremely fragile. If MBS wants India-Pakistan tensions to de-escalate, as he declared in Islamabad, he must start by advising his Pakistani hosts to take the steps the world has been asking them to.

BJP AND FRIENDS

Party bends to regional partners' demands in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, underlines importance of alliances ahead of polls

SHIV SENA AND BJP have apparently repaired their frayed relations and arrived at a pact in Maharashtra for the general and assembly elections. The BJP has pulled off a deal in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry as well, where it will contest in alliance with the AIADMK and PMK. In these states, the BJP appears to have gone out of its way to accommodate the partner's demands, a pattern that began when it negotiated an arrangement with the JD(U) in Bihar. The BJP leadership seems to have looked at the big picture while conceding ground to the Sena, JD(U), AIADMK and PMK.

The Sena-BJP deal in Maharashtra should help consolidate the Hindutva vote against a potential Congress-NCP alliance. This alliance — first forged in 1989 — had won 42 of 48 parliamentary seats in the state in 2014. However, the two parties moved apart ahead of the assembly elections later that year and contested separately, dividing an overlapping political constituency. The Congress and the NCP fought independently, splitting the anti-BJP vote, and helped the BJP win a simple majority in the state assembly for the first time. Now, the prospect of a Congress-NCP alliance would have prodded the BJP and the Sena to come together. However, the Sena leadership may have some explaining to do since the party has been vicious in its attacks on the BJP. Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray, for instance, repeated Congress president Rahul Gandhi's "chowkidar chor hai" jibe at PM Modi, and pulled up the government on issues ranging from demonetisation to Pakistan policy. Sena, clearly, had no option but to swallow its own words since its plank of nativism has lost its sheen and its Hindu nationalist agenda is subsumed in the BJP's Hindutva project. Tamil Nadu saw multi-cornered contests in 2014 and the AIADMK, which projected its chief, J Jayalalithaa, as the PM face, swept the polls. Now, a weakened AIADMK will fight the bulk of the seats while projecting the leadership of Modi, unusual for a party that claims the legacy of the Dravidian Movement.

The firming up of the NDA in these states, on terms and conditions apparently set by the allies, also reveals the uncertainty ahead of the election. The BJP seems unwilling to risk its chances in the wake of agrarian unrest, lack of jobs and the prospect of an Opposition getting, at the very least, its arithmetic right.

AFTER THE KISS

The sailor in Eisenstaedt's iconic post-WWII photo has passed on. The demons his generation exorcised threaten to return

WAS IT BECAUSE a soldier and a nurse, the fighter and the healer, are the ready and recognisable symbol of the horrors of war? Or, perhaps that dark colour of the American sailor's uniform, and her white outfit make for an elegant visual? Alfred Eisenstaedt's iconic photograph of a kiss between strangers in the heart of Times Square in New York celebrating the Allied victory over Japan in World War II, was an image that typified the sense of hope after the destruction, the ecstasy at the possibility of a new world. Like with all powerful images, the mystery of its resonance can never quite be solved. But the optimism the picture symbolised began steadily diminishing, almost as soon as it was taken.

George Mendonsa, the sailor, died earlier this week at 95, and Greta Friedman, the nurse, had passed away in 2016. Eisenstaedt never revealed the names of his subjects, and it was only in the 1960s that the pair realised that their fleeting kiss was an indelible record of history. Friedman, in fact, has said that "it wasn't much of a kiss" and it has been pointed out that the image could very well be a violation of her consent. Politically, the Cold War and the threat of extinction, the seeds of which were sown by the victory over Japan, began to loom large from the 1950s itself. And, many would argue, the world hasn't become much better.

What was the unknown sailor celebrating? The end of a horrific war, but also the defeat of a jingoistic, exclusive nationalism that thrived on the vilification of the other and the militarisation of society. As the generation that witnessed that time passes on, their experiences seem distant: But from Europe to North America and Asia and Latin America, the chants of an aggressive nationalism ring forth once again. The after-life of the image of the kiss has been more ambiguous than could have been imagined in 1945.

Soldiering on, after Pulwama

We are acutely aware of what is at stake in Kashmir. And that there is no easy way out

ABHINAV KUMAR

ANOTHER BLOODY STRIKE in Kashmir has left the nation in shock and disbelief. The 40 CRPF bravehearts who were killed in a suicide car bomb attack near Lethpura, Pulwama, on February 14, came from all corners of the country. As the nation mourned, in a predictable display of defiance, a section of Kashmiri society celebrated this strike on social media. A nasty backlash followed, that does no credit to the national cause in the Valley. Especially because patriotic Kashmiris serving in all our security forces are at the frontline in this conflict.

Across the country, the reactions from the usual suspects have been all too predictable. The jingoists go on beating their war drums, the peaceniks carry on smoking their peace pipes, and analysts educate us about the lack of a proper strategy in Kashmir. Everyone has their favourite scapegoat to blame for the mess.

Many point a finger at the current dispensation at the Centre for its hardline approach, that has supposedly worsened the situation in Kashmir. Others bemoan the lack of a coherent policy in Kashmir, as if it was some kind of a magic formula which once adopted, would solve everything. Lack of dialogue is often blamed for escalating violence. This is hogwash in a scenario when violence is the primary negotiating tactic of our enemy. Policies are not formed in a vacuum. They are, of course, based on strategic objectives, but they are also shaped by capacities and constraints. The current course in Kashmir is to no one's satisfaction but it is imposed on us by a combination of all of the above. To paraphrase Drucker, in Kashmir, reality eats policy for breakfast.

For the security forces operating in the Valley, most of this talk is plain noise. Fact is, we are too quick to claim improvement by clutching at straws. So a decline in violence and increase in voter participation will be trumpeted as a huge achievement. And conversely, a spectacular terror strike such as the incident in Pulwama, or an increase in casualties over the previous years, is enough to bring out the prophets of doom and gloom. The truth, as always, lies somewhere in between.

> In the aftermath of Pulwama, our task is cut out. Our first challenge is to go after the perpetrators and fast-track their path to paradise. As I write this, those efforts are well under way. Our second challenge is to ensure that the threat of future such attacks is minimised. One would want to paint a realistic picture on this count. With the best technology, equipment and intelligence at their disposal, US-led forces in Afghanistan and Iraq have not been able to eliminate the threat of car bombs. So let's not promise something to ourselves as a nation that is impossible to deliver. We can be better prepared, that is all.

There are challenges in Kashmir that are surmountable. And there are challenges in Kashmir that we have no answer to. Knowing which is which would be a useful exercise to weigh our options post Pulwama.

Let's look at the negatives first. It is not possible to dissuade the separatists/jihadis from the path of violence. It is not possible to coercively or diplomatically change the mindset of the generals and mullahs in Pakistan who provide them with basic support. It is not possible to seal the border completely to prevent crossing of militants and weapons. It is not possible to ensure that "fidayeen" attacks and the resultant loss of life can be prevented in totality. Anyone who promises any of these as an achievable policy objective, has a tenuous grip on reality.

Conversely, we must be clear about what is achievable in Kashmir. Preserving the demographic profile and cultural distinctiveness of the Valley is no longer in our national interest. Article 370 was a goodwill gesture by Jawaharlal Nehru that no longer serves its original purpose of making Kashmiris embrace the accession to India. If we want to show national resolve, repealing it would be exhibit A. It has long outlived its utility, if it had any to begin with. All it has done is create a limitless sense of entitlement in the Valley. The second thing that is entirely achievable is to continuously dehyphenate Ladakh and Jammu from Kashmir Valley. For too long, the Valley has been given the privilege of speaking for the entire state. It doesn't, and it is high time to show the mirror to the separatists about the culturally parochial and geographically limited nature of the Azadi movement. The right to self-determination cannot begin at the Zojila and end at the Banihal.

The third thing is to ensure that at the tactical level the security forces are given the best logistical support possible. In practical terms, it means bulletproofing and IED proofing all the vehicles used by the security forces in the Valley. It also means reimposing restrictions on civilian vehicles during convoy movement that had been in place earlier but were done away with in a goodwill gesture. And it will also require a more robust airlift capacity between Jammu and Srinagar for all the CAPFs. The fourth is to step up our efforts at deradicalisation and engage more meaningfully with Kashmiri youth.

In the aftermath of Pulwama, our task is cut out. Our first challenge is to go after the perpetrators. As I write this, those efforts are well under way. Our second challenge is to ensure that the threat of such attacks in the future is minimised. One would want to paint a realistic picture on this count. With the best technology, equipment and intelligence at their disposal, US-led forces in Afghanistan and Iraq have not been able to eliminate the threat of car bombs. So let's not promise something to ourselves as a nation that is impossible to deliver. We can be better prepared, that is all.

Our third challenge is to ensure that the culture of restraint and proportionate response by our men on the ground does not break down. Despite propaganda to the contrary, there is no comparison between the savagery of the separatists and the professionalism of our security forces. All of us serving in the Valley are seething right now, but our rage must be channelised productively and intelligently. This is a tragic setback, no doubt. But we have to learn its lessons and soldier on.

Despite the best efforts of the separatists and their sympathisers in our civil society to paint us as such, those of us who serve the nation in the Valley are not mindless bloodthirsty monsters. We are all proud professionals with a life beyond the uniform too. We are acutely aware of what is at stake in Kashmir. And that there is no easy way out. This attack must be seen for what it is, a cowardly act of desperation, designed to show that the jihad is alive and kicking. It makes not the slightest difference to our national resolve. We mourn our dead, console their families and gear up for the struggle ahead. Any number of Pulwama-style attacks will not change that.

The writer is an IPS officer serving in Kashmir. Views expressed are personal

RUSE OF GENDER JUSTICE

Triple talaq legislation does not have anything to do with women's empowerment

SUSHMITA DEV

ALL GOVERNMENT POLICIES must be judged keeping two things in mind: The circumstances at the time of introducing a legislation and the actual impact of a law. The Supreme Court (SC) judgment of 1985 that allowed Shah Bano to claim maintenance under the Code of Criminal Procedure was applauded as a progressive judgment. I cannot disagree with the merits of that judgment but the controversial law — subsequently the Muslim Women (Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 that was drafted by the Rajiv Gandhi government — came under severe attack at the time. It was seen as an act to appease the conservative Muslim and against the empowerment of Muslim women.

Be that as it may, what critics of the 1986 Act must in all humility realise now is how this law actually impacted women over the last three decades. The 1986 Act actually defines the rights of a Muslim woman on divorce. Section 3 says that she will be entitled to a fair and reasonable amount for maintenance. She will also be entitled to the property she receives from her relatives and the relatives of her husband. If her husband fails to pay her, she can claim her maintenance from the people who stand to inherit from her, if they fail, she can claim maintenance from her family and if they fail as well, she can claim maintenance from the state's wakf board. The most empowering provision is that she must be paid within the *iddat* period — three months.

> In 2017, the SC deemed instant triple talaq to be void in the 'Shayara Bano' case. The government's ordinance, however, criminalises it and the justification is it will deter Muslim men. No where does the judgment mention a need for criminalisation. The ordinance assumes that it will invoke fear in the husband's mind. But is there anything that stops him from deserting her?

Danial Latifi, Shah Bano's lawyer, amongst others, challenged the 1986 Act in the SC as unconstitutional. In 2001, Court upheld the Act and went on to state that it captured the spirit of the 1985 judgment. The 2001 verdict further clarified that she will get her settlement for her entire life as a lump sum within the *iddat* period. Lawyer and activist Flavia Agnes has noted that this law has given Muslim women maintenance to the extent of making men in the community unhappy. Courts have been flooded with appeals by husbands challenging orders of maintenance under the Act. Compare the Rs 179 received by Shah Bano to the women who got lakhs under the 1986 Act.

In 2017, the SC deemed instant triple talaq to be void in the *Shayara Bano* case. The government's ordinance, however, criminalises it and the justification is it will deter Muslim men. No where does the judgment mention a need for criminalisation. The ordinance assumes that it will invoke fear in the husband's mind. But is there anything that stops him from deserting her? Anyone who has dealt with matrimonial litigation or faced matrimonial disharmony will vouch for the fact that it is economic disempowerment that puts a woman in an unequal position. The government could have levied a fine for practising instant triple talaq.

There is no law that can force a married couple to stay married, all that lawmakers can do is codify the rights and liabilities of the parties on separation. The ordinance keeps the couple married and gives the woman nothing but a right to prosecute her husband. In comparison to the fair and reasonable amount sanctioned by the 1986 Act, the triple talaq bill said she must be given a subsistence allowance — the ordinance does not define this.

The Act of 1986 struck a balance between the rights of a community and of its women. Those who today applaud Narendra Modi's ordinance as a tool of empowerment of Muslim women must not forget the context. With general elections a month away, the prime minister desperately needs to appear inclusive to please the neutral voter, who feels letdown by incidents of cow vigilantism, mob lynching and the assassination of liberal writers.

Shayara Bano has the advantage of nullifying her talaq, so the woman remains legally married to her husband (who she did not want to return to). But she has no financial support. The ordinance empowers her to file a criminal case with no real relief and makes things more acrimonious. Maybe that's why under all other personal laws, the remedy for desertion lies in the restitution of conjugal rights which gives the couple the time to reconcile, not criminalisation.

Therefore, I see no justification for criminalising triple talaq.

The writer is a Congress Lok Sabha MP

FEBRUARY 20, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO


INDIAN EXPRESS

President calls for withdrawal of Chinese from Vietnam

Chinese halt advance

CHINESE HALTED

CHINA'S INCURSION INTO Vietnam has halted on February 19, about five to 10 km inside Vietnam, with Hanoi claiming that elements of 13 Chinese battalions have suffered 3,500 troops killed and 80 tanks have been destroyed. Western intelligence sources said in Bangkok that the intention of the Chinese invasion was to "teach Vietnam a lesson" and that elements of some Chinese units were possibly withdrawing to China.

INDIA'S STAND

PRIME MINISTER MORARJI Desai reviewed the Vietnamese situation with the Minister of External Affairs Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who cut short his visit to China by a day after Chinese forces attacked Vietnam. The foreign secretary, Jagat Mehta, was also present at these discussions. Desai has already come out with a forthright statement calling for the immediate withdrawal of Chinese forces from Vietnam as a first step towards restoration of peace in Southeast Asia. And to make India's stand clear, a special paragraph was inserted into the President's address expressing India's grave concern on the Sino-Indian-Vietnamese border, and the President too asked for the immediate withdrawal of Chinese troops.

UP DRAMA

THE MEETING OF the Janata Legislature Party scheduled for February 21 in Lucknow to elect a new leader for Uttar Pradesh has been postponed. The party's Central Parliamentary Board at its meeting tomorrow morning will fix a fresh date for the election of the leader, the Janata Party General Secretary Rama Krishna Hegde, said. The postponement has been necessitated to give the central leadership and various factions in the states more time to reach a consensus over the successor to UP Chief Minister Ram Naresh Yadav, who has lost the confidence of the party. Both the outgoing chief minister and the pro-changers had approached the high command to defer the election of the leader by a week or so.

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

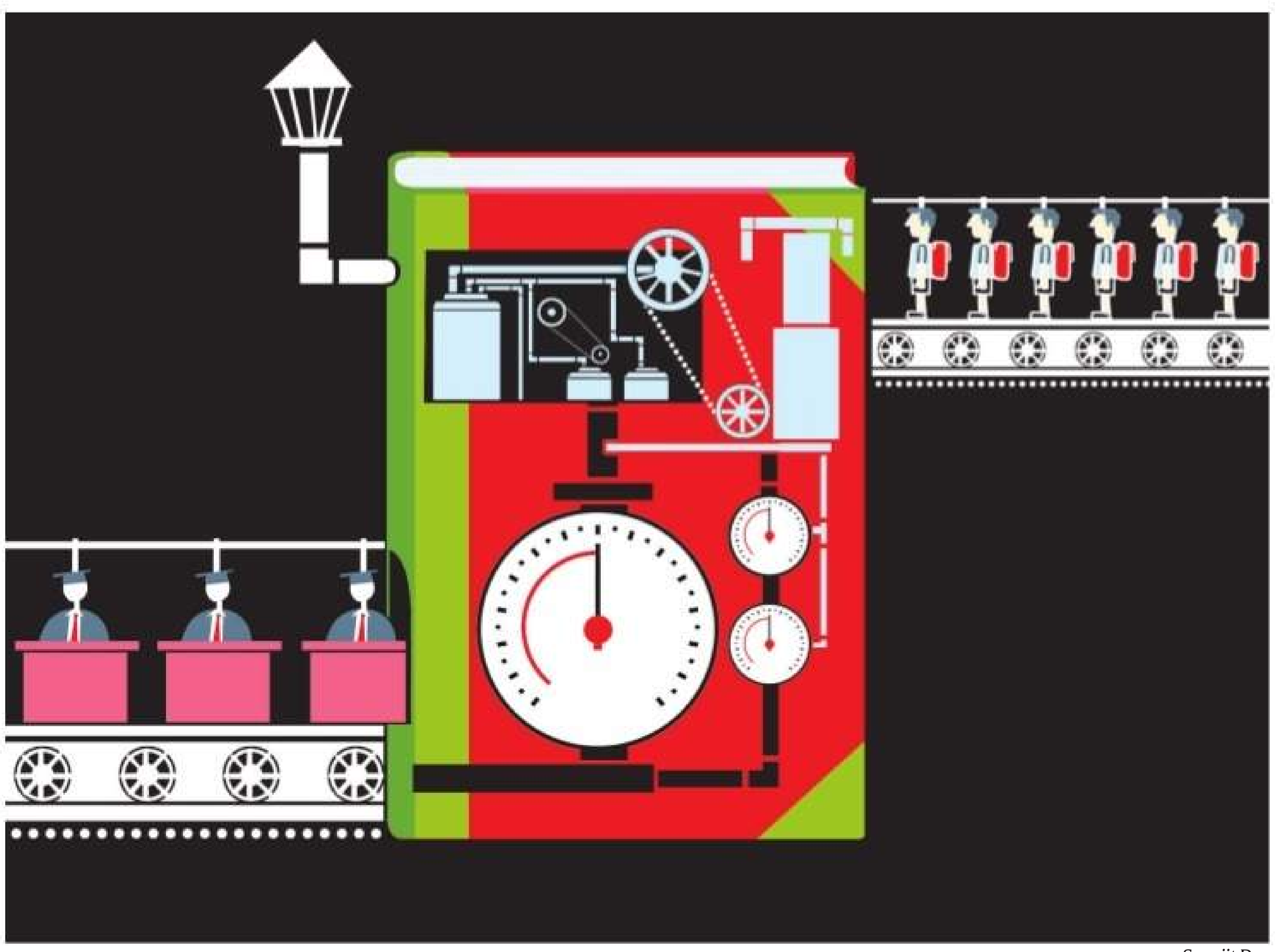
"We hope the US delegation and US elite will understand that bad relations hurt both sides, and China will never be the only victim."

— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Star-studded CVs and moral numbness

The prevailing wisdom is that well-trained professionals will contribute towards social welfare and environmental sustainability. That's not the way it works

AVNEE DHAMIJA AND NAVDEEP MATHUR



Suvajit Dey

IF ONE DOES a simple web search for corporate fraud, financial scandals, aggressive marketing of toxic products or other forms of corporate malfeasance, we get a list of some of the biggest names in the industry. Be it oil companies, financial institutes, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, auditing firms, consulting giants, or fast food companies, hardly any big name seems to be giving this party a miss.

We are as concerned with the scale of these malpractices as we are with the real-life impact of these activities on society. For the impact of fraud and wilful disasters of the oil companies, we find permanent ecological damage, destruction of biodiversity, loss of habitat and poorer health quality of all human and other life. Fatal addictions, commerciogenic malnutrition and over-medication from the pharma and fast food industries. The loss of health and healthcare, loss of employment or inhumane working conditions for others. The ravages of natural resource and human exploitation, war and violent conflict are known to be intricately linked with profiteering armaments' manufacturers and global finance. Connecting the dots is not that difficult. What amazes us is that these are the very industries and big-name companies that hire the best talent usually from the country's most elite institutions.

Paradoxically, the common perception in such institutions is rather different. Here, the prevailing wisdom is that well-trained professionals will contribute towards social welfare and environmental sustainability. This seems so remarkably at odds with the situation we have spelt out above. However, if we see such elite training grounds a little differently, we feel that such a paradox will no longer remain a mystery.

The answer, we feel, lies in the social norms and cultures of disciplining towards which educational spaces are geared today. It is in these spaces that potentially smart individuals are transformed into compliant "professionals", who focus merely on executing instructions in the most efficient manner. The incentive structure (status, prestige and pay packages associated with the firms who value these individuals as potential employees) is designed in such a way that the individuals lose interest in questioning the status quo, in seeking explanations, or in doing things differently — they look for standardisation, seek comfort in given structures, and limit themselves to task-orientation. The pedagogy in these "schools" is designed in such a way that the students learn to follow a solution-first approach — they are trained to solve the given problems in an instantaneous manner. In a quest to be the first one, they hardly question what they're being asked to do, but quickly rush into "solving" problems, irrespective of the larger implications of their actions. A classroom exercise in one of our courses can illustrate this clearly.

In this activity, the students were asked to form a group of two or three members to discuss the following: "Identify a product or service that you would 'sell' with all your energy, talent, and creative resources (with an intent to expose, attract, have people try, consume and ultimately seek their addiction), but would use that same level of energy in order to insulate and protect your family members, and ensure that they don't consume the product or service in question."

After some discussion, the groups identified certain products that were either proven to be harmful or were perceived to be potentially harmful — dating apps for married people, violent and sexualised video games, pornography, euthanasia, prostitution, junk food, soft drinks, energy drinks, muscle building supplements, alcohol, cigarettes, and many more.

From the perspective of a participating student, one of us noted: "As soon as the question was presented to the class, my group members and I started thinking of products that were harmful, addictive or illegal. We felt that it had to be a 'bad' product because we were asked to keep our families away from it. We started thinking of cigarettes, marijuana, and dating apps for married people. There was a lot of enthusiasm and we started discussing how we would position the product in the market in order to achieve maximum sales, but at the same time, we were sure that we would shield our family members from the product. Till this point, there was absolutely no feeling of immorality or wrongdoing. We felt we were only trying to solve a problem. After much discussion, one of the class members mentioned that such a product should not exist — if all of us start marketing aggressively, then eventually our families would also be exposed to the harmful products. At this point, the entire course of the discussion changed from marketing strategies to business ethics. I felt uneasy and disturbed as I realised that I was so sincere and diligent about solving the given problem that I had completely lost out on my ethical lens. I felt guilty and embarrassed — that it took a great deal of facilitation to make me and other class members realise that we were actively pushing for something that we ourselves considered harmful or immoral. I was also a little bewildered as I am not someone who would place business gains or my loyalty towards my employer above my conscience or morality. However, that's exactly what I did, albeit, subconsciously."

It should have been obvious that the exercise presented an ethical dilemma, and could not be tackled like a calculus problem. But as it actually transpired, the students believed that there was nothing right or wrong in the solutions proposed by them — it was not about a moral choice, and it was purely a business strategy. More so, the students displayed an abstract, but remarkably strong, sense of employer attachment. They felt that their foremost identity as an employee should be to take care of their employer's interest. They spoke of this loyalty in a sacred manner — as if it was preordained, and should not be subject to any sort of interrogation. Another serious rationalisation was the belief that nothing was actually going to change, by any intervention or questioning from their side.

We wonder if there is a way to "unschool" well-intentioned individuals, to enable them to discern the real-world implications of their powerpoints and excels — to nurture individuals to think critically, to raise questions, and to seek explanations, as opposed to the current culture of training individuals into diligent and obedient employees. However, this begs an important question. Would instilling moral criticality through pedagogical interventions (such as the classroom activity) be in line with creating "employable" resources, or would that be in contradiction to the interests of corporations that recruit well-witted disciplined individuals who strive endlessly to "strategically" maximise their employers' profits? We're not sure where we can get the answer from, but the bigger worry is that not many seem to be asking this question.

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Dhamija was an MBA student, batch of 2016, at IIM-Ahmedabad and is an entrepreneur. Mathur is faculty member, public systems group, IIM-A

A promissory note

Opposition's Common Minimum Programme needs honesty, realistic implementation, not bravado

UDAYAN MUKHERJEE

SOMETHING IMPORTANT HAPPENED at Sharad Pawar's residence last week. Not that the Opposition leaders met again — there have been plenty of these recently. But, there was talk of a Common Minimum Programme (CMP) — something a lot of citizens, particularly those disillusioned with the performance of the current NDA government, have been waiting for. A vision that all these various state parties, who are vying to present an alternative to the electorate, can agree and sign-off on. On this may hinge the nation's choice of plumping for a federal style coalition government or handing Narendra Modi another term to prove himself.

A lot of voters believe, correctly, that Modi is betraying tell-tale signs of desperation. The recent reservation for economically weaker sections and the handouts in the "interim" budget all point to that. Desperation is usually punished by voters. Opposition parties have to be careful not to fall into this desperation trap themselves. In that, Rahul Gandhi's recent reckless announcements about farm loan waivers and basic income schemes should be viewed with caution. It can easily be interpreted as a race to the bottom. What voters need is a calm, well-thought out programme which is less a sheet full of unattainable promises, like they witnessed in 2014, and more of an action plan meant to address the country's deep structural faultlines. We don't need another promise of "acche din" but a lay-out of the road that can get us somewhere close. The Common Minimum Programme needs honesty, not bravado.

The vision plan has to start with jobs, as this has been Modi's biggest failure. The CMP should avoid the mistake of putting out an annual job target like Modi's 20 million jobs a year, which he fell woefully short of. Rather, the nation needs a plan. As an example, the CMP could point to the pathetic 1.6 per cent growth in exports over the NDA's term and make a promise to focus on creating a manufacturing base for exports which can potentially create millions of jobs, as witnessed in other Asian economies like Bangladesh and Vietnam. Like we have a fiscal responsibility plan which pressurises the government to stick to deficit targets, the CMP can impose a target of bringing down unemployment from the current four-decade high of 6.1 per cent to 3 per cent during its tenure.

Intrinsically linked to the vision on job creation, is an overhaul of India's education system, which has to find place in the CMP. Our education system, primary or graduate level, is not producing employable workers and that is at the root of the jobs crisis. The CMP could announce the setting up of an education reform task force, helmed by credible technocrats with a firm implementation deadline. Budget outlays for education need to be augmented significantly.

A comprehensive farm sector policy should be the other pillar of any CMP. And this cannot hinge on promises of farm loan waivers, however politically expedient they may be. India's problem of falling farm prices and yields is structural and has been left unaddressed during the Modi tenure. The CMP can hold out a promise of "temporary" income support relief but introduce a longer-term plan to address the problem. Else it would be walking into the same trap that the NDA fell into. And if the opposition parties have set their hearts on a Universal Basic Income plan, then the CMP must include a promise to have such a plan vetted by the best economic minds on the subject before implementation. This is too important a subject to be left to the whims of politicians and bureaucrats.

The CMP also needs to promise a comprehensive relook at our reservation policy. Without resorting to a reckless "everyone will be included" kind of promise, a progressive, equitable and inclusive reservation policy should feature prominently in the list of objectives. In addressing all this, the Opposition should not forget to dispel any notion that corporate India will get the wrong end of the stick — that will be a colossal mistake. In an attempt to prove that it isn't a "suit boot ki sarkar", the Opposition has to be careful not to go to the other extreme. A word of assurance in the CMP about a stable tax regime and fiscal rectitude will allay such fears.

In addressing all these issues which are economic at core, the CMP cannot lose sight of its key social objectives, as this is what will separate it from Modi's tenure at the helm. A clear, unequivocal promise has to be made of zero tolerance to any kind of communal divisiveness. Violence against any minority — Dalit, Christian or Muslim — will be dealt with severely by the state. Hindus need not fear, they can hardly ever be discriminated against in India, but the government will not turn a blind eye to injustices — such as cow vigilantism — meted out using religion as a pretext. Every leader of the Opposition has to endorse this promise. India's social fabric does need some stitching.

Finally, the electorate has to be assured that this will be a stable government. This is the mother of all manifesto promises as it is precisely this fear that keeps voters away from coalition formations. All prominent leaders have to take a pledge that they will not use their position in the government as a bargaining chip and hold it to ransom with threats of pulling the coalition down, on any disagreement. There will always be differences, but they will never be bigger than the interest of the nation. If the CMP cannot agree on this, there is no deal. Modi will use his powers of oration to seed doubts about stability and snatch away another term. If the Opposition wants Modi out, then they will have to tolerate each other, and the CMP has to demonstrate that.

This is a watershed election for India. A lot of Indians want to desperately believe that there is another alternative. The CMP will be the litmus test.

Mukherjee is consulting editor, CNBC and author of the novel Dark Circles

VIEW FROM THE RIGHT

SELECTIVE OUTRAGE

THE EDITORIAL IN *Organiser* says that in Bharat, even murders and lynchings are termed as "secular" and "communal". It adds that there is a stark contrast in the media coverage and political responses between the unfortunate killings of Akhlaq of Dadri in Uttar Pradesh and Ramalingam of Thirubuvanam in Tamil Nadu. "What has been popularly discussed as 'Dadri lynching' and later popularised as 'cow lynching' by the narrative builders and members of the Award Wapasi gang was a 'communal' murder. Look at the headlines in some of the reports. 'Indian man lynched over beef rumours', 'Dadri lynching' and 'India's cow vigilantes'. The 'akhlaq lynching' is reminded systematically under some or the other pretext (sic). Mind you, this was all happening under the Samajwadi Party regime and not the 'Yogi Raj'," the editorial claims. The same narrative was peddled in the Junaid murder case and Pehlu Khan's killing, the editorial notes. It adds that in the case of Ramalingam's lynching, the same media houses have gone silent. Ramalingam was a "Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) activist, he was killed in front of his son. The FIR clearly identifies the motive 'to warn others' who oppose the religious conversion by extremists and still the secular silence continues. These double standards and selective outrage are the root cause of communal tensions," the editorial points out. It adds that the killing of Akhlaq was used to create an anti-Bharat narrative while the killing of Ramalingam would strengthen the anti-Bharat forces.

A report in *Panchjanya* notes that political parties in the state were biased in the Ramalingam case. Initially, only the BJP condemned the incident. DMK chief M K Stalin condemned the killing after two days on Twitter.

TWITTER'S BIASES

AN ARTICLE IN *Organiser* says that sinister attempts are being made to subvert the democratic and political process and create a biased narrative to influence the 2019 elections through popular social media platforms, especially Twitter, which has been hijacked by neo-Left intellectuals, media, pseudo-seculars and jihadis. The article says that free and fair means of communication are *sine qua non* of democracy and if the means of communication are biased, exclude people on social, religious, political, ideological, or any other ground, democracy gets vitiated. "This is made even worse if the means of communication are owned by a foreign company," the article contends. It adds that Twitter has a systematic bias against users who are nationalist in their thoughts and action. It notes that the Parliamentary Committee on Information Technology issued summons to Twitter officials on February 5.

FIVE THREATS

AN ARTICLE in *Organiser* talks of a warning which it wants India to pay heed to. Outside powers could try to change public opinion and generate mistrust among the common people during this year's general election. The article adds that there are many ways in which nations have accomplished regime changes abroad — bags of cash have been delivered, scandalous stories leaked to foreign newspapers, hundreds of social media accounts supporting radical groups have been created, and millions of social media users have been contacted. While talking about the forthcoming general election, the article says that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emerged as a powerful world leader. "His unique efforts in outreach to small, medium and powerful nations, including many neighbours, has unsettled many regional and world powers who are having less say in the affairs of such countries. It is due to these powers who don't like his rise, many security experts have opined that there may be attempts or interventions to stop his electoral prospects in 2019, (sic)" article reads. It contends that five forces could try to sabotage the electoral process: China, Pakistan, the Church, those influencing the Muslim electorate and social media companies.

DYNASTY AGAIN

THE EDITORIAL IN *Panchjanya* says that the rise of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra in the Congress after the appointment of Rahul Gandhi as the party's president cannot be called a healthy practice in a democracy. It points out that there is no scope for the youth in the Congress party, which promotes the next generation of a particular family. The editorial points out that the Congress has become a party that breaks the trust of people to benefit one family. "For example, there are allegations against some ex-chief ministers of Congress-ruled states that they ignored the laws and rules to arrange lands for the companies associated with the 'family'." It notes that the Congress was in a shock after the road-show of Rahul and Priyanka because the "lucky" bus arranged from Punjab could not create magic for the brother-sister duo. "It was because of the media management of the party that no camera moved from 'beautiful faces waving hands' to the roads to tell the real number of people there," the editorial points out.

Compiled by Lalmani Verma

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FOR THE FARMER

THIS REFERS TO the article 'A race to atone for neglect of the farmer' (IE, February 19). It is true that the token sops and schemes being promised for the agricultural sector by various parties before the general election are not going to tackle its longstanding problems. The politically ambitious BJP, however, must not hesitate to implement sure-fire measures that bring about structural reforms and make this sector distress-free.

Tarsem Singh, *Mahilpur*

LG VERSUS CM

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Who rules?' (IE, February 19). The role and power of lieutenant governors (LGs) in union territories should be redefined. The confrontation between chief ministers and LGs often turn into long-drawn judicial battles, as has happened in Delhi. The Puducherry governor, Kiran Bedi, is certainly wrong in blocking the state government's proposals on social welfare schemes.

Sanjay Chawla, *Amritsar*

BRING PAK TO BOOK

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'After Pulwama' (IE, February 18). India has not been successful in its efforts to tame Pakistan. Though India used coercive means like Operation Parakram in 2001-2002, these did not yield the desired results. China's blind backing for Pakistan has emboldened Islamabad. India has tried surgical strikes across the LOC to dismantle terror camps but even this did not stop Pakistan. India has to find an option to change this calculus.

Lal Singh, *Amritsar*

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'After Pulwama' (IE, February 18). There is no single response which can pressure Pakistan to end its proxy war. India will have to target Pakistan on multiple fronts, especially on the international relations' front. India can negotiate with China, since India has significant trade relations with it. Saudi Arabia and the UAE too have shown an inclination to improve relations with India in recent years.

Nishant Parashar, *Chandigarh*

Opinion

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2019

IMPROVING AGRI-INCOMES

Trilochan Mohapatra, director general of ICAR

We have to increase the production of crops and animals. We also have to use our natural resources efficiently. This has to be done despite the challenge of climate change while still ensuring better returns to the farmers

Linking loan rates to external benchmarks a bad idea

Loan rates must be linked to the cost of funds. If banks' margins don't cover cost, they will resort to lazy banking

RBI HAS SUGGESTED banks link their floating rate retail loans and loans to micro and small enterprises to an external benchmark. This would hit lenders' margins since retail deposits account for the bulk of their resources. To be sure, there is a case for more transparency in the lending practices and processes; customers' complaints, that banks are not always passing on a saving in the cost of funds, are probably true. The Janak Raj committee found banks are inflating the base rate by deviating in an "ad hoc manner" from the methodologies prescribed for calculating the base rate and the MCLR (Marginal Cost of Funds Lending Rate).

Moreover, they are tweaking the rate to make sure it doesn't fall in proportion to the drop in the cost of funds. Apart from "inappropriately" calculating the rates, new components have been brought in to get the rate to a desired level. These are clearly not desirable. However, the solution probably lies in regular monitoring and penalising lenders if they deviate from the norms enough to make it hurt. Stiff penalties should ensure banks fall in line.

Loan rates need to be linked to the cost of funds. Unless banks make enough of a margin to cover their costs, they will resort to lazy banking. They need to keep interest rates on deposits at attractive levels, else they will not attract enough resources to be able to lend. This is important at a time when the rate of growth of deposits is relatively slow vis-à-vis the growth in loans. The committee has noted that, although bank deposits have some distinct advantages in the form of stable returns (vis-à-vis mutual fund schemes) and liquidity (vis-à-vis small saving schemes), they are at a disadvantage in terms of tax-adjusted returns in comparison with these schemes. The rate of growth of deposits has stayed below 10% for nearly two years now whereas loans are growing at a faster pace.

External benchmarks suffer from one flaw or another. The main challenge in using either T-bill rates or CD rates as the benchmark, as the committee has observed, is that these markets are not deep enough and are therefore vulnerable to manipulation. Moreover, T-bill rates may, on occasion, reflect fiscal risks which will automatically get transmitted to the credit market when used as a benchmark. CD rates are highly sensitive to liquidity conditions, credit cycles, and seasonality. Again, the repo rate, while reflecting the appropriate rate for the economy, suffers from the lack of a term structure; also, banks have appropriate limited access to funds at the repo rate.

The other proposal that banks are miffed about is that the spread—cushion over the base rate or MCLR reflecting the credit profile of the borrower—be left unchanged unless there is a change in the rating. So the spread can be raised only if the credit profile of the borrower deteriorates. Banks are guilty of playing around with the spreads—the committee notes these are changed arbitrarily for borrowers of a similar quality. Some banks are believed to be charging spreads that are excessive and are doing so consistently. This is unacceptable and RBI should insist the spread remains unchanged during the life of the loan.

Need jobs, not wage hike

Sharp hike in minimum wage will lead to reduction in staffing

EVEN IF YOU choose not to pay attention to the leaked report of the NSSO, which shows a surge in unemployment rates in 2017-18 rising up to 15-20% levels among the youth, the Labour Bureau's annual employment-unemployment survey shows pretty similar results for 2015-16. While unemployment rates were 3.7% across the country, they were as high as 10.3% for those in the 15-29 age group and, within this, as high as 30% for graduates; essentially, the Labour Bureau data showed that unemployment rates rose as people got more educated. Such high levels of unemployment are unfortunate at any point in time but, in an election year, can spell disaster for those seeking re-election.

It is not clear how accurate even the labour bureau data is, though some other evidence suggests it may not be totally inaccurate either. Exports growth, particularly in labour-intensive sectors like ready-made garments, creates a lot of jobs, but this has been quite poor over the last few years—while overall exports contracted from $314 bn in 2013-14 to $304 bn in 2017-18, ready-made garment exports rose by under 12% in the four-year period. Construction of housing is another employment generator, but a combination of demonetisation, RERA and the overall war against black money has hit its growth.

In such a situation, why the government would want to more than double the minimum wage, from ₹4,576 per month today to a suggested ₹9,750 is not clear; a report by the VV Giri National Labour Institute Fellow, Anoop Satpathy, made public by the labour ministry, suggests this. Over and above this, it recommends an additional house rent of ₹1,430 per month for urban workers. The proposal, once the Central government accepts it, needless to say, is not binding on states—various region-specific rates have been suggested in the report—but once the Centre moves on this, there is pressure to raise wages; more so, given the number of states ruled by the BJP.

In a period of high growth, when firms' profits are growing fast, along with turnover, such a wage hike can probably be absorbed. But when, as now, economic growth is slow and profits squeezed, the impact could be to reduce labour-intensity. In such a situation, chances are employers will look to find ways to replace labour due to the steep hike. This was happening even well before the current controversy over jobs-growth—Crisil analysis shows a lowering of labour-intensity across most sectors—and this could reduce growth further. A cynical view may be that workers may be influenced more by the wage hike than the possibility of jobs reducing, but a useful corollary is that of MSPs for farm products. The government increased them dramatically to get farmer votes but since this was not matched with an increase in procurement, farmers remained unimpressed; and that, then, necessitated the minimum-income package in the budget.

JFactor

While caste's hold on household incomes is falling vis-a-vis education, research shows gender has a complex interplay with sub-castes

DATA FROM THE ICE PRICE 360° survey shows that caste is getting increasingly irrelevant to the income status of households. What matters is the level of education attained by the earning member(s). But, much of the government intervention for socioeconomic empowerment remains caste-focused. Worse, as research by Shareen Joshi and Nishtha Kochhar of Georgetown University and Vijayendra Rao of the World Bank Development Research Group, that became part of the book, *Towards Gender Equity in Development*, shows, when it comes to interplay with gender, whatever limited efficacy (going by the PRICE 360° data) caste-based interventions could be having is further marred by the fact that it is *jatis* (sub-castes) that influence the impact of interventions more than caste-based classification of government-programme/policy targets. Perhaps, a 'one-size-fits-all' approach successive governments have had for decades could be exacerbating intra-caste inequalities when it comes to gender. The complex interplay between *jati*, class and gender thus merits much greater attention than it has received.

The authors admit that placing sub-castes within the boundaries of the varna system or government-classification of caste is a very complicated issue, but cite earlier research that shows *jati*-based networks have a considerable influence on an individual's prospects of marriage, employment and out-migration. They also cite research that separately show that there are large "differences in the allocation of benefits within the Scheduled Caste classification by *jati*" and *jati*-level population proportions "have significant implications for electoral outcomes". The author's analysis of caste-level and *jati*-level data shows that women's autonomy relating to key household decisions and participation in the labour force broadly gains in strength as we go down the pyramid of caste-based "hierarchy" in three states—Bihar, West Bengal and Odisha. Within *jatis*, in Bihar and Tamil Nadu, women from the most marginalised *jatis* show a greater degree of autonomy on labour participation and socioeconomic decisions. In Odisha, while the Schedule Caste women have greater autonomy on labour force participation than their general category peers, on mobility, tribal women have significantly more autonomy. There will, of course, be regional variations, but empowering women could need a keener look at *jatis* if true gender equity is to be brought about.

INFLATION EXPECTATIONS

AFTER THE SHOCKS THAT HAVE HIT INFLATION (GST, OIL, FOOD, ETC) DISSIPATE, EXPECT CORE INFLATION TO STABILISE AT MUCH LOWER LEVELS, AND HEADLINE TO CONVERGE TOWARDS IT

India's lack of inflation

PRANJUL BHANDARI

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INDIA, AN ECONOMY infamous for high and sticky inflation, is currently coming to terms with the opposite phenomenon—inflation over the last year is not just falling, but falling more than expected. Inflation forecast errors have become one-sided. Moreover, inflation components continue to confound, with persistent divergence between food and core prices. In the latest reading, food inflation is at -1.3% and core inflation is at 5.8%, with a mysterious 7 percentage point gap between them. Headline inflation at 2% is well under the 4% target. The big questions doing the rounds are: why hasn't headline inflation been converging to core over the last year, as the academic papers testing for the post-2013 period suggest? Despite inflation expectations being better anchored since 2013, why is core inflation rising? Will headline inflation eventually increase all the way to 5.8% (where core currently stands)?

Does core converge towards headline or the other way around? After testing this, there is strong evidence of what some other papers have also found—that the prex-2013 period was characterised by core inflation converging to headline, and the post 2013 period being characterised by headline inflation converging to core. A combination of two forces have defined the distinct phases: (1) the nature of food price shocks and (2) the leanings of monetary policy. The pre–2013 period was characterised by rising food inflation and loose monetary policy (as characterised by real rates). Inflation expectations became unanchored. Core inflation was elevated as transitory shocks got generalised more easily. And all of this manifested in core inflation converging rapidly towards headline.

The post–2013 period is characterised by falling food prices and tight monetary policy. A combination of low global commodity prices and good harvests pushed food inflation down. Alongside this, as RBI embarked on inflation targeting, it consciously kept real rates in the positive terrain. As a result, inflation expectations became more firmly anchored. Transitory shocks began to fade away more quickly. All of this is resulting in headline converging towards core. So, if we are in a phase where inflation expectations are better anchored and there is evidence that headline is converging more towards core, why have headline and core inflation been moving in opposite directions over the last twelve months?

There have been a slew of price shocks that have distorted relative prices (of both food and core) and hindered convergence over the last year. While food inflation had been falling since 2011, the decline picked up pace in early 2018. This was led by both structural and cyclical factors. As demand recovers, the cyclical pressures could reverse. Core inflation is not in equilibrium. It is in flux, grappling with a multitude of shocks, which need careful parsing through. Expect it to stabilise at lower levels. Once the relative price distortions ease, food inflation will tick up gently and core inflation will fall to a more stable level. It is then that headline inflation will converge towards core. When thinking about inflation convergence, it is important to make note of any shock that may be prevailing during the period. In the face of price shocks, particularly those which may prevail for an extended period, headline inflation may appear not to converge to core.

What is keeping core inflation excessively elevated? How long will the shock last? Core inflation suddenly spurted up in October 2018, led by the health and education components, particularly in rural India. What were the causes? There is econometric evidence that, over time, education inflation converges back to core inflation (and core inflation does not converge to education inflation). This means that shocks to education inflation are more idiosyncratic in nature, and tend to fade away eventually. A similar test for convergence throws up evidence of both health inflation converging to core and core inflation converging to health6. This suggests that health inflation may be susceptible to both short-lived and long-lasting shocks.

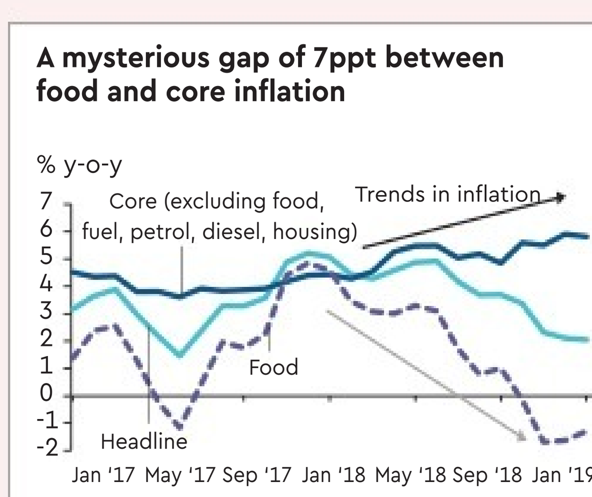
This time around, there are media reports suggesting that the spike in health inflation could have been led by any of these: (1) Since September 2018, the agency that collects rural health data has been changed from the postal office to NSSO; (2) ban on certain popular generics in India; (3) a crackdown in polluting factories in China from where a lot of medicine ingredients come, and (4) impact of the new health scheme - Modicare. While it is difficult to ascertain the exact reason of the spurt, it is worth noting that, if it is a one-time jump up in the health index (for instance, led by a change in the way data is collected), it would stay in the inflation data for a year, but dissipate thereafter. Oil at $85/barrel in mid-2018 coupled with a sharply depreciating rupee was a perfect recipe pushing core inflation higher. The fall in oil prices to the $65/b ballpark and some stabilisation in the rupee is likely to ease that pressure with some lag.

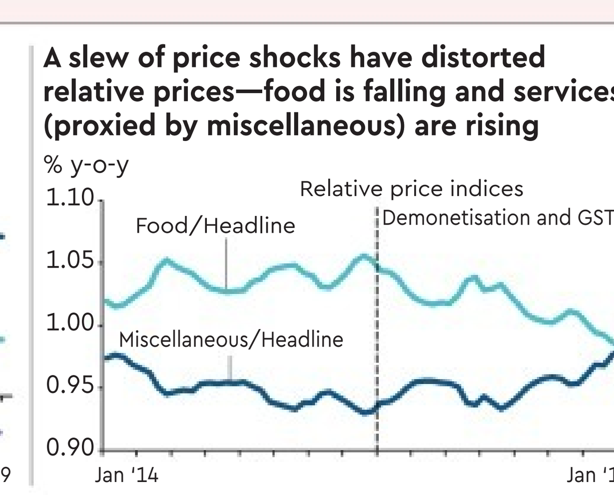
Higher GST rates, particularly for the services sector (like luxury hotels and some financial services), could have pushed up the core inflation index. This rise is likely to remain in the core inflation data for about a year, before fading. The selective cuts in GST rates over the last few months is likely to hasten the normalisation in core inflation. Once these shocks fade, core inflation could fall by 100 bps one year from now. (The risk is that some of the shocks turn out to be more long-lasting than those accounted for, keeping core inflation elevated for longer).

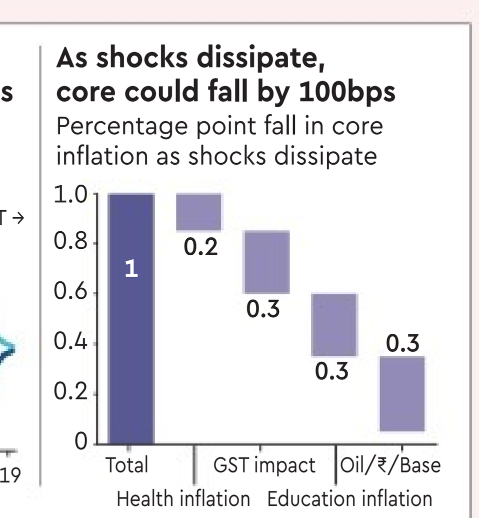
Once core inflation is on a stable footing at the 4.5-5% range (depending on the exact definition), and food inflation begins to normalise to the 3.5% levels, led by improving rural incomes and a low base, expect headline inflation to converge gradually towards core, resting at the 4% ballpark one year from now (Jan-Mar 2020). Until then, however, headline inflation could remain under 4%. Expect a 25 bps repo rate cut in the April meeting, taking the policy repo rate to 6%. Even with this, real rates will remain in the positive terrain, anchoring inflation expectations further and strengthening the process by which headline inflation converges to core.

Edited excerpts from HSBC's *India's Lack of Inflation* (February 18)

With inputs from **Aayushi Chaudhary** and **Deep Nagpal**, an economist and associate with HSBC respectively







Source: CEIC, HSBC

Interpreting India's jobs crisis

Actual investments on the ground will be a key metric for assessing the employment scenario, as opposed to headline budgetary allocation numbers

ABHIRUP BHUNIA

The author is with IPE Global, a development consulting firm

THE INDIAN JOBS crisis has been brewing for some time now. The recently revealed NSSO data, confirming a 45-year-old high unemployment rate of 6.1% has triggered fresh debate eliciting diverse perspectives on how to interpret this vital piece of data. However, there are few important facts about India's real economy which yield an easier consensus: Firstly, agriculture, which employs more than half of India's population—including disguised unemployment—will employ a progressively lower number of people, due to unresolved structural issues. In rural India, income per farmer is about a third of the income of an average non-farm worker. Plus, more than 60% of existing farmers prefer a job in the city, a survey reveals. Secondly, India's dynamic non-farm job-creating sectors (such as construction) have slowed down in the past few years. Thirdly, exports, including that of labour-intensive sectors (like textiles), have been underperforming, thanks in part due to weak global demand.

The construction sector has been one of the most dynamic in terms of job creation—second only to agriculture. Between 1990-91 to 2015-16, about 36% of all new non-farm jobs created were in construction. Due to rapid urbanisation, construction is going to remain a robust job creator in the long-term. Segments like warehousing, commercial/residential realty, and infrastructure are promising job-creating sectors for the long-term. Rural construction also has been a major contributor to employment in the sector.

The Economic Survey of 2018 anticipated realty and construction to generate 15 million jobs by 2022, while the National Skill Development Council (NSDC) put the demand for labour in real estate and construction (by 2022) at over 66 million. But the construction sector has been going through a downturn after a long period of boom. According to the National Accounts Statistics of 2018, the Gross Value Added (GVA) in construction during 2012-17 was 2.5%, compared to 10.1% between 2003-11. Various factors contributed to this slowdown, including demonetisation, indebted developers and unsold inventories.

The government's Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) has also not kept up pace. Till August 2018, only 8.34 lakh housing units were built under PMAY, against a target of 2 crore houses by 2022. Bestowing infrastructure status on housing does not seem to have produced any substantial result on the ground, yet. The infrastructure sector—a key segment for construction—has not been performing very well either. Bank credit to infrastructure sector has been growing slowly or contracting, with the spectre of stalled projects and mounting non-performing assets (NPAs) looming large. However, the rate of construction of rural roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) has grown from 100 kms per day in 2014-15 to 134 in 2017-18. The 2019 budgetary push for rural infrastructure, through an allocation of ₹19,000 crore for development of roads in rural areas under PMGSY, will potentially create additional jobs in rural construction.

Exports are significantly correlated with employment. Labour-intensive industries like textiles/apparel (employing more than 50 million directly) and gems/jewellery (employing about 5 million directly) make up more than 30% of India's export basket. The annual growth rate in India's exports has, since 2014, been tardy and has also ventured into negative territory. The value of textile and apparel exports from India rose marginally in the last four years, from $37.57 billion in FY14 to $39.20 billion in FY18.

During the same time, Bangladesh and Vietnam took much faster strides, with their textile/apparel exports-growth clocking high growth rates. A focus on apparel and textiles is beneficiary for employment as it requires relatively low investment per job. MSMEs, which account for 40% of India's total exports, have also been facing declining credit growth rate. The flagship MUDRA scheme entails provision of loans to MSMEs without collateral or security. While admirable in scope, 90% of MUDRA loans are of a ticket size of up to ₹50,000, which, as investible capital, does not reflect very bright prospects for additional job creation.

Amongst the prospective services sectors where employment is expected to grow are travel and tourism and information technology. After a slowdown, the IT sector is expected to add 250,000 jobs in 2019. The travel and tourism sector in India meanwhile is expected to add 1 million jobs annually on an average until 2028, according to an estimate by the World Travel and Tourism Council.

It would need substantial re-skilling and up-skilling to achieve this forecast, given the evolving face of tourism and hospitality, particularly its growing tech-centricism. Sectors which show promise also need a push from the government, both in terms of budgetary support, as well as through incentives. Schemes such as Swadesh Darshan Scheme, National Mission for Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD), and Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY) are well-placed to tap the enormous potential of the sector. However, actual investments on the ground will be a key metric for assessing the employment scenario, as opposed to headline budgetary allocation numbers.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Get smart

Initiatives on the part of international forums and UN bodies are often found wanting when it comes to action against rising insecurity in developing regions. Decorum and solidarity ought to be prioritised over politicisation of issues. Unsubstantiated allegations, berated remarks, adversities and internal conflicts, with a potential to hamper the geopolitical stability and public welfare, should be dealt with stringently/promptly. It is important to develop a constructive vision, viable enough to achieve in a cost-effective manner. When it comes to security on the border-line/corridors, authorities should take cognisance of additional surveillance needs, shoulder greater responsibilities and manage administrative costs/overheads efficiently. Long-term bilateral relations require much more than eye-wash/superfluous attempts, especially when one-sided cordial gestures in the past have gone down the drain

— Girish Lalwani, Delhi

True enemies

The Pulwama attack is heart-wrenching for every Indian. As reports of attacks on Kashmiri students and residents emerged from various parts of India, it is not good for the sake of the country. In this critical situation, we are duty-bound to maintain peace and communal harmony. A sinner's punishment can not be given to an innocent man. Some of the shocking developments in different parts of the country are unacceptable. Those who are seeding hatred, more enmity and disturbing communal harmony are the real enemies of India

— Wali Mohammad, Mumbai

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ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

Basic income: The Indian dilemma

Basic income is a good idea for India. It is the foundation of a more equitable and inclusive society. It provides to every citizen of India a minimum ground to stand on. To implement it meaningfully, however, we need to innovate on several fronts

SARATH DAVALA
The author is vice-chair, Basic Income Earth Network, and coordinator, India Network for Basic Income

WITH 1.3 BILLION POPULATION, the 'universal' part of the Universal Basic Income (UBI) is the most difficult to tackle in India. If we adhere to the purity of the concept and make it universal, then in the Indian context there is a great risk of diluting it since the amount that may be given to each individual may be too small to have any significant impact on people's lives.

That now pushes us back to targeting, which, through experience, we have seen that it is riddled with errors of both inclusion and exclusion. The question is: Whether targeting is inevitable to roll out a meaningful basic income? If that is so, it is necessary that we simplify it as much as possible?

A recent initiative by the Telangana government through its programme Rythu Bandhu is a case in point. This programme gave what the government called investment money to farmers twice a year at the time of the sowing season. In order to avoid targeting problems, the Rythu Bandhu programme was made both universal to all the farmers and also unconditional. All the 7 million farmers in the state were entitled to the money, and there were no conditions laid out at all—not even that a recipient farmer should necessarily cultivate her land. The recently announced PM-KISAN is a traditional model of both targeting and also adding exclusion criteria within the selected target population. But these schemes are addressing just one section of the population.

What do we do when we face a situation announced by Rahul Gandhi—the Minimum Income Guarantee for all the poor? How does one then give to all the 'poor'? Is there a way of simplifying the challenge of 'targeting poor'? We are yet to come up with an innovative way of addressing this issue.

Can there be another way of looking at this puzzle? Instead of searching for *inclusion criteria*, should we be looking at *exclusion criteria*? Even this route may not be easy to implement. If we exclude, for instance, all income-tax payers, the percentage of population we will exclude will be less than 5%. Arvind Subramanian, the former Chief Economic Advisor, speculated we should give basic income to all the women, which would ensure that the money goes to almost every household. This may be seen as discriminating against men. So, how do we solve this puzzle? That is our biggest challenge in India.

Coming to the two other elements, 'individual' and 'monthly', we observe that, in India, but for educational scholarships or old-age pensions, the general poverty alleviation grammar has always been to focus on the household. Lately, in the context of promoting women's empowerment and agency, women members of the households have been the focus—interest-free loans, subsidised cooking gas, etc. Providing income stream to individuals as part of poverty alleviation has never been the strategy of the Indian welfare system. To effectively eradicate poverty, it is necessary that we take this leap and focus on the individual. The same applies to the idea of providing basic income every month since the regularity of income provides *a sense of security* and has a strong positive psychological effect on individuals.

Coming to the question of cash versus in-kind transfers, it appears that to a large section of the intelligentsia, the idea of giving cash to the poor is highly objectionable because of its fungibility. Basically, it is the mistrust in the poor—that they *will not* spend cash for the intended purpose, and that giving cash entails the risk that the recipients may use it for entertainment and temptation goods. That is the reason the tendency of the Indian state has always been to give subsidised or free goods such as foodgrains, cooking gas, blankets, bicycles, school bags and uniforms, sarees, etc. The global research evidence, however, points to the contrary. Even the findings of the Madhya Pradesh pilot study debunk the myth that the poor will misuse cash. This tendency of our politicians and policymakers smacks of a very deep-seated paternalism, which we need to change.

Then we have the question of understanding basic income as a 'right'. For any basic income programme, there are two kinds of insurance necessary. One is insurance against the vagaries of political regimes. The best protection against this is to make basic income provision a law rather than just as a scheme, so that it cannot be withdrawn. Secondly, the real value of the basic income needs to be protected against inflation. Which means that it needs to be inflation-indexed so that the real value of the money does not get eroded with the passage of time and rise in inflation. We could think of a lead time of five years before we make a law.

Lastly, the 'unconditional' nature of basic income. This is perhaps the most radical of all the elements of UBI, and also happens to be most alien to our welfare grammar. All welfare schemes have conditionalities because we see the task of poverty alleviation as a matter of charity—a paternalistic act of giving alms to someone who has fallen behind in the race. This attitude completely overlooks the fact that large sections of the population are in a state of deprivation because of unequal opportunities; and that they have the right to partake at least minimum support from the fruits of the community as a matter of right rather than as charity. Our excessive emphasis on private property and private inheritance hides the fact that natural resources and national wealth belong to the people collectively, and that the state is just a custodian. And that there is something called public inheritance and the members of a community have a right over this public inheritance. A major transformation of perspective is needed for us to see these distinctions.

All welfare schemes have conditionalities because we view poverty alleviation as charity. This attitude overlooks the fact that a lot of people are in a state of deprivation because of unequal opportunities

Conditionalities are repugnant for another important reason. Conditionalities automatically create an army of inspectors and supervisors who get to wield enormous discretionary powers. This results in the worst forms of corruption, and results in wastage and leakages of welfare money.

Let me now conclude by emphasising that basic income is a good idea for India. It is the foundation of a more equitable and inclusive society. It provides to every citizen of India a minimum floor to stand on. To implement it meaningfully, however, we need to innovate on several fronts. And we can do that.

(*Concluded.*)

From private to public entities

KARAN MARWAH
Partner & head, Capital Markets Advisory Services, KPMG in India

Helping start-ups in India raise capital on domestic bourses

STARTUPS IN India have been coming out with innovative products and solutions catering to various segments and at multiple price points. As the ecosystem grows, the need for funding at the right cost and right time is integral to ensure that companies with the right revenue model and potential are able to raise capital. While a number of start-ups have been able to raise funding from private equity and venture capital, investors have become discerning. A way start-ups can raise capital is by listing in public markets. SEBI had introduced the Institutional Trading Platform (ITP) in 2015 to facilitate listing of start-ups, to cater to their funding requirements and facilitate trading of their shares on stock exchanges. While well-intentioned, ITP never really took off due to the onerous requirements and restrictions on the types of investors. SEBI then constituted an expert group to review the framework and suggest improvements. The group submitted its recommendations to SEBI, and the Board, in principle, approved some changes in its meeting on December 12, 2018. SEBI approved the following proposals:

1. Platform to be renamed Innovators Growth Platform (IGP);
2. To be eligible for listing on IGP, the issuer shall be a company intensively involved in using technology, IT, IP, data analytics, biotechnology or nanotechnology to provide products, services or business platforms with substantial value;
3. 25% of the pre-issue capital, of the issuer company for at least a period of two years, should have been held by:
a. Qualified institutional buyers,
b. Family trusts with a net-worth of over ₹500 crore,
c. Category-III foreign portfolio investors,
d. Pooled investment funds with minimum AUM of $150 million and registered with a financial sector regulator in the jurisdictions where it is resident. The fund should be a resident of a country whose securities market regulator is a signatory to IOSCO's MMOU (Appendix A signatories) or a signatory to bilateral MoU with SEBI and not a resident in a country identified in public statement of Financial Action Task Force as deficient in AML and combating financing,
e. Accredited investors for the purpose of IGP to include:
(i) Any individual with total gross income of ₹50 lakh annually and who has a minimum liquid net-worth of ₹5 crore, or (ii) any body corporate with a net-worth of ₹25 crore.
4. Not more than 10% of the pre-issue capital may be held by accredited investors;
5. The existing requirement of cap on holding not more than 25% of the post-issue capital by any person individually or collectively with persons acting in concert to be deleted;
6. The minimum application size and minimum trading lot to be ₹2 lakh and in multiples of ₹2 lakh thereof;
7. There would not be any requirement of minimum reservation of allocation to specific category of investors;
8. Minimum number of allottees to be 50;
9. Minimum net offer to public should be in compliance with the Minimum Public Shareholding norms and minimum offer size to be ₹10 crore; and
10. IGP to be designated as a platform for start-ups with an option to trade under regular category after one year of listing, subject to compliance with exchange requirements.

While there have been large private investments in the start-up ecosystem, we are yet to see larger companies tap the public markets

These changes proposed by SEBI can make the platform viable for start-ups to list and raise capital on domestic bourses. While there have been large private investments in the start-up ecosystem, we are yet to see larger companies tap the public markets. This is unlike the global scenario, especially in the US, where a number of large start-ups and unicorns have gone public or embarked on the journey to go public. The hope is that this creates the right ecosystem for Indian start-ups and unicorns to become public entities.

Depending on the response it receives, it may be worthwhile for the regulator to consider further easing restrictions on pre-issue holdings. Some relaxations may also be granted for the initial filing and regulatory requirements together with the recurring reporting requirements for such companies based on defined thresholds in order to ease their transition journey, from being private to public entities.

PM-KISAN

Too little, too late?

PM-KISAN is a positive step, but it can, at best, provide a basic minimum income, which needs to be supplemented by other schemes and by state governments

CSC SEKHAR
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ILLUSTRATION: SHYAM KUMAR PRASAD

AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT in the Interim Budget was the one relating to direct income transfer to farmers—under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN), ₹6,000 per year will be provided to each farming family with cultivable land up to 2 hectares (5 acres). This amount will be provided in three instalments of ₹2,000 each, and will be deposited directly into beneficiaries' accounts. PM-KISAN is fully funded by the Centre and is expected to entail annual expenditure of ₹75,000 crore. It is expected to benefit 12 crore small and marginal farmers. The support, although it appears too little and too late for farmers, may not be too late for the government, coming on the eve of the general elections.

PM-KISAN follows PM-AASHA (Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan), announced in September 2018. Measures like PMKSY (Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana), PMFBY (Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana) and eNAM (Electronic National Agriculture Market) have been launched in the last four years to address the problems facing the agriculture sector. However, the outcomes have not been very encouraging. In the Union Budget of 2018-19, an increase in MSP to cover at least 150% of the cost of production was announced. PM-AASHA, an ambitious three-pronged programme, was launched to operationalise the hiked MSP. The first component of PM-AASHA is public procurement, which has been in operation for rice and wheat for over five decades, and the related problems of over-stocking and leakages are well-known. The second component is the deficiency payments system, wherein the farmer is free to sell in the designated APMC market during a specified period, and if the market price falls below MSP, the government steps in and makes a payment (called the deficiency payment), which is equal to the difference between MSP and the market price. This scheme has been implemented in Madhya Pradesh and the experience showed that the scheme needed a lot of improvement before being scaled to the national level. A major problem with this system is delinking of supply from market demand, because of the assured price and the consequent supply-demand imbalance. The third component is private participation, wherein some designated private agencies carry out procurement of oilseeds at MSP and will be compensated up to 15% of MSP, if the market price falls below MSP. The private agency is responsible for storage, distribution, sale and related losses, if any. Because market prices of oilseeds in most states were lower by more than 20% of MSPs, the private sector was not keen to carry out pilots in any of the states. Thus, PM-AASHA has not yielded desired results and the desired outcome of ensuring higher MSPs to farmers was not realised. This resulted in discontent among farmers and threatened to hurt the electoral prospects of the ruling party. This prompted a quick rethink and a realisation that more needed to be done. Thus emerged PM-KISAN.

The significance of PM-KISAN is that, for the first time, an attempt has been made to transfer income directly to farmers without using price policy (of either inputs or output). In most of the programmes in the past, including those of previous governments, the policy instrument used has always been price. The focus has mainly been on provision of inputs at lower price (input subsidies) and provision of a higher output price (MSP). Output price support is useful when the objective is to direct allocation of resources (on the supply side) in a particular direction, but when the objective is to increase farmers' income, it is a rather weak instrument. This is because the demand side is not factored in and, therefore, needs increasing intervention of the government. Input subsidies have resulted in gross overuse of some of the resources, resulting in soil degradation and declining water tables in states like Punjab. When raising farmers' income is the main objective, direct transfer may perhaps be a more appropriate instrument.

What are the advantages and limitations of PM-KISAN? The main advantage is that the benefits are not linked to production of any crop. And since the benefits are not linked to production, the resultant supply-demand imbalance is expected to be minimal, unlike in the case of MSPs. Also, there is no need of procurement, storage and distribution of all the commodities. Instead, procurement can be limited to only those commodities that are needed for public distribution system. This should lead to much lower fiscal costs and lesser storage infrastructure.

On the flip side, since the benefits of PM-KISAN are linked to legal possession of land, no assistance can be provided to tenants, landless agricultural labourers or other vulnerable sections of the rural society. In that respect, the KALIA scheme of Odisha provides a more comprehensive coverage. Another major limitation of PM-KISAN is poor maintenance of land records, except in states such as Telangana. This may largely limit its usefulness, although there are some efforts recently, after the Interim Budget, to get updated information from states. The benefit of ₹6,000 per year (which is the upper limit) appears inadequate. This works out to a mere ₹1,200 per acre per year. This amount is inadequate considering the fact that the (weighted) average cost of cultivation, as per the latest available data, works out to more than ₹8,000 per acre per year for cereals, pulses and oilseeds. Thus, it becomes absolutely necessary for state governments to top up the amount provided under PM-KISAN from their own funds. After all, agriculture is a state subject and the major responsibility for implementation is on states. It is worthwhile to note here that most non-BJP state governments, except Telangana, have not carried out the reforms needed in state APMC Acts to benefit from eNAM. However, PM-KISAN is different, in the sense that part of the funds are already provided by the Centre, and states only need to supplement to ensure effective support to farmers. Even then, the assistance under PM-KISAN may not be adequate and there is a need to continue to provide support under other programmes such as PM-AASHA.

PM-KISAN is a positive step to provide direct income support to small and marginal farmers. But it can, at best, provide a basic minimum income that needs to be supplemented by other programmes and by state governments.

In the shadow of politics

The Supreme Court is slow to hear appeals involving divisive issues that provide ammunition to poll campaigners

OUT OF COURT

M J ANTONY

Though judiciary generally stays away from political questions, its judgments and even observations of individual judges ("caged parrot") have had powerful impact on national elections. Supreme Court interference in the 1990s' in Hawala diaries, Mandal-Masjid issues had serious consequences on the then governments. It did more harm to the parties in power than 100 speeches from platforms. In 2014, the Congress suffered humiliating defeat when the court passed a series of orders in scams like 2G spectrum, coal block allocation and the Commonwealth Games.

This time, however, the court has made disruptive matters out of sight. Politicians might wring their fingers because the judiciary is not giving them any such gifts for the coming polls. The Mandal-Masjid controversies are still simmering, the review of Rafael judgment is pending and the roles of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) are not of immediate concern. While the wheels of the government are speeding, showering benefits on the electorate, the court has apparently parked polemical matters on the sideway. Whether the delay is unintended or a deft move by the court is in the realm of delightfully vague speculation.

The previous Chief Justice Dipak Misra showed some expediency in taking up the Ayodhya appeals by listing them out of turn last year. Then he retired and the new CJ Ranjan Gogoi became the 'master of the roster'. But in a series of astrological misfortunes, the members of the Constitution Benches kept changing. First, there was a controversy over the choice of judges by the CJ acting as the master of the roster because those who had handled the case earlier were left out. That ran against the revered conventions. When it was corrected after clamour, one judge in the new bench had to recuse because as a lawyer he had represented Kalyan Singh, who was the UP chief minister when the structure was demolished. A new bench was formed, but one judge was "unavailable" for undisclosed reasons. The next hearing is set for March 14, gods willing.

Even if the bench formation is final, the verdict would not come very soon without divine intervention. The judges have to plod through deposition of 88 witnesses, running into 13,886 pages, 257 related documents and video tapes, earlier court orders running into 4,304 printed pages and 8,533 typed pages. Thousands of pages in Persian, Sanskrit and other languages have to be meticulously translated. The judges have to hear counsel for some 14 parties and governments. Considering the normal pace at which proceedings go, it might take months to get a decision. Instead of swearing against this situation, one would be grateful that the public are spared the cacophony or calamity that could follow a hurried decision.

Another campaign topic, the Rafael deal, is also on the back burner. The controversial judgment is not likely to be reviewed very soon. The government has moved the Supreme Court pointing out judicial errors in understanding phrases in the documents it had handed over to the judges in sealed covers. Meanwhile, several new facts have tumbled out into public domain. A review petition is meant to correct 'errors apparent on the record' and to reconsider a judgment in the light of new facts before the court.

Also under the carpet is another bitter dispute — 10 per cent reservations for economically backward among forward classes. The Mandal judgment of 1992 has been tweaked too many times by the court and the state governments have incrementally sapped the affirmative principle enshrined in the Constitution. The latest amendment has been challenged for violating its basic structure. The final answer would not come in time for politicians to pull chestnuts out of the fire. Another sensitive dispute over the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act is also on hold.

Taking a peek into the dockets, one would find other burning issues like the finalisation of NRC, Article 370 granting special status to Jammu & Kashmir, the entry of young women into Sabarimala temple and the status of AMU. Justice delayed on such subjects has deprived election campaigners much fodder, but the public has been mercifully saved to some extent from the shrill debate.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Back together

TWITTER @BJP4INDIA

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), said sources, used its trump card to get the Shiv Sena to agree to an alliance in Maharashtra. The alliance was announced on Monday after a meeting between BJP President Amit Shah and Shiv Sena Chief Uddhav Thackeray. During the meeting, the BJP leadership told Sena's interlocutors that the party did not consider the Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and Raj Thackeray's Maharashtra Navanirman Sena (MNS) as "political untouchables". That was the "trigger" for the Sena to lower its guard on the issue of an alliance. "The fear of NCP and MNS forming an alliance behind the curtain was conveyed successfully to the Shiv Sena leadership," a BJP leader said. The Sena has also been promised more portfolios at the Centre, BJP sources said.

Inextricably linked

Meghalaya Governor Tathagata Roy on Tuesday tweeted, "An appeal from a retired colonel of the Indian Army: Don't visit Kashmir, don't go to Amarnath for the next two years. Don't buy articles from Kashmir emporia or Kashmiri tradesman who come every winter. Boycott everything Kashmiri. I am inclined to agree." Many questioned whether the governor thought Kashmir is not part of India. "People like Tathagata want Kashmir but without Kashmiris... He will be best placed to know he cannot have one without the other so what's it to be?" former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah (*pictured*) asked on a social media platform.

Distress anthem?

Following the great opening of *Gully Boy*, the film's title song *Apna time aayega* (our time will come) has become an anthem of sorts for the underdog or those in distress. The song has touched a raw nerve among stock market players. Given the continuous slide in stock prices, particularly of smaller companies, many investors and brokers can be heard humming *apna time aayega* — keeping afloat hopes that the market will soon see a reversal in trend. The Sensex on Tuesday fell for a ninth straight day — its longest losing streak in eight years.

Why Roposo is the bellwether for social apps

It has successfully managed to break into the next level of Indian customers that Facebook and Google have been struggling to do

PATANJALI PAHWA

Roposo

Founded	2014
Time spent	29 minutes
Men: Woman	2:3
Daily active users	1.6 million
Monthly active users	8 million
Posts per month by users	7.5 million

TAKE TWO

Towards the end of last year it came in two tranches. Reports speculated that it was a down round — that is, when a company raises capital on a valuation lower than the previous round. A month later, the second part of the fund-raise landed and it was not. Roposo, the regional language social network, had raised money almost 18 months after it first pivoted from a social commerce app to a social networking platform. The investors, Tiger Global and Bertelsmann, together put in around $11 million.

Roposo in the grand scheme of things is not a big player. It has raised almost $31 million since it was founded in 2014. It faces off against bigger players in ShareChat, which in September 2018 raised $100 million, valuing itself at almost $500 million. There are others too. Hike announced last year, as it laid off 25 per cent of its staff, that it would be pivoting away from the messenger and now becoming a social app. In a recent blog post, Hike founder Kavin Mittal said he would be divorcing the messenger part of the app from the social app. Sources say all the remaining funds will be diverted to the social app. But this could also be the start of the race.

Since Roposo's investment came in over a year after it pivoted, it can be safely assumed that both Tiger Global and Bertelsmann believed in the pivot and hence followed on. So, we potentially have three well-funded Indian companies vying for the customer's attention and there are more. Clip App, which is backed by India Quotient and Matrix Partners, and there are also the Chinese, which include Helo and Tik Tok (both part of the Bytedance family).

Roposo's started as a gifting website, then it realised that with fashion it could get the stickiest of all customers: women. It then pivoted to a social commerce platform. Roposo encouraged customers to create a feed of their favourite clothes across e-commerce websites, encouraged customers to pair their clothes with different accessories and create a look. It also got customers deals on styles. "We essentially behaved like an affiliate," says Mayank Bhangadia, co-founder and CEO, Roposo. Affiliates are companies that make a commission on bringing customers to e-commerce websites. The feed developed and so did Roposo. From just pictures, customers started posting small videos. Then things changed. As fashion e-commerce sites went, there was a definite consolidation. The use case for affiliates was fading. Roposo could either start private labels or do something different. In 2017, Roposo had evolved to a version of Pinterest meets Instagram, meeting affiliate sales. But then a new path opened. "People started posting short videos of not just fashion but also food and travel," says Bhangadia. And that's when something clicked — it could pivot and monetise this part of the business.

Today, the company has 1.6 million active users a day. Customers spend an average of 29 minutes a day on the app. It isn't the levels of ShareChat, which is at around 10 million active users a day. But it is getting there, Bhangadia believes. "Roposo wants to replicate the TV experience," he adds. And in chasing that the company has over 25 channels in different languages across genres.

But the fact remains that the sector is crowded with everyone focusing on video. What's brought on this gold rush? Bhangadia credits this to the emergence of Jio. "When Jio came two things got popular in India: WhatsApp and YouTube," says a former Google India employee who now works at one of the Indian unicorns. He explains that people who never had access to the internet found a brand new way of passing time. "And for this group, internet was an elitist concept," he adds.

A Delhi-based venture investor describes the exuberance perfectly. "Technology companies say they have the 1.3 billion potential customers. Let's burst that myth first," he says. You can remove 600 million people from the 1.3 billion who are too poor to be included in any of this. Their primary objective is to put food on the table and roof over their heads. Now, you have 700 million people. "The top 100 million of this are those who are super users in India," he adds. They order on Amazon, use Swiggy and book flights on MakeMyTrip. There is a layer of 100 million right under this who are on Facebook, Twitter, use Flipkart but their most high-value online transaction is IRCTC. That leaves 500 million people, those who have smartphones but only use WhatsApp. They stand in queue to buy train tickets. They don't like Facebook or Instagram, English makes them uncomfortable and prefer video to text.

There are roughly 500 million people in this group. They don't like Facebook and Instagram, as English makes them uncomfortable and prefer video to text. This 500 million are people who have nothing built for them. And that's why the likes of ShareChat and Roposo have caught so much traction. It is easy, bite-sized entertainment, which can handle low speeds and the standard of content is much lower.

"It is not a short-term play," says a Mumbai-based PE investor who is aware of Roposo's plans. He explains that step one in all video sites will be to create stars. Roposo and ShareChat both have their own ad network where everything from phones to apparel is advertised. Roposo has a small layer where it enables e-commerce. But once all this is built, then what?

The answer is Facebook or Google. Facebook has been trying to break into the next level of Indian customers, a data stream that is invaluable for it to sell ads to but it hasn't been able to get past that layer. Google has been trying to build a social network for years and has found no success. A version of ShareChat or Roposo is ripe for acquisition. "If either of these two execute properly, you will see companies pay good money for them," says the PE investor. But there are so many in the business now, it is difficult to see how consolidation will play out in a few years.

INSIGHT

Away from the traditional combat air projects

India has ambition; the UK has expertise. Identify areas to collaborate as the next step

DOMINIC ASQUITH

Almost 40 years ago, the United Kingdom (UK) decided to privatise its defence industry. This did not happen overnight, and was one part of a major change in the way industry related to government as its customer. That new relationship took time to develop. It is still doing so. But even today, private sector business acumen combines with a strong government relationship to make British defence manufacturers among the best exporters in the world.

This week, I will be accompanying some top-rated British manufacturers as well as delegates from the UK government to Aero India in Bengaluru. As two countries with capability and global ambition, this week will be all about looking for areas where we can collaborate.

India has a growing defence capability, and ambitions to become a globally competitive force. More Indian companies than ever will come to Bengaluru and join the international defence industry in competing for opportunities.

That global competitiveness is born of necessity as well as economic ambition. As well as contributing to gross domestic product (GDP), domestic defence industries are an essential part of a strong defence capability, but most also need international orders to survive.

Defence procurement is a complex process. It has to deliver strategic capability and satisfy the tactical requirements of the end user. It must meet the financial constraints of the budget holder, yet create a sustainable commercial opportunity for the manufacturer. Highly capable military forces require specialised equipment, but the more specialised and tailored that equipment becomes, the less adaptable it is to the needs of other customers.

The UK acknowledges this. As a team, it brought together industry, military end users, budget holders and procurement experts to understand what new approaches might work.

India has a growing defence capability, and ambitions to become a globally competitive force. More Indian companies will join the international defence industry in competing for opportunities

As a result, we changed not only our approach to procurement, but also capability setting. Emphasis was placed on flexibility rather than specialisation, enabling designs to be adapted for different end-user purposes. New procurement methods, focusing on cost and speedy delivery, enabled government and industry to adopt a fairer approach to managing risk and opportunity. A closer relationship with industry has helped us adopt new methods of delivery that increase capability rapidly and affordably whilst reducing errors in the supply chain. The delivery of a project on time and on budget is now a realistic goal. In addition, more emphasis has been placed on creating international partnerships to develop new technologies, in programmes that are focused on themes of global importance – including here in India.

These principles are exemplified by the UK's Combat Air Strategy. The UK government committed almost £2 billion to our Future Combat Air System Technology Initiative (FCAS TI), which uses that funding to invest in our national industry capability and develop the next generation of combat air technologies. Additional funding for FCAS TI has been provided from the UK industry through a project called Tempest. FCAS TI is about so much more than designing a Typhoon replacement — it focuses on a wide range of technologies that could contribute to our current and future air capability.

In line with these principles, the FCAS TI is "international by design" and is open to collaboration with foreign industry and governments — like India — where it is mutually beneficial to do so. Additionally, since it is not focused on a specific single product as an output, international partners will be able to work together with the UK on new technologies that they can apply to their own products and programmes.

We have also initiated our programme to replace Typhoon from 2040, known as the Combat Air Acquisition Programme (CAAP). This programme will explore the best solution to deliver future capability, underpinned by a flexible approach to partnering. This could result in collaboration on sub-systems, which are then used on indigenous systems, or collaborating on systems themselves. It seeks to maximise the ability to leverage the technology and industrial strengths of all nations who wish to participate.

This model is a world away from traditional combat air projects, where companies came together to design and develop a product around a set of requirements. CAAP and FCAS TI aim to move away from a traditional transactional approach to one in which we jointly develop world-leading capabilities in a collegiate manner which encourages creative approaches, underpinned by joint strategic goals.

At Aero India, I will be joined by colleagues from the UK ministry of defence and the Royal Air Force who are keen to work more closely with India. With our experience and cutting-edge expertise, the capability of India's industry and the demand from the Indian government for state of the art combat air technology, I sincerely believe that India and the UK are natural partners.

The author is the UK High Commissioner

LETTERS

Risky business

This refers to your article "Promoters' pledged share up 60%" (February 19). Pledging of shares is risky as share values are prone to market risks. Share appropriation as security for loans up to an average of 60 per cent will result in weak capital investment for promoters due to fluctuating share markets. There may be an abrupt fall in the value of shares in the stock market due to which their appropriation as security may be below par and even in some cases worthless. It, in the process, leads to capital erosion. Pledging of shares may appear to be an easy way of realising quick market returns but trading in this area should be minimal.

Its impact on capital outflow and resultant fall in net asset value in adverse market conditions will thus harm all investors — be it share or debenture holders. This happens all the more when the gap between the promoter's listed wealth and the promoter's personal wealth is too narrow for investor comfort. The minority shareholder will be the worst affected. Hence, a reduction in the percentage for pledging in shares is essential to ensure a strong capital base for smooth conduct of business. A high percentage of investment in shares will also lead to desperate management decisions for immediate market survival than efficient business planning.

C Gopinath Nair Kochi

Stand united

This has reference to your editorial "A self-goal" (February 19). The incidents of violence and alleged harassment of Kashmiris in many parts of the country are highly condemnable. Kashmir is an integral part of India and our Constitution guarantees many privileges to Kashmiri people. Yet, they have been the most affected lot ever since independence. Many laws enforced to control the terrorist activities are directly affecting the normal life of the people of the Valley. Though the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act was withdrawn in 1995, more than 19,000 cases registered under this Act are still pending for disposal. In India, the maximum cases of human rights violations are reported in Kashmir.

The whole population of Kashmiri people should not be held responsible for the gruesome activities of terrorists. The best way to fight this nuisance, as you have correctly mentioned, is to show solidarity with Kashmiris. We should stand with Kashmiri people in their hour of need and gain their confidence to fight against cross-border sponsored terrorist activities.

Nujum Mayyanad New Delhi

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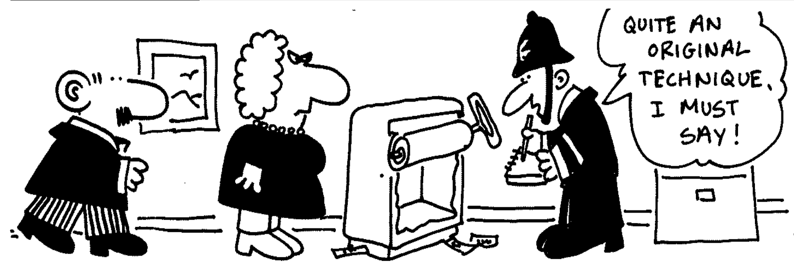
HAMBONE



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Soft on promoters, still

Jet bailout should not allow equity holders too much leeway

Jet Airways is selling a majority stake to its lenders for ₹1, under a complicated arrangement that is on track to be put on vote on February 21. A group of lenders led by State Bank of India has proposed taking a 50.1 per cent stake in India's largest full-service carrier through the issuance of 114 million new shares — something that is allowed under a framework outlined by the Reserve Bank of India last year. The procedure, applicable for companies with a negative net worth, is called bank-led provisional resolution plan, and needs to be approved by all stakeholders including the promoter group and the board of Etihad, which owns 24 per cent of Jet. This is not a permanent solution, but only a holding mechanism pending a full equity infusion.

While it is, of course, good news that Jet may not go under — it is important that Jet survives in order to ensure decent competition in the civil aviation sector, which is increasingly being dominated by low-cost carrier IndiGo — there are other aspects of this proposed bailout that should give rise to concern. For one, it is planned that the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) might contribute some of the money required to address Jet's ₹8,500 crore debt. This is puzzling. The NIIF was set up to energise private investment in the infrastructure sector, and is a fund shared between private investors and the government. The purpose is to invest in greenfield infrastructure projects of the sort that are simply not getting built with private capital at the moment. However, using NIIF to bail out Jet is a very bad signal. It will convey to future private partners that the fund will be put at the disposal of the government even for politically convenient corporate rescues. It is hard to see why private investors will then trust the fund going forward. There are also real questions to be asked about whether banks should own a majority stake for any length of time in a company that operates in a profoundly risky sector such as aviation.

There is also the question of why, in this debt-to-equity deal involving a special rights issue, Jet founder and head Naresh Goyal should be permitted to retain a 20-21 per cent stake — a little less than half of his current 50 per cent. But the question is why Mr Goyal is being allowed to retain any stake at all after a bail-out plan. If lenders such as banks are taking a haircut, then basic principles of finance as well as proper incentives for promoters requires equity holders such as Mr Goyal to not get a share of the pie. Equity risk is greater than debt risk, and debt holders should be paid before equity holders get anything. It appears the deal being worked out is far too soft on Jet's promoter — and is reminiscent of the banks' forbearance for Kingfisher Airlines, when they poured money while allowing Vijay Mallya to retain a hold on the airline. In effect, banks are risking public money on a private airline yet again (SBI alone holds a quarter of Jet's total debt). Such deals were to have stopped, so why are they still being offered to promoters?

In search of champions

Marquee businesses are diminishing with alarming frequency

In India's recent business history, the late nineties can be considered the age of the automobile industry and infrastructure, and the first two decades of the 21st century saw multiple booms in information technology, aviation, telecom, real estate, retail and health care. Approaching the start of the third decade, however, any bank looking to lend to corporations in high-growth, and relatively low-risk, businesses would be hard put to find them. IT is slowly reaching its zenith, and without a great leap forward in business models is likely to decline. Telecom is struggling under high debt and acute competition; real estate is stuck in a long slump of oversupply and physical retail struggles with footfalls, competition from e-commerce and rising costs. E-commerce, the flavour of the past decade, will continue to grow on the back of private equity and venture capital that, by definition, can absorb the greater losses of this nascent business. But no one in this space is anywhere near making money. In short, there are few champions to be found in India Inc today.

The past year alone has seen marquee names in several key industries on the verge of losing control of their businesses. For instance, after multiple serial governance failures, the Singh brothers are out of Fortis and Religare, and are tied up in bizarre cases against each other as well as against the Japanese buyers of Ranbaxy, once a racehorse of the pharmaceutical business. Jet Airways, whose share price is a third of what it was a year ago after it defaulted on bank loans in January, now faces the prospect of being taken over by banks. Subhash Chandra's Essel group, which has bad debts of ₹13,000 crore sunk in an ill-chosen foray into infrastructure, is trying hard not to lose control of its flagship Zee Entertainment. Anil Ambani's Reliance Communication, whose stock now quotes at around ₹6 from ₹111.50 five years ago after lenders dumped pledged shares, has been taken to the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) by its debtor Ericsson to recover due of ₹1,154 crore.

Essar Steel's future ownership is ricocheting between the NCLT and the appellate tribunal as the promoters hope to keep a foothold. And B M Khaitan of the McLeod group announced that it will auction a major chunk of its 45 per cent stake in Eveready Batteries, the market leader in dry cell batteries and flashlights, to pare debt; last year, the group's loss-making tea flagship McLeod Russell sold several tea estates. Professionally-managed Infrastructure Leasing and Finance Services has seen its entire board and senior management replaced after it was revealed that its 348 subsidiaries had built up debts of ₹91,000 crore. The Tata group's ill-fated Tata Teleservices sold its consumer mobile business to Bharti in an extraordinary debt-free, cash-free deal, and is searching for a buyer for its fibre-optics business. Seen in its entirety, this is an extraordinary destruction of value in a short period of time. India desperately needs new champion sectors that are also profitable so that they can finance future growth.

Population, GDP and Poverty — II

Seriously tightened population policy is needed to reduce poverty

PARTHO SHOME

Last month, I discussed China's control of population growth rate that enabled it to dive below India — from the late 1960s — with a concomitant increase over India in its per capita GDP growth. Those differences continued, taking China to newer heights surpassing India during the following decades in all economic and socio-economic indicators (though not, of course, human rights, a matter I have occasionally addressed earlier).

Today's Figure 1 asks to view GDP growth rate over population growth rate— GDP per capita in a different light — and examines its behaviour. In a fashion, this variable reflects the upward pull (or downward push) of GDP growth as population is controlled (or unattended). The visual impact is immediate: While India has had a slightly upward — little better than horizontal — trend in the five decades covering 1969-2017, China's upward pull has been phenomenal until about 2010. After 2010, China's trend declined, due to loosened population policy. Clearly, a deliberate and meaningful population policy would assist India to thrust upward its per capita GDP and growth.

Another population reflecting indicator is taken in Figure 2, that of the Extreme Poverty Headcount Ratio (EPHR) — per cent of population living below $1.90 per day, for 1980-2015[1]. In 1981, 89 per cent of Chinese were living below this mark, as opposed to 57 per cent Indians, the global average being 42 per cent. Brazil, at 21 per cent, was well better than the average. The drastic improvement of China — crossing India by 2000 — is phenomenal. By 2015, the EPHR indicators had changed to 13.4 per cent for India, 3.4 per cent for Brazil, and 0.7 per cent for China, the world average being 10 per cent. Thus India remained worse than global average while China's EPHR almost disappeared. The reversal of trends was driven by China's economic effort as much as its harnessing population growth.

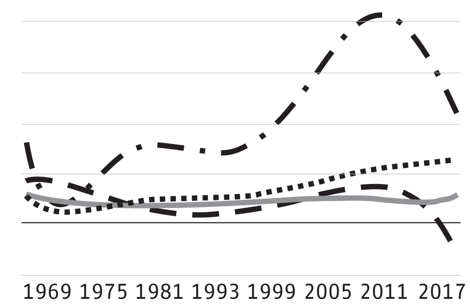
Figure 3 amplifies cross-country headcount magnitudes under EPHR during 1981-2015. Globally, there were 1.9 billion extremely poor (EPHR) in 1981 which reduced to 736 million in 2015, or a reduction of 61 per cent in 35 years. China reduced it from 878 million to 10 million — a reduction of 99 per cent, and India from 409 million to 175 million — a reduction of 57 per cent, or below average reduction. Brazil reduced it from 36 million to 7 million — a reduction of 74 per cent, or above average. It is telling that, among the three, only India's effort was below even the world average. What explains India's inability to reach the global average in the decline of extreme poverty. The answer lies at least partially in its inability to address population growth meaningfully.

To bring light to reality, while improvement in economic conditions at the individual level would lead to lower birth rates, in reverse, lower birth rates should also contribute to economic prosperity and poverty reduction. There is increasing cross-country research evidence of this two-directional relationship. For example, East Asia and South East Asia — including Thailand, Indonesia and the countries of Indochina — experienced impressive declines in their fertility rates during the last 25 years. Steven Sinding has confirmed that their "decline in poverty and improvement in living standards are attributable at least in part to (their) very successful fertility reduction policies"[2]. Evidence proferred by other social scientists is appearing from Africa as well. Clearly, countries that are Rip Van Winkles should address their lack of population strategy verily.

India's break from poverty could occur only through significantly deeper reductions in fertility buttressed by economic policies that are growth, not just subsidy, oriented. Commensurately, the ongoing Finance Commission should include population growth rate as a negative criterion for Centre-state revenue sharing. For the 2019 parliamentary elections, party manifestos should include explicit population policies to reduce the fertility rate including through a mix of incentives and disincentives. Or, do we just wring our hands at more babies being born into slavery?[3]

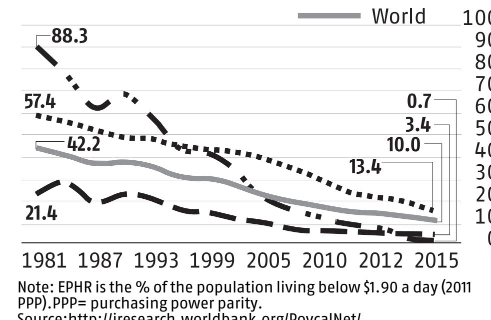
1. Thus EPHR is income based. It yields numbers lower than Multi-dimensional Poverty or Severe Multi-dimensional Poverty indices that I used in my column dated 13 November, 2018. The difference reflects their inclusion of more dimensions, than income alone, of poverty. 2. S. Sinding, "Population, poverty and economic development," Philosophical Transactions of The Royal Society, 2009, No. 364, pp. 3023-3030. 3. See my column dated 13 November 2018.

FIGURE 1: **GDP Growth Rate / Population Growth Rate** (Ratio)



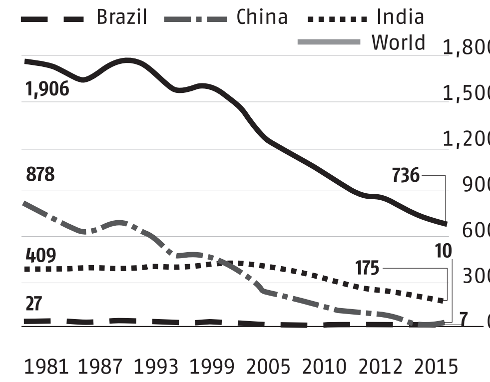
Source: World Development Indicators (WDI), World Bank.

FIGURE 2: **Extreme Poverty Headcount Ratio (EPHR)** (% of population)



Note: EPHR is the % of the population living below $1.90 a day (2011 PPP). PPP= purchasing power parity.
Source:http://iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNet/

FIGURE 3: **Extreme Poverty Headcount** (Millions)



Looking beyond the US-China negotiations

CLAUDE SMADJA

US-China trade negotiations have resumed on Tuesday as President Trump reiterated last week that he was willing to hold off on increasing tariffs to 25 per cent by March 1 on $200 billion in Chinese goods if an agreement was in sight to satisfy US complaints about China's "unfair" trade and forced technology transfer practices.

However, beyond the negotiations what is really going on the American side — at least among the hardliners in Washington led by Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and White House trade advisor Peter Navarro — is the implementation of a two-prong strategy towards China: On the one hand, decoupling the US and Chinese economies and, on the other hand, implementing a containment policy to slowdown or even stop the rise of China as a strategic technological, economic and military competitor to the US.

In that respect, even if the present trade negotiations were to end with an agreement from China to buy more American goods, to open more its markets for foreign companies and to stop the forced transfer of technology by foreign to Chinese companies, this would be at best a pause in what hardliners in Washington — and to some extents hard liners in Beijing — see as the unavoidable great power confrontation for global prominence.

There is scant chance that the Trump administration will be able to achieve its containment objectives, as — with respect to China's rise in every single domain — the train has left the station quite some time ago. China has already become too much of an economic power with a huge population, a vast and dynamic domestic market and overarching economic and business worldwide connections. It is now a technological powerhouse on the verge of overtaking the US in some key technologies and is fast developing its military capabilities. There is no way that the US could replicate with it what its Soviet containment policy achieved in the Cold War era.

The rear-guard battle that the White House is waging might at best delay China's development in some domains for a few years. It will, in fact, prompt Beijing to accelerate its drive to become self-reliant in key areas such as semi-conductors or aeronautics. But what it will definitely create is resentment towards the US from a Chinese public fiercely nationalistic, extremely proud of what the country has achieved over the last 40 years and exacerbate the sense of a revenge to be taken over history.

This would undoubtedly make even more difficult the much indispensable *modus vivendi* that needs to be achieved among two super-powers operating with different systems and logic but compelled to find ways to engage in business, economic interaction and to collaborate on some key global issues.

The Beijing leadership will not bend to any pressure to change a system that it sees as extremely successful in making China achieve in 40 years what it took a 150 years for Western countries to achieve. It will also not accept any change in its policies that would endanger the grip of the Communist Party as a structure of power. This means the continuation of the leading role of the public sector and the SOEs in all strategic economic and technological areas and the reliance on a very directive industrial policy. The line one hears in Beijing from government and Party officials is: *We are not asking any country to change its political or economic system and we don't see why anybody would be entitled to ask us to do that*.

In that context, the most likely — and best — development in the US-China confrontation is that Beijing will offer some concession to reduce the US trade deficit, additional pledges and measures to protect intellectual property rights and reduce forced transfers of technology. This will not weaken or change in any way the modus operandi of the Chinese system or the basic structures on which its economy functions. But, these tactical concessions will presumably be made in a way allowing Mr. Trump to declare victory and tell his electoral base what a strong leader he is, without Beijing conceding anything essential to its strategic objectives.

The key structural challenge remains of how to make two economic blocs having achieved a kind of parity but operating according to different systems and logic not only to coexist but to interact in a positive way and to be able to join forces in addressing some global challenges.

Western corporations will have to re-calibrate the way they do business in and with China — as the Chinese market will get even bigger to ignore — while Chinese corporations will also have to devise less abrasive and offensive ways to get from the US and Europe the kind of technologies they will continue to need in the coming years to accelerate their evolution.

There will certainly be some sighs of relief if the present US-China trade negotiation end up successfully before 1st March. But don't hold your breath. We are just at the very beginning of a period of deep global structural economic and geopolitical adjustments.

The most likely pattern that we are going to go through in the coming period will be an alternation of phases of low-intensity economic and geopolitical frictions and phases of high-intensity economic and geopolitical frictions. And the most favourable outcome will be to limit the damage of this alternation and maintain the interdependence between the US and Chinese economies as the best safeguard against something worse.

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India's secondary sex

BOOK REVIEW

VEENU SANDHU

Doctors at the trauma centre of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi are used to handling horrible cases. But even they were shaken by this one. A 15-year-old girl — a child herself — had brought in a two-year-old for treatment claiming to be her mother. The unnamed toddler had a fractured skull and human bite marks all over her body. The doctors, who named her Falak, which means "sky" or "heaven", said they had never seen a child in such a terrible state. The little girl died after nearly two months in hospital, and after having suffered lung, blood and brain infections and three heart attacks. This was seven years ago, around this time of the year.

Priyanka Dubey's book, *No Nation for Women: Reportage on Rape from India, the World's Largest Democracy*, took me back to Falak's story. The child's distressing condition and subsequent death had exposed the ghastly underbelly of Indian society. Linked to her story was the story of rampant sexual abuse that women in India face at different levels and in different ways — prostitution, rape, bride selling and human trafficking, all of which had collectively led to her death. And yet, so familiar is this story that it doesn't send a chill down our spines anymore.

Something similar happens as you read one horrible case after the other in Ms Dubey's book. Over the chapters, though the names of the women change as does their situation, everything becomes one big blur where stories seem to overlap, where one woman's experience appears to slip into another's. And that's when the intensity, acceptability and monstrous expression of the pervasive prejudices against women in India truly hits you.

No Nation for Women is a solid work of reporting done over six years across geographies. Ms Dubey begins with Bundelkhand, a region divided between Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, which she calls "no woman's land". You soon find out why. The victims, some as young as 14, are girls who had dared to spurn the advances of men. So, they were punished with "corrective" rape. Many were burnt to death after the sexual assault. Theirs were stories that seldom travelled out of their impoverished, back-of-the-beyond land.

The next chapter finds Ms Dubey in Tripura, the country's northeastern tip bordering Bangladesh, where rape assumes a political overtone — where it becomes a tool for taking revenge, teaching a lesson and showing a woman her place. One of the victims here is a 50-year-old political worker with three adult children who thought she was past the age where she needed to worry about being sexually assaulted. Once a carefree, empowered person, she now keeps turning back to see if someone is following her as she walks through the village. Stories such as these, too, seldom make it to national newspapers, given how the Northeast often falls on our blind spot. "You're from Delhi, aren't you?" a human rights activist asks the author, "... We don't exist for you."

Over 13 chapters, *No Nation...* brings out the disturbing extent of the crime. Each chapter carries multiple stories of women, some dead, many still fighting the long fight for justice.

In the chapter on trafficking that brings the story of four tribal girls — three from Madhya Pradesh and one from Assam — you get graphic accounts of how a skewed sex ratio in one state is devastating the lives and families of girls in another. And how some maid placement agencies, to which we turn so that our homes can function like clockwork, are serving as a cog in the sinister system that traffics girls.

Ms Dubey also touches upon the three layers of the trafficking industry: The confidante who lures the girls, the middleman who facilitates their transit to another city and the agent in the "delivery city" who does the final buying and selling. The buyer sometimes is a desperate bride-seeker, a pimp or a maid placement agency.

Rapes in police custody, in small towns, of children, to establish caste supremacy — in the end, you are left staring at the pages, numb. What kind of society are we that we consistently, deliberately — and systematically — fail our women?

Throughout, the biases leap out of the pages: In the way a 13-year-old boy smirks when the author asks for directions to a gang-rape victim's house; in the attitude of a policeman who is convinced that a woman constable who is raped while she is ferrying her sister's body to her village for cremation has a "loose" character; in the manner in which the policemen tell Ms Dubey that women should be banned from joining the force because they are only a distraction.

A sound piece of reportage, *No Nation...* could, however, have done with sharper editing. The issue of rehabilitating rape survivors in India is also under-addressed in the book — as it is in our society.

The author does not isolate herself from the stories she tells. She is honest about their impact on her, which makes *No Nation...* a sensitive, if disturbing, book. In one place, for instance, she says she wants to howl and scream loudly. "Instead I cover my face with my scarf and sob. Silently. Because I don't want the driver to know that I am crying. Otherwise he might assume that I am a "weak woman". And no good things happen to "weak" women in this world."

The vulnerability of a woman — whether she lives in a remote village or is an empowered reporter —hits you.

NO NATION FOR WOMEN: Reportage on Rape from India, the World's Largest Democracy
Priyanka Dubey
Simon & Schuster
Pages: 242; Price: ₹399

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड
वर्ष 12 अंक 4

प्रवर्तकों पर नरमी

जेट एयरवेज अपनी बहुलांश हिस्सेदारी कर्जदाताओं को एक रुपये में बेच रही है। यह बिक्री एक जटिल व्यवस्था के तहत की जा रही है, इस विषय पर आगामी 21 फरवरी को निर्णय लिया जाएगा। भारतीय स्टेट बैंक के नेतृत्व में कर्जदाताओं के एक समूह ने देश की सबसे बड़ी पूर्णकालिक सेवा प्रदान करने वाली इस विमानन कंपनी में 50.1 फीसदी हिस्सेदारी खरीदने का प्रस्ताव रखा है। इसके लिए 11.4 करोड़ नए शेयर जारी किए जाएंगे। यह व्यवस्था भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक (आरबीआई) द्वारा गत वर्ष प्रस्तुत एक खाके के अनुरूप ही है। यह प्रक्रिया नकारात्मक नेटवर्थ वाली कंपनियों पर लागू होती है और इसे बैंक-लेड प्रोविजनल रिजॉल्युशन प्लान का नाम दिया गया है। इसके लिए प्रवर्तक समूह और एतिहाद के बोर्ड समेत तमाम अंशधारकों की मंजूरी आवश्यक होगी। एतिहाद की जेट में 24 फीसदी हिस्सेदारी है। दिक्कत यह है कि यह कोई स्थायी समाधान नहीं है।

यह अच्छी खबर है कि जेट एयरवेज शायद संभावित संकट से बच जाएगी लेकिन यह बात अहम है कि जेट एयरवेज बची रहे। अगर ऐसा होगा तभी नागरिक उड्डयन क्षेत्र में समुचित प्रतिस्पर्धा सुनिश्चित हो सकेगी। फिलहाल इस क्षेत्र में सस्ती विमानन सेवा इंडिगो का दबदबा है। परंतु इस प्रस्तावित राहत के कुछ अन्य पहलू हैं जिन पर ध्यान देने की आवश्यकता है। पहली बात, योजना यह है कि राष्ट्रीय निवेश एवं अधोसंरचना फंड (एनआईआईएफ) जेट के 8,500 करोड़ रुपये के कर्ज को निपटाने में कुछ राशि का सहयोग करेगा। यह अपने आप में एक पहेली है। एनआईआईएफ की स्थापना बुनियादी ढांचा क्षेत्र में निजी निवेश को बढ़ावा देने के लिए की गई थी। इस फंड में निजी निवेशकों और सरकार के बीच साझेदारी है। इसका उद्देश्य है ऐसी बुनियादी परियोजनाओं को निवेश मुहैया कराना जिन्हें फिलहाल निजी पूंजी से नहीं बनाया जा सकता है। बहरहाल, एनआईआईएफ का इस्तेमाल कर जेट एयरवेज को उबारना सही संकेत नहीं है। इससे भविष्य के निजी निवेशकों को यह संकेत मिलेगा कि सरकार इस फंड का इस्तेमाल राजनीतिक रूप से सहज कॉर्पोरेट बचाव के लिए कर सकती है। ऐसे में यह समझना मुश्किल है कि निजी निवेशक फंड पर आगे भरोसा क्यों करेंगे? इसके अलावा ऐसे प्रश्न भी उठेंगे कि बैंकों को किसी ऐसी कंपनी में बहुलांश हिस्सेदारी रखनी चाहिए या नहीं जो नागर विमानन जैसे अत्यंत जोखिम भरे क्षेत्र में काम कर रही हो।

एक सवाल यह भी है कि डेट-इक्विटी वाले इस सौदे में जिसमें स्पेशल राइट का मसला शामिल है, उसमें जेट के संस्थापक और प्रमुख नरेश गोयल को 20-21 फीसदी हिस्सेदारी रखने की इजाजत कैसे दी जा सकती है। यह उनकी मौजूदा 50 फीसदी की हिस्सेदारी के आधे से भी कम है। सवाल यह है कि आखिर गोयल को राहत पैकेज के बाद भी किसी तरह की हिस्सेदारी क्यों सौंपी जा रही है? अगर बैंकों जैसे कर्जदार बोझ वहन कर रहे हैं तो वित्त जगत के मूलभूत सिद्धांत कहते हैं प्रवर्तक (इस मामले में गोयल) को कोई हिस्सेदारी नहीं मिलनी चाहिए। शेयर का जोखिम, कर्ज के जोखिम से बड़ा है और कर्जदारों का बकाया शेयर धारकों के पहले चुकाया जाना चाहिए। ऐसा प्रतीत होता है कि इस सौदे में जेट के प्रवर्तक के प्रति काफी नरमी बरती जा रही है और यह मामला किंगफिशर एयरलाइंस के प्रति बैंकों की नरमी की याद दिलाता है। बैंकों ने माल्या के विमानन कंपनी का मालिक रहते हुए भी उसमें काफी पैसा डाला। प्रभावी तौर पर देखा जाए तो बैंक एक निजी विमान कंपनी के लिए जनता के पैसे को दांव पर लगा रहे हैं। जेट के कुल कर्ज में स्टेट बैंक की हिस्सेदारी एक चौथाई है। ऐसे सौदों को रुक जाना चाहिए था, तो अब तक प्रवर्तकों को ऐसी पेशकश क्यों की जा रही है।


विनय सिन्हा

सुव्यवस्थित सांख्यिकी तंत्र के अभाव में बिगड़ता खेल

हमें अपनी सांख्यिकी व्यवस्था में सुधार करना होगा, अन्यथा अपर्याप्त और राजनीतिक नजरिये से तैयार अस्पष्ट आंकड़ों के बीच नीतियां बनाने के लिए हमारी आलोचना होती रहेगी। बता रहे हैं शंकर आचार्य

जॉन मैनार्ड कींस को आमतौर पर वृहद अर्थव्यवस्था का संस्थापक माना जाता है। उनकी 1936 में प्रकाशित पुस्तक 'द जनरल थिअरी ऑफ एंप्लॉयमेंट, इंट्रेस्ट ऐंड मनी' को इस क्षेत्र में सबसे अहम माना जाता है। उन्होंने अपनी पुस्तक में जो प्रमुख अवधारणाएं दीं उनमें, समेकित मांग और आपूर्ति, खपत, निवेश और उत्पादन से उसका संबंध, रोजगार और आर्थिक गतिविधियां आदि सभी शामिल हैं। सन 1930 के दशक की महामंदी के कारण कींस और उनके समकालीन अर्थशास्त्रियों के दिमाग में उत्पादन और रोजगार सबसे अधिक अहमियत रखते थे। वृहद अर्थव्यवस्था के सिद्धांत पर उनके योगदान ने राष्ट्रीय आय के अंकेक्षण जैसे उभरते क्षेत्र को गति दी। कॉलिन क्लार्क, सिमॉन कुज्नेट और रिचर्ड स्टोन जैसे दिग्गज सामने आए। वृहद आर्थिक नीति के समर्थन और उसके व्यवहार को लेकर सिद्धांत और आंकड़े सामने आने लगे।

कई बार मुझे आश्चर्य होता है कि आखिर कैसे दुनिया के औद्योगिक देश सन 1930 के पहले अपनी आर्थिक नीति चला रहे थे। उनके पास वृहद अर्थव्यवस्था के आकलन का कोई ढांचा नहीं था, न ही राष्ट्रीय आय और रोजगार के विश्वसनीय आंकड़े। मौजूदा भारत में भले ही हमारे पास वृहद अर्थव्यवस्था के मूलभूत सिद्धांत और वृहद अर्थव्यवस्था की आधारभूत बातें हों लेकिन इनमें इजाफा हो रहा है। हमारे यहां सकल घरेलू उत्पाद समेत आर्थिक मोर्चे पर अधूरे आंकड़े हैं। इनमें रोजगार और बेरोजगारी के आंकड़े भी शामिल हैं। जब आप इस बात को लेकर सुनिश्चित न हों कि आर्थिक वृद्धि में धीमापन आ रहा है या तेजी और रोजगार के हालात कैसे हैं तो ऐसे में राजकोषीय या मौद्रिक नीति निर्माण आसान नहीं है।

जरा हालिया जीडीपी वृद्धि आंकड़ों पर गौर करें। जनवरी 2015 में जब तक 2004-05 के पुराने आधार वर्ष को बदलकर 2011-12 नहीं किया गया था, सब ठीक चल रहा था। आधार वर्ष को बदलने के अलावा आकलन पद्धति और डेटा स्रोत में भी अहम बदलाव किया गया। इससे कई तरह की विसंगतियां उत्पन्न हो गईं। इसके चलते वर्ष 2013-14 के वृद्धि अनुमान में काफी उछाल आई। यह वही वर्ष था जब हमें एक छोटा भुगतान संतुलन संकट झेलना पड़ा था। उसी वक्त नीतिगत ब्याज दरों में 300 आधार अंकों का इजाफा भी किया गया था। पुराने मानकों से इतर केंद्रीय सांख्यिकी कार्यालय (सीएसओ) ने 2011-12 के पहले के आंकड़ों को दो वर्ष तक नए आधार वर्ष के हिसाब से समायोजित नहीं किया। इस अंतर को दूर करने के लिए राष्ट्रीय सांख्यिकी आयोग ने वास्तविक क्षेत्र की सांख्यिकी संबंधी समिति का गठन किया। इसकी अध्यक्षता डॉ. सुदीप्त मुंडले के पास थी और देश के मौजूदा मुख्य आर्थिक सलाहकार उसके सदस्य सचिव बने। समिति ने सन 1994-95 से 2011-12 तक के अपने अनुमान जुलाई 2018 में प्रकाशित किए। यह प्रकाशन 2011-12 को आधार वर्ष मानते हुए किया गया।

वर्ष 2004-05 से 2011-12 तक के संप्रग के कार्यकाल को राजनीतिक रूप से संवेदनशील माना जाता है और इन वर्षों को लेकर भी इन नए अनुमानों में करीब आधा फीसदी का सुधार दर्शाया गया। इस पर विवाद उत्पन्न हो गया। संभवत: इन बैक सीरीज आंकड़ों की प्रतिक्रिया स्वरूप ही सीएसओ उत्साहित हो गया और उसने नवंबर 2018 में अपनी बैक सीरीज जारी कर दी। इस नई सीरीज ने एनएससी द्वारा जारी अनुमान को प्रति वर्ष दो फीसदी तक पीछे छोड़ दिया।

एक पखवाड़ा पहले मौजूदा 2011-12 आधारित जीडीपी आंकड़ों पर नए सिरे से संदेह उत्पन्न हो गया जब 2016-17 के शुरुआती आंकड़ों के लिए पहले जताई गई 7 फीसदी की दर को संशोधित कर 8.2 फीसदी कर दिया गया। इससे एक नई बहस छिड़ गई कि क्या नोटबंदी वृद्धि दर बढ़ने में सहायक है?

जहां तक रोजगार के आंकड़ों की बात है, राष्ट्रीय नमूना सर्वेक्षण कार्यालय (एनएसएसओ) ने 2017-18 का अपना सर्वेक्षण जून 2018 में पूरा कर लिया। प्रेस में आई खबरों के मुताबिक एनएससी ने दिसंबर के आरंभ में इस रिपोर्ट को स्वीकृति दे दी लेकिन अभी भी इसका जारी होना शेष है। हाल ही में एनएससी के दो गैर कार्यकारी सदस्यों के इस्तीफे से इसे जोड़कर देखा जा रहा है। इनमें कार्यवाहक अध्यक्ष भी शामिल थे। रिपोर्ट या जैसा कि नीति आयोग के उपाध्यक्ष कहते हैं मसौदा रिपोर्ट के कुछ हिस्से दो सप्ताह पहले लीक हो गए। यह रिपोर्ट 2011-12 से रोजगार के आंकड़ों को लेकर निराशाजनक रुझान प्रस्तुत करती है। बेरोजगारी दर बढ़कर 6.1 फीसदी हो गई। 15 से 29 की उम्र के युवाओं में बेरोजगारी दर काफी बढ़ी और ग्रामीण महिलाओं में बेरोजगारी 13.6 फीसदी और शहरी महिलाओं में 27.2 फीसदी थी। सभी आयु वर्ग में श्रम शक्ति की भागीदारी में काफी गिरावट आई थी। यह घटकर 23 फीसदी रह गई। युवा महिलाओं में तो यह 16 फीसदी के निराशाजनक स्तर तक पहुंच गई। जाहिर है महिला सशक्तीकरण केवल जुमला बनकर रह गया। संयोग देखिए कि बेरोजगारी में इजाफा और श्रम शक्ति भागीदारी में गिरावट को हाल में सेंटर फॉर मॉनिटरिंग इंडियन इकनॉमी के आम घरेलू सर्वेक्षण में भी दर्ज किया गया है।

गत सप्ताह नीति आयोग के सीईओ (एनएससी के पूर्व सदस्य) ने इस समाचार पत्र के अंग्रेजी संस्करण में दो हिस्सों में एक आलेख लिखकर विवाद को और बढ़ावा दे दिया। उन्होंने उक्त मसौदा रिपोर्ट की आलोचना करते हुए कहा कि यह रिपोर्ट उनके पास नहीं भेजी गई और न ही वह वह एनएससी की इससे संबंधित बैठकों में मौजूद रहे। उन्होंने रोजगार के मोर्चे पर आंशिक रूप से बेहतर अनुमान पेश किए। उनकी आलोचना कमजोर नजर आती है हालांकि पूरा आकलन तभी हो सकेगा जबकि पूरी रिपोर्ट सार्वजनिक हो जाए। देश में रोजगार की स्थितियों को लेकर जानकारी का स्तर कुछ ऐसा है।

यह अप्रत्याशित और दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण हालात हैं। हमें तत्काल राष्ट्रीय आय शृंखला की मौजूदा शृंखला के स्रोत और तौर तरीकों की समीक्षा करनी होगी और जरूरी सुधारों को अंजाम देना होगा। हमें सीएसओ की स्वायत्तता बहाल करनी होगी और यह सुनिश्चित करना होगा कि इसके पास इन भारी दायित्व के निर्वहन के लिए जरूरी गुणवत्ता और मात्रा का होना आवश्यक है। एनएसएसओ के लिए भी ऐसे ही एजेंडे की आवश्यकता है। इस दौरान रोजगार, श्रम शक्ति के सर्वेक्षणों तथा इनकी रिपोर्ट को खास प्राथमिकता देने की आवश्यकता है। सांख्यिकी तंत्र को मजबूत बनाने और उनमें सुधार का कोई विकल्प नहीं है। इनको वह पेशेवर स्वायत्तता मिलनी चाहिए जो उन्हें अब तक मिलती आई है। अगर हम ऐसा नहीं करते हैं तो हमारी आलोचना होती है कि हम अपर्याप्त आंकड़ों और राजनीतिक चश्मे से देखी जा रही सूचना के आधार पर नीतियां बनाते हैं।

(लेखक इक्रियर में मानद प्रोफेसर और देश के पूर्व मुख्य आर्थिक सलाहकार हैं। लेख में प्रस्तुत विचार निजी हैं।)

मोदी सरकार में संसाधनों के इस्तेमाल पर उठते सवाल


दिल्ली डायरी
ए के भट्टाचार्य

नरेंद्र मोदी सरकार के पांच साल के कार्यकाल के दौरान सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र की कंपनियों (पीएसयू) को पूंजी मुहैया कराने में अहम बढ़ोतरी हुई है। लेकिन पीएसयू के लिए आवंटन में बढ़ोतरी के बावजूद इन सरकार नियंत्रित उद्यमों में आंतरिक संसाधन सृजन तुलनात्मक रूप से कम है और इन पांच वर्षों में सरकार की पीएसयू लाभांश पर निर्भरता में बढ़ोतरी जारी रही।

पीएसयू के साथ सरकार के जुड़ाव का एक अहम संकेतक वह बजट मदद है, जो वह इन उद्यमों को मुहैया कराती है। इस मामले में भी मोदी सरकार ने काफी अधिक बजट सहायता मुहैया कराई, जिसका कुल बजट खर्च में हिस्सा इन पांच वर्षों में दोगुने से अधिक यानी 9 फीसदी से अधिक हो गया है। हालांकि इस बढ़ोतरी की गहन जांच से पता चलता है कि सरकार नियंत्रित उद्यमों को लेकर मोदी सरकार की नीति में बुनियादी कमजोरी है। सरकार पीएसयू को 90 फीसदी से अधिक बजट सहायता इक्विटी के रूप में देती है। शेष सहायता ऋण के रूप में दी जाती है। मोदी सरकार के पांच साल के कार्यकाल के दौरान इक्विटी के जरिये पीएसयू में 6.26 लाख करोड़ रुपये झोंके जाने का अनुमान है। लेकिन इस राशि में से करीब 94 फीसदी पीएसयू कंपनियों के चार समूहों में गई। इस राशि में से 2.53 लाख करोड़ रुपये सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंकों, 2.07 लाख करोड़ रुपये भारतीय रेलवे, 1.14 लाख करोड़ रुपये भारतीय राष्ट्रीय राजमार्ग प्राधिकरण (एनएचएआई) और 17,320 करोड़ रुपये एयर इंडिया को मुहैया कराए गए।

भारतीय रेलवे और एनएचएआई को इक्विटी पूंजी मुहैया कराने को लेकर कोई हो-हल्ला नहीं होना चाहिए। निस्संदेह सरकार को यह सुनिश्चित करना चाहिए कि उन्हें मुहैया कराई गई पूंजी का सदुपयोग होना चाहिए ताकि उससे पर्याप्त प्रतिफल मिले और रेलवे एवं सड़क क्षमता में बढ़ोतरी हो। लेकिन इससे इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता कि सरकार को हमेशा इन दो अहम बुनियादी ढांचा क्षेत्रों को पर्याप्त संसाधन मुहैया कराने चाहिए।

मोदी सरकार का पांच वर्षों में पीएसयू के लिए पूंजी आवंटन यह दर्शाता है कि उसने संभवतया इक्विटी के लिए आवंटित संसाधनों के एक बड़े हिस्से को बरबाद होने दिया। यह सरकार की कड़े फैसले लेने की अक्षमता को भी दर्शाता है

असल में मोदी सरकार का भारतीय रेलवे में इक्विटी योगदान पांच वर्षों के दौरान मनमोहन सिंह सरकार के दूसरे कार्यकाल 2009-10 से 2013-14 या संप्रग-2 के मुकाबले करीब दोगुना रहा। मोदी सरकार के दौरान एनएचएआई के लिए इक्विटी आवंटन मनमोहन सिंह के पांच वर्षों के मुकाबले करीब डेढ़ गुना अधिक रहा। लेकिन सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंकों के लिए इक्विटी आवंटन में भारी बढ़ोतरी को लेकर सवाल उठेंगे। यह 2009-14 के दौरान 45,517 करोड़ रुपये था, जो 2014-19 के दौरान 2.53 लाख करोड़ रुपये पर पहुंच गया।

साफ तौर पर इक्विटी आवंटन में भारी बढ़ोतरी सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंकों के लिए अधिक पूंजी पर्याप्तता की जरूरत की वजह से हुई क्योंकि उनकी फंसे कर्जों में लगातार बढ़ोतरी हो रही है। क्या यह तय करने पर पर्याप्त विचार-विमर्श किया गया कि सरकार नियंत्रित किस कुशल बैंक को ऐसी इक्विटी पूंजी मिलनी चाहिए? या यह पूंजी हर सरकार नियंत्रित बैंक को उनका प्रदर्शन देखे बिना दी गई? यह बड़ी राशि है। क्या सरकार ने केवल कुशल बैंकों पर ध्यान देकर और अकुशल बैंकों को पूर्वनिर्धारित समय सीमा के दौरान अपने परिचालन को समेटने के लिए कहकर इस पैसे का सदुपयोग किया?

इससे भी चिंताजनक मोदी सरकार के पांच साल के कार्यकाल के दौरान एयर इंडिया को इक्विटी का आवंटन है। एयर इंडिया में वर्ष 2014 से 2019 के दौरान करीब 17,320 करोड़ रुपये का निवेश किए जाने का अनुमान है। सरकार ने एयर इंडिया की रणनीतिक बिक्री की प्रक्रिया शुरू की थी। लेकिन राजनीतिक विरोध और निजीकरण के गलत तरीके समेत कई वजहों से एयर इंडिया सरकार के गले की फांस बनी हुई है।

अब भी एयर इंडिया केंद्रीय सरकारी खजाने को चपत लगा रही है। असल में मोदी सरकार द्वारा एयर इंडिया के लिए मुहैया कराई गई 17,320 करोड़ रुपये की इक्विटी पूंजी संप्रग-2 से अधिक है। संप्रग-2 ने अपने पांच साल के कार्यकाल में एयर इंडिया को 15,200 करोड़ रुपये की इक्विटी पूंजी मुहैया कराई थी। रोचक बात यह है कि 2019-20 के अंतरिम बजट में एयर इंडिया के लिए इक्विटी पूंजी का आवंटन नहीं किया गया है। क्या इसका यह मतलब है कि सरकार 2019-20 में एयर इंडिया की रणनीति बिक्री करने में कामयाब रहेगी? इस समय इसके बहुत कम आसार नजर आ रहे हैं। इसलिए पीएसयू में इक्विटी के लिए प्रावधान करना यह दर्शाता है कि अनुमान कम रखा गया है। इसी तरह सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंकों के लिए इक्विटी आवंटन भी अनुमान से कम है। हालांकि सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंकों की और पूंजी की जरूरत अभी पूरी नहीं हुई है। उम्मीद है कि इन जरूरत से कम अनुमानों को पूर्ण बजट में ठीक किया जाएगा, जो जुलाई 2019 में पेश होने की संभावना है।

लेकिन मोदी सरकार का पांच वर्षों में पीएसयू के लिए पूंजी आवंटन यह दर्शाता है कि उसने संभवतया इक्विटी के लिए आवंटित संसाधनों के एक बड़े हिस्से को बरबाद होने दिया। यह सरकार की कड़े फैसले लेने की अक्षमता को भी दर्शाता है। भले ही ये फैसले निजीकरण से संबंधित हों या सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के कमजोर बैंकों को अपना परिचालन बंद करने के लिए बाध्य करने से संबंधित हो।

कानाफूसी

क्षणिक खुशी

कांग्रेस के राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी ने जब ज्योतिरादित्य सिंधिया को पश्चिमी उत्तर प्रदेश में पार्टी को मजबूत करने का काम सौंपा और उनको क्षेत्र का प्रभारी बनाया तो मध्य प्रदेश कांग्रेस के कई नेता प्रसन्न हो गए। उनको लगा कि अब प्रदेश की राजनीति में सिंधिया का दखल न के बराबर होगा क्योंकि उनके पास इसके लिए वक्त ही नहीं होगा। वे यह सोचकर प्रसन्न थे कि अब लोकसभा चुनाव के पहले होने वाले टिकट वितरण में उनकी चल सकेगी। परंतु उनका यह स्वप्न दिवास्वप्न साबित हुआ। दरअसल इस बात के स्पष्ट संकेत हैं कि न केवल सिंधिया अपनी पारंपरिक गुना-शिवपुरी सीट से चुनाव लड़ेंगे बल्कि वह ग्वालियर-चंबल क्षेत्र से भी अपने करीबियों के लिए कुछ सीट मांग सकते हैं। गौरतलब है कि हालिया विधानसभा चुनाव में इस क्षेत्र में पार्टी का प्रदर्शन काफी अच्छा रहा था।

बदमजा राजनीति

पुदुच्चेरी की उप राज्यपाल किरण बेदी पिछले दिनों सोशल मीडिया पर और विपक्षी दलों के निशाने पर रहीं। उन्होंने राज्य के मुख्यमंत्री वी नारायणसामी का मजाक उड़ाया था। नारायणसामी राज्य के प्रशासन में बेदी के कथित हस्तक्षेप के विरुद्ध धरने पर बैठे थे। उन्होंने ट्विटर पर लिखा कि मीडिया में से किसी ने मुझसे एक रोचक प्रश्न किया कि क्या धरना भी योग है? मैंने कहा हां है लेकिन यह इस बात पर निर्भर करता है कि आप किस उद्देश्य से धरने पर बैठे हैं, आप कौन सा आसन कर रहे हैं और किस तरह की आवाज निकाल रहे हैं। अपने इस ट्वीट के साथ उन्होंने एक कौए की तस्वीर ट्वीट की और लिखा, कौआ आसन। कांग्रेस नेताओं और सोशल मीडिया के उपयोगकर्ताओं ने कहा कि यह पोस्ट बेकायदा थी। कुछ लोगों ने बेदी की पुरानी तस्वीर ट्वीट करनी शुरू कर दी जब 2011 में वह अन्ना हजारे के नेतृत्व में भ्रष्टाचार विरोधी आंदोलन के दौरान धरने पर बैठी थीं।

आपका पक्ष

संयंत्रों की स्थापना करेगी बेरोजगारी दूर

आज देश में अच्छे-अच्छे कल-कारखाने सरकार के कठोर नियमों के कारण बंद हो गए हैं या फिर बंदी के कगार पर हैं। खासकर जयपुर में जैसे जयपुर मेटल के अलावा अन्य कारखाने सरकारी नियमों के कारण बंद हो गए हैं। इन कारखानों के पास करोड़ों रुपये मूल्य की काफी जमीन है जिसे सरकार ने उन्हें रियायती दर पर दी थी। ऐसे कारखानों को दोबारा शुरू करने की दिशा में प्रयास किया जाना चाहिए। इसी प्रकार देश में नए कारखाने खोलने की भी जरूरत है। इन कारखानों में उपयोग होने वाला कच्चा माल उसी क्षेत्र से लिया जाना चाहिए। राजस्थान में लोहे तथा तांबे की खानें हैं जिनका इस्तेमाल कारखानों में किया जा सकता है। राज्य के खेतड़ी में तांबे की खान है जहां से कच्चा माल काफी कम कीमत पर भेजा जाता है। उसी तांबे को उत्पाद बना कर हजारों रुपये में बेचा जाता है। सरकार को देश में नए कारखाने खोलने के लिए प्रवासी भारतीय को प्रोत्साहित करना चाहिए। इससे देश के अलग-अलग जगहों में नए कारखाने खुल सकते हैं जिससे बेरोजगारी दूर करने में काफी मदद मिलेगी। इसके अलावा इससे होने वाली आय से देश की अर्थव्यवस्था सुधरेगी तथा राजस्व घाटा पाटने में मदद मिलेगी। सरकार को इस दिशा में ठोस नीति बनानी चाहिए जिससे वर्तमान में देश की सबसे बड़ी समस्या बेरोजगारी दूर करने में काफी मदद मिलेगी।

घेवरचंद गोदीका, जयपुर

बढ़ती बेरोजगारी को रोकने के लिए सरकार को ठोस नीति बनानी चाहिए

उज्ज्वला योजना में रिफिलिंग बड़ी बाधा

उज्ज्वला योजना के तहत गरीब महिलाओं को दिया गया गैस कनेक्शन (सिलिंडर और चूल्हा) न तो मुफ्त है और न ही सिलिंडर पर (मार्च 2018 तक) सब्सिडी मिली है। लाभार्थी को गैस कनेक्शन लेते ही 1,750 रुपये चुकाने पड़ते हैं। सरकार पहले छह सिलिंडर की रिफिलिंग के दौरान करीब 1,740 रुपये प्रति ग्राहक वसूल लेती थी। शायद यही वजह है कि अधिकांश उपभोक्ता दूसरी बार सिलिंडर नहीं भरवाते हैं। करीब 50 फीसदी उपभोक्ता हर दो महीने, 30 फीसदी 3-4 महीने में एक बार सिलिंडर लेते हैं। जब यह योजना असफल होने लगी तो सरकार ने गैस सिलिंडर पर सब्सिडी देने का फैसला किया। सरकार घरों के चूल्हों को गैस से जलाने के लिए प्रयत्नशील है। फिर भी प्रश्न यह है कि गरीबों के घरों में एक बार रिफिलिंग होने वाले गैस सिलिंडर कैसे बार-बार भरे जाएं।

दीप कुमार, महराजगंज

उत्साहित है सरकार

उज्ज्वला योजना का मकसद महिलाओं को किफायती दरों पर गैस कनेक्शन देना है। इस योजना के बाद शुद्ध ईंधन के प्रयोग से महिलाओं में सांस संबंधी बीमारी होने का खतरा कम हुआ है और महिलाएं ज्यादा सशक्त महसूस कर रहीं हैं। पहले की तुलना में महिलाओं का समय भी बचता है और घर के अंदर और बाहर होने वाले वायु प्रदूषण पर भी रोक लगी है। इस योजना के कारगर होने का अंदाजा इस बात से लगाया जा सकता है कि सरकार ने इस वर्ष के बजट में तीन करोड़ अतिरिक्त गैस कनेक्शन देने के लिए करीब पांच हजार करोड़ रुपये आवंटित किए हैं। अब इससे और भी महिलाएं लाभान्वित होंगी।

शुभम दियावार, जबलपुर

पाठक अपनी राय हमें इस पते पर भेज सकते हैं : संपादक, बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड लिमिटेड, 4, बहादुर शाह जफर मार्ग, नई दिल्ली - 110002. आप हमें ईमेल भी कर सकते हैं : lettershindi@bsmail.in उस जगह का उल्लेख अवश्य करें, जहां से आप ईमेल कर रहे हैं।

पाक का चेहरा

नौसेना के पूर्व अधिकारी कुलभूषण जाधव के मामले में अंतरराष्ट्रीय न्यायालय में भारत ने जो अकाट्य तर्क पेश किए हैं उनसे पाकिस्तान बेनकाब हो गया है। अब यह साफ है कि किस तरह एक निर्दोष भारतीय को पाकिस्तान ने झूठे मामले में फंसा कर गिरफ्तार किया और सैन्य अदालत में मुकदमा चला कर फांसी की सजा सुना दी। कुलभूषण जाधव इन दिनों पाकिस्तान की जेल में बंद हैं। पाकिस्तान ने जाधव के बारे में भारत को मांगी गई जानकारियां आज तक मुहैया नहीं कराईं, न इस मामले में उसने वियना संधि का पालन किया। इस मामले में वह कई तरह के झूठ भी बोल चुका है। पाकिस्तान की सेना ने 2016 में जाधव को ईरान से अगवा कर जेल में बंद कर दिया था और सैन्य अदालत में उन पर पाकिस्तान की जासूसी करने का मुकदमा चलाया गया, यातनाएं देकर जबरन अपराध कबूल करवाया गया और फांसी की सजा सुना दी गई। जाधव ईरान में अपना कारोबार कर रहे थे। अंतरराष्ट्रीय अदालत का फैसला कुछ भी आए, लेकिन पूरी दुनिया देख रही है कि पाकिस्तान सिर्फ अपने हितों के लिए भारत के खिलाफ जाधव को एक मोहरे के तौर पर इस्तेमाल कर रहा है। वह अंतरराष्ट्रीय मंचों पर अपने पक्ष में इस बात को भुना रहा है कि जाधव पाकिस्तान के खिलाफ काम कर रहे थे।

लेकिन झूठ के पांव नहीं होते। पाकिस्तान खुद भी यह जान रहा है कि जाधव मामले में वह अंतरराष्ट्रीय अदालत में टिक नहीं पाएगा। जिस तरह से उसने जाधव के खिलाफ सबूत गढ़े, सारे कानूनों को ताक पर रख कर मुकदमा चलाया और फांसी की सजा सुनाई, भारत की सरकार और जाधव के परिवार को अंधेरे में रखा, उससे साफ है कि सब कुछ पूर्व नियोजित था। जाधव के बचाव में भारतीय पक्ष ने जितनी दलीलें दी हैं, वे पाकिस्तान को कठघरे में खड़ा करती हैं। इनका पाकिस्तान के पास कोई जवाब नहीं है। जाधव से मुलाकात के लिए भारत ने पाकिस्तान से तेरह बार राजनयिक पहुंच उपलब्ध कराने का आग्रह किया, लेकिन इसे पाकिस्तान ने खारिज कर दिया। जाधव को कोई कानूनी सहायता मुहैया नहीं कराई जा रही, न ही भारत सरकार को उनके मुकदमे से संबंधित जानकारियां दी जा रही हैं। हालांकि दो साल पहले जाधव की मां और पत्नी को उनसे मिलवाने का दिखावा जरूर किया था पाकिस्तान ने, लेकिन इस दौरान उसने बहुत ही शर्मनाक व्यवहार किया था। भारत ने सबसे बड़ा सवाल तो पाकिस्तान की सैन्य अदालत को लेकर ही खड़ा किया है। पाक की सैन्य अदालतों के जजों के पास कानून की डिग्री तक नहीं होती। ऐसे में मुकदमा सिर्फ सैन्य प्रमुख के इशारे पर ही चलता है। जाधव के मामले में यही हुआ।

भारत के निर्दोष नागरिकों को पकड़ कर उन्हें संगीन मामलों में फंसाना, उन पर मुकदमा चलाना और सजा देकर फिर उसका राजनीतिक इस्तेमाल करना पाकिस्तान का पुराना इतिहास रहा है। सरबजीत और अन्य कैदियों के मामले भी ऐसे ही थे, जब इन कैदियों को झूठे मामलों में फंसा कर इन पर मुकदमा चलाया गया और फिर जेल में ही इन्हें मरवा दिया गया। सरबजीत की रिहाई के लिए भारत ने काफी दबाव बनाया था, लेकिन रिहाई के कुछ समय पहले ही उन पर जेल में हमला हो गया, बाद में उनका शव ही भारत पहुंचा था। इसी तरह चमेल सिंह की भी जेल में ही हत्या करवा दी गई थी। ऐसे में जाधव की सुरक्षा को लेकर भारत का चिंतित होना स्वाभाविक है। हालांकि इस बात की पूरी संभावना है कि जाधव मामले में पाकिस्तान अंतरराष्ट्रीय न्यायालय में हार सकता है। मगर देखना यह है कि इसके बाद उसका अगला पैंतरा क्या सामने आता है!

अराजकता की दिशा

इसमें कोई दो राय नहीं कि पुलवामा में आतंकी हमले में सीआरपीएफ के बयालीस जवानों की मौत के बाद समूचे देश में शोक का माहौल है। हर संवेदनशील व्यक्ति दुख से भरा है और इस हमले के जिम्मेदार आतंकियों के खिलाफ सख्त कार्रवाई की मांग कर रहा है। लेकिन क्या यह स्थिति ऐसी गतिविधियों की छूट दे देती है, जिसमें लोग अराजक हो जाएं? पुलवामा हमले के बाद आतंकियों के खिलाफ आम लोगों के गुस्से को समझा जा सकता है। मगर इस क्रम में देश के कई इलाकों से कश्मीरी लोगों पर हमले की जैसी खबरें आ रही हैं, वे चिंताजनक हैं। कहीं कश्मीर से निकल कर किसी अन्य राज्य में व्यवसाय करने गए लोगों और उनकी दुकानों पर हमले किए गए, उन्हें मारा-पीटा गया और तोड़फोड़ की गई, तो कहीं कश्मीरी विद्यार्थियों को गुस्से का शिकार बनाया गया। हालत यह है कि देहरादून में कुछ संगठनों के आक्रामक रुख को देखते हुए एक शिक्षण संस्थान ने अपने एक डीन को निलंबित कर दिया और दो अन्य कॉलेजों ने कश्मीरी विद्यार्थियों को दाखिला नहीं देने की घोषणा कर दी है।

अगर कोई व्यक्ति देश विरोधी गतिविधियों में शामिल है तो उसके खिलाफ कानूनी कार्रवाई होनी चाहिए। लेकिन सिर्फ इस बात के लिए किसी पर हमला करने को कैसे सही ठहराया जा सकता है कि वह कश्मीरी है? सरकार और सुरक्षा बलों की ओर से यह साफ किया गया है कि पुलवामा में सीआरपीएफ पर हमला करने वाला एक आत्मघाती आतंकी था। यह छिपा नहीं है कि कश्मीर और वहां के लोग खुद लंबे समय से आतंकवाद की समस्या झेल रहे हैं। ज्यादातर कश्मीरी आतंकवाद से खुद को अलग करके सामान्य जीवन जीना चाहते हैं। वे अन्य राज्यों में व्यवसाय करने या फिर बेहतर शिक्षा और रोजगार हासिल करने के लिए निकल रहे हैं तो इसका मतलब यही है कि वे देश को अपना मानते हैं और देश की मुख्यधारा में शामिल होना चाहते हैं। खुद सरकार लंबे समय से कश्मीरी अवाम को मुख्यधारा में शामिल करने के लिए कई योजनाओं पर काम कर रही है और इसमें काफी हद तक कामयाबी भी मिली है। दूसरी ओर पुलवामा हमले के बाद भावनाओं में बह रहे कुछ लोग या फिर इस घटना का राजनीतिक इस्तेमाल करने वाले संगठन कश्मीरी पहचान को आतंकवाद के समर्थक के रूप में प्रचारित करने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं। यह उन तमाम पहलकदमियों को नाकाम करने का रास्ता है, जिनके जरिए सरकार कश्मीर में आतंकवाद की समस्या को खत्म करने की कोशिश कर रही है।

यह ध्यान रखने की जरूरत है कि कश्मीर में अलगाववादी और आतंकी संगठनों का मकसद यही है कि कैसे कश्मीर को देश के बाकी हिस्सों से अलग-थलग कर दिया जाए। इस लिहाज से देखें तो कई राज्यों में कश्मीरी लोगों या विद्यार्थियों पर हो रहे हमले उन्हें खुद को देश से अलग-थलग मानने पर मजबूर कर सकते हैं। इससे आतंकियों की मंशा ही पूरी होगी। हालांकि सच यह भी है कि कश्मीरियों पर हमलों के बाद देश भर में उन्हें सुरक्षा और अपनापन देने की कई खबरें भी आई हैं। खुद सीआरपीएफ ने 'मददगार' हेल्पलाइन के जरिए पीड़ित कश्मीरियों को हर तरह की सहायता मुहैया कराने का आश्वासन दिया है। देश की एकता की असली ताकत यही है। यों भी, कश्मीर भारत का अभिन्न हिस्सा है और देश की एकता और अखंडता को बनाए रखने के लिए सरकार को सख्त कदम उठाने की जरूरत है। एक लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था और कानून के राज में किसी भी अपराध के आरोपियों के खिलाफ कार्रवाई और उन्हें सजा दिलाने के लिए एक तंत्र होता है और उसी के जरिए कानूनी प्रक्रिया का संचालन देश के हित में होता है।

कल्पमेधा

तिरस्कृत होने का रास्ता है तिरस्कारों के आगे सिर झुका देना। मनुष्य का उतना ही आदर होता है जितना वह दूसरों से पाने में समर्थ होता है।

-हैजलिट

बुनियादी आय और संकट

सोनल छाया

बुनियादी आय योजना से लाभ और नुकसान दोनों होने की संभावना है। भारत जैसे बड़े और विविधता से परिपूर्ण देश में इसे लागू करना आसान नहीं है। सार्वभौमिक बुनियादी आय को लागू करने के लिए संसाधनों की जरूरत होगी, जिसके लिए मौजूदा सरकारी योजनाओं जैसे मनरेगा, सार्वजनिक वितरण प्रणाली आदि को बंद करना होगा। अगर ऐसा हुआ तो लोगों के बीच अविश्वास का माहौल बनेगा। लाभार्थियों की पहचान करने में भी समस्याएं आएंगी।

अंतरिम बजट में छोटे और सीमांत किसानों को सहायता के रूप में एक सुनिश्चित आय देने के लिए प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान निधि बनाने की घोषणा की गई है। भारत दुनिया का पहला देश है जो बारह करोड़ से अधिक किसानों को प्रत्यक्ष आय हस्तांतरण की सुविधा उपलब्ध कराने जा रहा है। यह प्रस्तावित योजना दुनिया के दूसरे देशों में ऐसी नकद हस्तांतरण योजना को लागू करने वाले लाभार्थियों की औसत संख्या से चालीस हजार गुना अधिक है। प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान योजना के तहत दी जाने वाली सहायता राशि महज सात अमेरिकी डॉलर प्रति माह है, जो अन्य देशों की तुलना में बहुत कम है। बहरहाल, सरकार द्वारा प्रत्येक किसान के खाते में छह हजार रुपए सालाना हस्तांतरित करने की घोषणा के साथ ही भारत में सार्वभौमिक बुनियादी आय की सार्थकता पर गंभीर विमर्श की जरूरत महसूस की जा रही है।

भारत में बुनियादी आय को सार्वभौमिक बुनियादी आय की संकल्पना से जोड़ कर देखा जाता है। इसका आगाज अठारहवीं शताब्दी में गरीबी दूर करने के लिए किया गया था। अठारहवीं शताब्दी को औद्योगिकीकरण का काल माना जाता है। इस सदी में कल-कारखानों की शुरुआत हुई थी। पूंजीवाद की संकल्पना ने तेजी से विस्तार पाया। वित्त वर्ष 2016-17 के आर्थिक सर्वे की रिपोर्ट में सार्वभौमिक बुनियादी आय की संकल्पना पर चालीस पन्नों में विस्तार से चर्चा की गई, जिसमें इसे गरीबी दूर करने और असमानता कम करने के उपाय के रूप में देखा गया। भारत में इस संकल्पना के तहत सभी नागरिकों को एक निश्चित राशि देने का प्रस्ताव किया गया है, ताकि सभी अपना जीवनयापन कर सकें। कुछ अर्थशास्त्रियों ने इस संकल्पना का समर्थन यह कह कर किया कि भारत जैसे भ्रष्ट देश में सभी नागरिकों को उनके जीवनयापन के लिए एक निश्चित राशि दी जानी जरूरी है। इसमें दो राय नहीं है कि खातों में नकद हस्तांतरण सशर्त या बिना शर्त घरों की आय बढ़ाता है। इस संकल्पना के समर्थकों का मानना है कि इस उपाय की मदद से व्यापक स्तर पर लोगों का कल्याण किया जा सकता है। भारत में इसे लागू करना लोगों के कल्याण करने के मामले में एक क्रांतिकारी कदम साबित हो सकता है। साथ ही, गरीबी दूर करने के मामले में भी यह मील का पत्थर साबित हो सकता है।

मौजूदा समय में देश में श्रमिकों के संख्या बल में महिलाओं की संख्या काफी कम है। देश में असंगठित क्षेत्र का एक व्यापक दायरा होने के कारण महिला श्रमिकों का शोषण हो रहा है, लेकिन खातों में नकद हस्तांतरण से उनकी आर्थिक एवं सामाजिक स्थिति बदल सकती है। महिलाओं के आर्थिक रूप से सबल होने से लिंग अनुपात में भी समानता आएगी। इसलिए सार्वभौमिक बुनियादी आय से महिला सशक्तिकरण को बल मिलेगा, जिसका सकारात्मक प्रभाव पूरे समाज पर पड़ सकता है। वर्तमान में लगभग नब्बे फीसद से अधिक कामगार असंगठित क्षेत्र में काम करते हैं, जिनमें दस से कम संख्या में काम करने वाले श्रमिकों की एक बड़ी संख्या है। चूंकि, फिलवक्त दस की संख्या से नीचे काम करने वाले कामगारों पर सरकार नजर नहीं रखती है, लिहाजा ऐसे श्रमिक भविष्य निधि में अपना योगदान नहीं कर पाते हैं और इन्हें पेंशन, बीमा और स्वास्थ्य से जुड़े फायदे नहीं मिल पाते हैं। सार्वभौमिक बुनियादी आय से ऐसे श्रमिकों को सीधे तौर पर लाभ मिल सकेगा। इस योजना की वजह से लोग बैंक से जुड़ने के लिए भी प्रेरित होंगे, जिससे वित्तीय समावेशन की संकल्पना को साकार करने में आसानी होगी। साथ ही आम लोगों को बैंक से कर्ज भी मिल सकेगा, जिससे मांग एवं आपूर्ति के प्रवाह में तेजी आएगी और विकास को बल मिलेगा।

कई देश हैं, जिन्होंने इस तरह से जरूरतमंदों को वित्तीय सहायता देने की कोशिश की, लेकिन पाया कि ऐसी योजना को चलाने से वैसे कारकों पर कोई प्रभाव नहीं पड़ता है, जिनकी वजह से असमानताएं बढ़ती हैं। हालांकि, इस योजना का सकारात्मक पक्ष यह है कि इसकी मदद से वंचित तबकों का आर्थिक एवं सामाजिक रूप से उन्नयन करने के साथ-साथ मौजूदा सबसिडी या अन्य सरकारी योजनाओं को लागू करने के दौरान बिचौलिए, भ्रष्टाचार आदि पर भी लगाम लगेगी, जिससे सरकारी निधि की बंदरबांट की संभावना कम होगी।

बुनियादी आय की संकल्पना के विरोधियों का मानना है कि मुफ्त पैसा लोगों को आलसी बनाता है और लाभार्थी काम करने से परहेज करने लगते हैं। मुफ्त में पैसा मिलने से जो श्रमिक कार्य कर रहे हैं, वे भी काम करने से परहेज करने लगेंगे जिससे श्रमिक आपूर्ति में कमी आएगी। मुफ्त का पैसा मिलने से लोगों के बीच फिजूलखर्ची की आदत भी विकसित होगी। घर के पुरुष सदस्यों में नशे और जुआ खेलने की प्रवृत्ति पनप सकती है, क्योंकि हमारे देश में अभी भी ज्यादा संख्या में पुरुष ही बैंक से जुड़े हुए हैं। इस योजना को लागू करने से बैंकों पर काम का दबाव बढ़ेगा। भारतीय बैंकिंग क्षेत्र पहले से ही मानव संसाधन की कमी का सामना कर रहे हैं।

जरूरतमंद कौन है, इसकी पहचान करना सरकार के लिए मुश्किल भरा कार्य होगा। इस प्रक्रिया को अमलीजामा पहनाने में भ्रष्टाचार को बढ़ावा मिलेगा। अपात्र व्यक्ति भी इस योजना का लाभ लेने में सफल हो सकता है। एक अनुमान के मुताबिक देश में मौजूदा कल्याणकारी योजनाओं को लागू करने की लागत सकल घरेलू उत्पाद (जीडीपी) का 3.7 फीसद है, जबकि प्रस्तावित योजना की लागत जीडीपी का 4.9 फीसद होने का अनुमान है। लागत बढ़ने से पूंजी की व्यवस्था करना भारत जैसे विकासशील देश के लिए आसान नहीं होगा।

आर्थिक सहयोग एवं विकास संगठन (ओईसीडी) के अनुसार किसी भी देश ने बुनियादी आय को 'कामकाजी उम्र' के लोगों के लिए आय समर्थन का एक प्रमुख स्तंभ नहीं माना है। लेकिन कई देशों में कुल आबादी के एक छोटे से भाग पर इस संकल्पना को आजमाया गया है। अमेरिका और ईरान का नाम इस संदर्भ में लिया जा सकता है। अमेरिका का 'अलास्का स्थायी कोष' एक निवेश कोष है, जिसका निर्माण तेल राजस्व की मदद से किया गया है। वर्ष 1982 से इस निधि से अलास्का के प्रत्येक व्यक्ति को वार्षिक लाभांश का भुगतान किया जा रहा है। इसी तरह का एक प्रयोग वर्ष 2011 में ईरान में किया गया था, जिसके तहत औसत दर्जे की घरेलू आय के उनतीस फीसद को हर महीने जरूरतमंदों को हस्तांतरित किया गया था। इसी तरह की योजना को लागू करने की घोषणा कनाडा, फिनलैंड और नीदरलैंड में भी की गई है। स्विट्जरलैंड, फ्रांस, न्यूजीलैंड, नामीबिया, स्कॉटलैंड और जर्मनी में भी ऐसी योजना को लागू करने के लिए प्रयास किए जाते रहे हैं।

बुनियादी आय योजना से लाभ और नुकसान दोनों होने की संभावना है। भारत जैसे बड़े और विविधता से परिपूर्ण देश में इसे लागू करना आसान नहीं है। सार्वभौमिक बुनियादी आय को लागू करने के लिए संसाधनों की जरूरत होगी, जिसके लिए मौजूदा सरकारी योजनाओं जैसे मनरेगा, सार्वजनिक वितरण प्रणाली आदि को बंद करना होगा। अगर ऐसा हुआ तो लोगों के बीच अविश्वास का माहौल बनेगा। लाभार्थियों की पहचान करने में भी समस्याएं आएंगी। देश में अशिक्षा और गरीबी का दायरा बहुत व्यापक है। अनपढ़ और बेरोजगारों की बड़ी फौज इस योजना से मिलने वाले लाभ को अपना अधिकार समझने लगेगी। इसका देश के कार्यबल पर नकारात्मक प्रभाव पड़ेगा। सबसे बड़ा नुकसान श्रमिक बल में कमी आने से अर्थव्यवस्था पर पड़ेगा। काम-धंधों की रफ्तार मंद पड़ने से उत्पादन की गति धीमी होगी, इससे मांग और आपूर्ति के बीच असंतुलन पैदा होगा और विकास को धक्का लगेगा।

अंधविश्वास के पांव

रजनीश जैन

दुनिया मेरे आगे

इसमें कोई विवाद नहीं है कि हमारे देश में प्राचीन संस्कृत ग्रंथों की बहुतायत रही है। इनमें दर्शन, इतिहास, साहित्य, अध्यात्म और विज्ञान जैसे विषय शामिल हैं। एक समय अधिकतर ग्रंथों का अरबी, फारसी, चीनी, जापानी और जर्मन भाषाओं में अनुवाद होना सामान्य घटना मानी जाती थी। आज यह सारा ज्ञान अनूदित होकर कई शोध पत्रों और पुस्तकों में संरक्षित हो गया है। इनकी बदौलत वेदों और उपनिषद की ऋचाएं समूचे विश्व के विद्यार्थियों के पास पहुंच गई हैं। निश्चय ही यह उपलब्धि गर्व करने लायक है। अगर इस बात का डंका बजाया जाता है तो इसमें कोई बुराई भी नहीं है। दिक्कत मीडिया के एक हिस्से से है जो इन ग्रंथों को आधार बना कर अनर्गल बातें अपने दर्शकों के मानस में उंड़ेल रहा है। लगभग सभी चैनलों पर ज्योतिष के कार्यक्रमों की बढ़ती भीड़ को समाज के हित में नहीं माना जा सकता, क्योंकि इसके बहाने अंधविश्वास का फैलाव व्यापक पैमाने पर हो रहा है।

ज्यादा घातक और चिंताजनक बात यह है कि इसी के साथ अवैज्ञानिक तथ्य भी विज्ञान की शक्ल में परोसे जा रहे हैं। यह सब इसलिए भी हानिकारक है कि जनमानस ही नहीं, बल्कि समाज का प्रबुद्ध वर्ग भी अब अंधविश्वासों का तर्क सहित विरोध करने, वैज्ञानिक आधारों का हवाला देने के बजाय इनके बारे में ही बात करने लगा है।

सूचना के अंधड़ में हमारा विवेक ध्वस्त होने लगा है, क्योंकि हर तीसरे दिन प्रकट होने वाला नया दावा कहीं न कहीं हमारी वैज्ञानिक सोच को कुतरने लगा है। अक्सर इस तरह के कपोल-कल्पित रहस्योद्घाटन किसी ऊंचे कद के दिखने वाले नेता के मुखारविंद से टपक रहे हैं। लिहाजा, उन्हें मीडिया या प्रचार माध्यमों के बड़े हिस्से में खासी जगह मिल रही है। प्राचीन साहित्य और मिथकों से निकाल कर लाई जा रही ऐसी मनभावन पेशकश समग्र वैज्ञानिक सोच को चुनौती देने लगी है। सामान्य प्राकृतिक घटनाओं को प्राचीन धारणाओं के चश्मे से देखा जा रहा है।

हम पीछे क्यों देख रहे हैं? कहीं इसके अवचेतन में कोई हीन भावना तो काम नहीं कर रही है? यह चलन इतनी तेजी से बढ़ रहा है कि डार्विन, न्यूटन और आइंस्टाइन जैसे महान वैज्ञानिकों और शख्सियतों को खारिज किया जा रहा है। बात शायद गणेश की प्लास्टिक सर्जरी से शुरू हुई थी, बढ़ते-बढ़ते हाल ही में संपन्न विज्ञान कांग्रेस के मंच तक जा पहुंची। एक शोधपत्र ने यह साबित किया कि किसी जमाने में हमारे यहां चालीस इंजनों वाले विमान थे और दूसरे ग्रहों पर जाना सामान्य बात थी... रावण के पास अपना हवाई अड्डा था। एक वैज्ञानिक ने स्टीफन हॉकिंग के ब्लैक होल सिद्धांत को हास्यास्पद बता दिया। एक ने कौरवों की पैदाइश टेस्ट ट्यूब से घोषित कर दी, तो एक अन्य ने न्यूटन और आइंस्टाइन के सिद्धांत गलत बता दिए! टीवी मीडिया के लिए माना जा सकता है कि उसके अस्तित्व के लिए इस तरह का कचरा परोसना एक नियमित काम का हिस्सा हो सकता है। लेकिन आखिर कब तक वे ऐसा करते रहते हैं? क्या इन्हें सिर्फ अस्तित्व बचाने की कवायद तक सीमित रहना है? विश्वसनीयता और इस तरह के अनर्गल दावों के लिए शोध करने का दायित्व वहन नहीं करना है?

विज्ञान कांग्रेस के मंच से इस तरह की बातों पर जब सवाल किया गया तो विद्वान वैज्ञानिक का मासूम जवाब था कि ये बातें संस्कृत के ग्रंथों में लिखी हैं तो गलत तो हो ही नहीं सकतीं। इस तरह का दावा उन्होंने बगैर सोचे-विचारे अपने नाम से सार्वजनिक रूप से कर दिया। उन्हें शायद इस बात का खयाल नहीं रहा कि वे जिस वैज्ञानिक समुदाय के सामने ऐसी बात कर रहे हैं, उनकी नजर में इसे कैसे देखा जाएगा! हालांकि इस तरह के दावों को समय-समय पर अकाट्य तर्कों की मदद से बेबुनियाद ठहराया जाता रहा है। लेकिन खारिज करने की सकारात्मक खबरों को इतनी अहमियत मीडिया में नहीं मिलती, जितनी इनके प्रचार के समय मिलती है। यहीं यह समझना मुश्किल हो जाता है कि संचार माध्यमों के काम में इस तरह का दोहरापन क्यों होता है। जबकि सच यह है कि सही सूचनाएं आम लोगों तक पहुंचाना समूचे मीडिया की जिम्मेदारी है।

निश्चित ही समय का यह दौर गंभीर चिंतन करने का है। एक पूरी पीढ़ी इस दुविधा में है कि वाट्सऐप और फेसबुक जैसे माध्यमों पर अनवरत आ रही जानकारी को सही मानें या वैज्ञानिक साहित्य पढ़ें! जन सामान्य को कौन-सा साहित्य पढ़ना चाहिए और कौन-सा नहीं, ताकि वह कूपमंडूकों के रेवड़ का हिस्सा न बन सके। इस दिशा में भी काफी कुछ प्रयास करने की आवश्यकता है। प्रसार माध्यमों और शिक्षण संस्थाओं की भूमिका को अहम माना जा सकता है कि वे ही अंधेरे को दूर करने में मदद करते हुए अंधविश्वास के फैलाव को रोक सकते हैं। यह ध्यान रखना चाहिए कि विकास के सारे चरण प्रतिगामी हो जाएंगे, अगर अंधविश्वासों से मुक्ति का रास्ता नहीं अपनाया गया!

आतंक का सबक

पुलवामा में मुट्ठी भर आतंकवादियों के कायराना हमले के बाद लहूलुहान देश दुख से भीगा और गुस्से से उबल रहा है। इस हमले में सीआरपीएफ के 42 जवान शहीद हो गए। ज्यादा दुख की बात यह रही कि हमारे जांबाज जवानों को अपने दुश्मन से सीधे छाती तान कर मुकाबला करने का मौका नहीं मिला, बल्कि वे एक डरपोक, छुपे और कायराना हमले का शिकार हुए। किसी जवान का कुछ दिनों में विवाह था, किसी के पीछे रह गया उसका 15 दिन का दुधमुंहा बालक, किसी को 15 दिन बाद बेटी के हाथ पीले करने थे और कोई छोड़ गया पीछे अपने बूढ़े बेसहारा लाचार मां-बाप।

अगर एक डरपोक पड़ोसी मुल्क और उसके पिट्ठू आतंकवादी 2500 हथियार बंद जवानों के काफिले पर हमले की जुर्रत कर पाए तो उसमें उनके सहायक बने हैं हमारे ही मुल्क में छिपे गद्दार। पड़ोसी मुल्क को इस हमले को अंजाम देने के लिए न तो अपने सैनिक भेजने पड़े और न बारूद। यह घिनौना मकसद पूरा करने के लिए उसे बस यहीं के चंद नौजवानों के दिमाग में जेहादी जहर भरना पड़ा। उसे यह मौका चंद सिक्कों के लालच में यहीं के जयचंदों ने आसानी से उपलब्ध करा दिया। यहां के कुछ गद्दार सेना से मुठभेड़ में या पत्थरबाजी के दौरान देश के दुश्मनों के मरने पर तो छाती पीटते नजर आते हैं लेकिन सेना के जवान के शहीद होने के पीछे राजनीति ढूंढ़ते हैं।

अगर किसी शहीद का पिता दूसरे बेटे को भी देश पर कुर्बान करने का जज्बा रखता है तो हमारा भी फर्ज है उसके जज्बे का सम्मान करने का। सेना पर हमला चाहे गोली से हो, चाहे बोली से या पत्थर से, उसके दोषी को देश का दुश्मन मान कर ही सलूक करना चाहिए। अगर कोई सेना को अपने मुल्क की रक्षा करने से रोकता है, तो उसे भटके हुए नौजवान की बजाए आतंकवादियों का समर्थक मान कर सबक सिखाना चाहिए।

पुलवामा हमला भारत की बहादुर सेना को सीधी चुनौती है। हर हमले के बाद सिर्फ निंदा करने, भारी भरकम बयानबाजी करने, जिम्मेवार मुल्क को 'डोजियार' सौंपने और उससे तरजीही मुल्क का दरजा का दर्जा वापस लेने से यह समस्या सुलझने वाली नहीं। समय है देश को अपनी साफ्ट स्टेट यानी उदार राष्ट्र की छवि को तिलांजलि देने का। देश को मजबूत और अपनी रक्षा में इतना सक्षम बनाने का कि हर दुश्मन उस पर हमले से पहले अपने अंजाम से डर कर थर-थर कांपे। हमले के जिम्मेवार कुटिल मुल्क को दुनिया भर में उसकी चालों के लिए बेपर्दा करना होगा। ऐसे मुल्क के साथ किसी तरह का रिश्ता न रखा जाए, न राजनीतिक, न खेलों का, न सांस्कृतिक और न ही व्यापार का। यही वक्त है ऐसे देश से निपटने के लिए पूरे विश्व में उसके विरुद्ध मोर्चाबंदी की जाए।

● *लेफ्टिनेंट कुलदीप शर्मा, जालंधर*

डिजिटल देशभक्ति

अगर आप काली डीपी लगा देते हैं, कैंडल मार्च में जाकर सेल्फी पोस्ट कर देते हैं, 'आरआईपी' लिख कर दिन में पचास स्टेटस डालते हैं, कमेंट में अनजाने लोगों से भिड़ जाते हैं, बिना जांचे-परखे भड़काऊ पोस्ट शेयर करते हैं, और फोन हाथ में पकड़ सोफे में बैठ जंग और बदले की मांग करते हैं तो आप डिजिटल देशभक्त हैं!

अगर आप सच्चे देशभक्त हैं तो सरकार और फौज पर भरोसा रखिए। सच्चे दिल से शहीदों को नमन कीजिए। फोन में स्टेटस डाल कर नहीं, फोन से शहीदों के परिवारों की मदद कीजिए। शांति रखिए और शांति फैलाइए, फर्जी या झूठे मैसेज नहीं। कुछ भी शेयर करने से पहले जांचें कि वह सही है या नहीं। नकारात्मकता से दूर रहें और एकता बनाए रखें क्योंकि हमारी एकता भंग करना ही दुश्मन का मकसद है। सबसे जरूरी यह कि अगर सच्चे देशभक्त हैं तो भारत बंद करने, रैलियां निकालने, फोटो शेयर करने के बजाय अपने काम को ईमानदारी से करें। यह देश के विकास के लिए आपका बड़ा योगदान होगा। डिजिटल देशभक्ति से दूर रहिए!

● *नेहा अधिकारी, नई दिल्ली*

किसी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए-8, सेक्टर-7, नोएडा 201301, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश

आप चाहें तो अपनी बात ईमेल के जरिए भी हम तक पहुंचा सकते हैं। आइडी है : chaupal.jansatta@expressindia.com

कब तक

भारत हर बार चौंक जाता है। 2001 में देश की संसद पर हुए आक्रमण से हम चौंके थे। 2008 में मुंबई में विभिन्न जगहों पर भीषण आतंकी हमले से हम अचंभित हो गए थे। शायद इसी वजह से भारत में एक नई जांच एजेंसी अस्तित्व में आई- एनआइए यानी राष्ट्रीय जांच एजेंसी। फिर भी हम लगातार छद्म युद्ध का शिकार होते रहे हैं 2016 में उड़ी, फिर पठानकोट और अब पुलवामा में। हर बार देश के लोगों में गुस्सा भर जाता है। हर बार हम पाकिस्तान को नक्शे से मिटा देने की मांग करने लगते हैं लेकिन अपनी कमियों की ओर न ध्यान देते हैं न सरकार को ध्यान दिलाते हैं।

कई प्रश्न उठ खड़े हुए हैं पुलवामा के बाद। मसलन, इतनी व्यापक सुरक्षा व्यवस्था के बावजूद कैसे इतनी ज्यादा मात्रा में आरडीएक्स वहां निर्बाध पहुंच गया? आखिर अपने खुफिया तंत्र की निष्क्रियता हम कब तक बर्दाश्त करते रहेंगे? हम युद्ध नहीं चाहते। युद्ध किसी समस्या का हल भी नहीं है। मगर बंदूक और कर्फ्यू के जरिए भी हम कब तक घाटी का शासन चलाते रहेंगे?

● *जंग बहादुर सिंह, गोलपहाड़ी, जमशेदपुर*

संकट की दस्तक

राष्ट्रीय जल विज्ञान संस्थान के अनुसार भारत में विकास की रफ्तार बढ़ने के साथ-साथ पानी का संकट भी बढ़ेगा और कई इलाकों में उसके लिए मारामारी मचेगी। दरअसल, हमारी आधुनिक जीवनशैली प्राकृतिक संसाधनों के अत्यधिक दोहन पर आधारित है जिससे पानी का उपयोग निरंतर बढ़ता जा रहा है। अभी पानी की मांग प्रति व्यक्ति सौ से एक सौ दस लीटर है जो 2025 तक बढ़ कर एक सौ पच्चीस लीटर हो सकती है। तब तक भारत की आबादी एक सौ अड़तीस करोड़ हो जाएगी। आज हालत यह कि राजधानी दिल्ली तक का पानी पीने लायक नहीं रहा है क्योंकि इसमें क्लोराइड की मात्रा तय सीमा से अधिक पाई गई है।

यह सब औद्योगिक गतिविधियों और व्यापक शहरीकरण के कारण हो रहा है जिससे देश के वन क्षेत्र में लगातार कमी आ रही है। वन क्षेत्र में कमी के चलते वर्षा की मात्रा भी कम होती जा रही है। यही ग्लोबल वार्मिंग का मुख्य कारण है। ग्लोबल वार्मिंग के कारण ग्लेशियर पिघल रहे हैं जिससे समुद्री क्षेत्र जलमग्न हो रहे हैं। ऐसे में हमें अपने संसाधनों का विवेकपूर्ण प्रयोग करना होगा। साथ ही अधिक से अधिक पेड़ लगाने होंगे और पर्यावरण के अनुकूल जीवनयापन के नए तरीके खोजने होंगे। जीवाश्म ईंधन पर अपनी निर्भरता भी कम करनी होगी।

● *चांद मोहम्मद, आंबेडकर कॉलेज, दिल्ली*

रांची, बुधवार, 20 .02 .2019

कितने सबूत चाहिए

पुलवामा हमले में पाकिस्तान का हाथ होने के आरोप पर प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान सबूत मांग रहे हैं. चीन की आधिकारिक मीडिया भी ऐसा ही कह रही है. साफ जाहिर है कि न सिर्फ दोनों देश आतंकवाद को लेकर कतई गंभीर नहीं हैं, बल्कि मसूद अजहर जैसे सरगनाओं को उनका संरक्षण भी मिलता रहेगा. क्या पाकिस्तान और चीन की सरकारें इस सच्चाई से वाकिफ नहीं हैं कि मसूद अजहर की रहनुमाई में जैशे-मोहम्मद भारतीय संसद, पठानकोट सैनिक ठिकाने, जम्मू-कश्मीर विधानसभा और पुलवामा में सुरक्षाबलों के काफिले पर हमले कर चुका है? क्या इमरान सरकार और उनकी सेना की शह के बगैर वह भारत के खिलाफ आतंकवादियों और आत्मघाती हमलावरों को तैयार करने तथा हमलों की साजिश रचने के लिए उनकी धरती का इस्तेमाल कर रहा है? क्या चीन के पास पाकिस्तान में सक्रिय उन गिरोहों की जानकारी नहीं है, जो खुलेआम भारत को तबाह करने के लिए जलसे करते हैं? पिछले साल संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद द्वारा तैयार की गयी वैश्विक आतंकियों की सूची में अकेले पाकिस्तान से 139 नाम शामिल हैं. इनमें मुंबई हमले की साजिश रचनेवाला हाफिज सईद और उसके अनेक गुर्गे भी हैं. लश्करे-तैयबा और उससे संबद्ध संगठनों के नाम भी हैं. मसूद अजहर का जैशे-मोहम्मद भी आतंकी गिरोह माना गया है. इनके अलावा ईरान और अफगानिस्तान के साथ पाकिस्तान के अल्पसंख्यक तबकों पर हमलावर संगठनों को भी इस सूची में रखा गया है. भारत सीधे तौर पर दोनों देशों से तथा अंतरराष्ट्रीय मंचों पर पाकिस्तान-समर्थित आतंकी गतिविधियों की जानकारी साझा करता रहा है. इन जानकारियों में खतरनाक तस्करों तथा खालिस्तानी खाड़कुओं के उल्लेख भी हैं. पाकिस्तान और चीन की सरकारें जान-बूझकर इन सबूतों से आंखें चुरा रही हैं. खुद इमरान सरकार के मंत्री हाफिज सईद जैसे तत्वों के साथ सार्वजनिक आयोजनों में भाग लेते रहे हैं. पुलवामा हमले के एक दिन पहले ईरानी सैनिकों के एक काफिले पर आत्मघाती हमला हुआ था. पाकिस्तान द्वारा तालिबानियों से मिलीभगत करने पर अफगानिस्तान ने फिर से संयुक्त राष्ट्र में शिकायत की है. अमेरिका और अनेक यूरोपीय देश सीधे तौर पर पाकिस्तान पर बरसों से आतंकवाद को प्रश्रय देने और आतंकवाद के विरुद्ध लड़ाई कमजोर करने का आरोप लगा चुके हैं. इस कारण अमेरिका ने तो आर्थिक और सामरिक मदद भी रोक दी है. कश्मीर, अफगानिस्तान और ईरान समेत इस पूरे इलाके में पड़ोसी देशों में हिंसा, आतंक और अलगाववाद को बढ़ावा देना पाकिस्तान की रक्षा और विदेश नीति का मुख्य हिस्सा रहा है. यह विडंबना ही है कि पहले अमेरिका और अब चीन अपने स्वार्थों के कारण इस तथ्य को नजरअंदाज करते रहे हैं. इस स्थिति को बदलने के लिए सुरक्षा बंदोबस्त को पुख्ता करने के साथ भारत को कूटनीतिक प्रयासों को तेज करना होगा.

अमेरिका और अनेक यूरोपीय देश सीधे तौर पर पाकिस्तान पर बरसों से आतंकवाद को प्रश्रय देने और आतंकवाद के विरुद्ध लड़ाई कमजोर करने का आरोप लगा चुके हैं.

मित्रों पर निर्भर पाक-अर्थव्यवस्था

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अपनी विफल होती अर्थव्यवस्था तथा अत्यंत अवहनीय ऋण स्थिति के बावजूद पाकिस्तान अपने मित्रों से कुल 100 अरब डॉलर की मदद की उम्मीद कर सकता है.

पुलवामा के आतंकी हमले की विभीषिका रोंगटे खड़े करनेवाली है. इसकी जिम्मेदारी जैश-ए-मुहम्मद ने ली है, जो पाकिस्तान से संचालित होता है. इस हमले के लिए उन्नत योजना, आपूर्ति व्यवस्था, हथियारों और विस्फोटक की प्राप्ति, धन प्रवाह तथा सटीक सूचना की आवश्यकता थी, जो संस्थागत और सुव्यवस्थित समर्थन ढांचे के अभाव में असंभव था. ये सभी तत्व आइएसआइ के खुफिया ढांचे के अलावा संभवतः पाकिस्तान की सेना तथा यहां तक कि उसके सरकारी तंत्र की प्रत्यक्ष अथवा परोक्ष भागीदारी की ओर संकेत करते हैं. दूसरी ओर, ये हमारे खुफिया तंत्र की भीषण विफलता की ओर भी इशारा करते हैं, जिसे जम्मू-कश्मीर के राज्यपाल ने भी स्वीकार किया है.

इससे भी ज्यादा दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण यह है कि इस घटना ने देश में अत्यंत उत्तेजनापूर्ण माहौल तथा सामाजिक एवं राजनीतिक ध्रुवीकरण की संभावनाओं के द्वार खोल दिये हैं. पूरे देश में फैले कश्मीरी छात्रों तथा लोगों पर न केवल आक्रमण की, बल्कि कश्मीर की आर्थिक नाकेबंदी की आशंकाएं बलवती हो रही हैं. देश में तीन महीने से भी कम वक्त है आम चुनाव होने में. ऐसे में यों भी गैर-आर्थिक मुद्दों पर बढ़ते ध्रुवीकरण का माहौल तारी रहेगा. पुलवामा ने इस आग में घी डालने का काम किया है और जल्दी ही इस आतंकी हमले के राजनीतीकरण की वजह से इसके मुख्य चुनावी मुद्दा बन जाने की संभावनाएं हैं.

प्रश्न यह है कि भारत पुलवामा की प्रतिक्रियास्वरूप पाकिस्तान पर कौन-से दबाव डाल सकता है? निश्चित रूप से इसके दायरे में राजनयिक, आर्थिक तथा भू-राजनीतिक तत्व समाहित होंगे. वर्ष 2001 में ही संयुक्त राष्ट्र जैश-ए-मुहम्मद को एक आतंकी संगठन घोषित कर चुका है. इसके बावजूद वह पाकिस्तानी धरती से सक्रियतापूर्वक कार्यरत रहा है. अमेरिका के अलावा दुनिया के पचास से भी अधिक देशों ने पुलवामा हमले की निंदा की है, पर इन सबका कोई खास असर पाकिस्तान पर नहीं पड़ेगा. आर्थिक मोर्चे पर भारत ने पाकिस्तान से सर्वाधिक तरजीही राष्ट्र (मोस्ट फेवर्ड नेशन) का दर्जा वापस लेकर वहां से आयातित होनेवाली हर चीज पर 200 प्रतिशत सीमा शुल्क लगा दिया है. दरअसल, सर्वाधिक तरजीही राष्ट्र का नाम भ्रमपूर्ण है, क्योंकि विश्व व्यापार संगठन (डब्ल्यूटीओ) के सभी सदस्य देशों को अपने सभी व्यापारिक साझीदारों को बाजारों तक इसी स्तर की समान पहुंच प्रदान करनी है. ऐसे में इसका अर्थ 'सर्वाधिक तरजीही राष्ट्र' की बजाय 'समान स्तर' ही होता है. पर अपवादस्वरूप परिस्थितियों में देशों को किसी खास देश से यह दर्जा वापस लेने का अधिकार दिया गया है.

इसके साथ ही यह भी ध्यान में रखा जाना चाहिए कि पाकिस्तान से हमारा आयात महज 44.8 करोड़ डॉलर का ही है, जो भारत के कुल आयात के 0.01 प्रतिशत से तथा पाकिस्तान के कुल निर्यात के 2 प्रतिशत से भी कम है. इसलिए इस कदम का प्रतीकात्मक मूल्य मात्र ही है. एक साझे इतिहास तथा विशाल कारोबारी संभावनाओं के बावजूद दोनों देशों के बीच व्यापार और वाणिज्य का अस्तित्व न के बराबर है. तथ्य यह है कि दक्षिण एशिया विश्व का एकमात्र क्षेत्र है, जहां अंतरक्षेत्रीय व्यापार अत्यंत न्यून यानी कुल विदेश व्यापार के पांच प्रतिशत से भी कम है.

पाकिस्तान की अर्थव्यवस्था लगभग 300 अरब डॉलर की है और यह भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था के आठवें हिस्से के बराबर है. पाकिस्तान पर कर्ज का असह्य बोझ है, जो बढ़ता ही जा रहा है. अभी यह लगभग 27 लाख करोड़ पाकिस्तानी रुपये के बराबर है, जिसमें 100 अरब डॉलर का विदेशी कर्ज भी शामिल है. इसका अर्थ यह है कि पाकिस्तान को प्रतिवर्ष 12 अरब डॉलर तो कर्ज की बकाया रकम पर वार्षिक अनुरक्षण (एनुअल सर्विसिंग) के लिए चाहिए, जबकि उसके पास आठ अरब डॉलर का ही सुरक्षित भंडार है, जो तीन माह से भी कम अवधि के निर्यात के बराबर है. दिसंबर 2017 से एक वर्ष के दौरान पाकिस्तानी मुद्रा 35 प्रतिशत से भी अधिक मूल्यह्रास (डेप्रिसिएशन) का शिकार बन गयी. अंतरराष्ट्रीय रेटिंग एजेंसियों ने पाकिस्तान को निवेशयोग्य कोटि से नीचे 'जंक ग्रेड' में डाल रखा है. यहां विदेशी निवेश में पिछले एक वर्ष के दौरान 20 प्रतिशत की कमी आ गयी है, जबकि इसका रक्षा बजट वहनीय अनुपात से काफी ऊंचा है. यही वजह है कि इमरान खान के नेतृत्व में पाकिस्तान की नयी सरकार विदेशों से फंड जुटाने के आक्रामक अभियान में लगी हुई है, जिसमें उसे सफलता भी मिलती नजर आ रही है.

पुलवामा के सिर्फ दो दिन बाद ही सऊदी अरब के वली अहद (क्राउन प्रिंस) मुहम्मद बिन सलमान एक बड़े प्रतिनिधिमंडल के साथ पाकिस्तान पहुंचे हैं, जो 20 अरब डॉलर के निवेश की पेशकश करने जा रहा है. इसमें ग्वादर बंदरगाह में 10 अरब डॉलर के पेट्रोकेमिकल कॉम्प्लेक्स तथा तेलशोधक कारखाने भी शामिल हैं. सऊदी सरकार के पास लगभग एक लाख करोड़ डॉलर की राजकीय संपदा निधि है, निवेश की उपर्युक्त रकम जिसका एक छोटा हिस्साभर है. इसके पहले भी इमरान खान द्वारा सऊदी अरब की यात्रा के वक्त उसने पाकिस्तान को छह अरब डॉलर की आपात मदद दी, जिसका आधा रियायती कर्ज था. ऐसी उम्मीद है कि चीन भी पाकिस्तान अधिकृत कश्मीर होकर गुजरनेवाले विवादास्पद चीन-पाकिस्तान आर्थिक गलियारे (सीपीईसी) समेत बेल्ट एवं रोड पहल के तहत पाकिस्तान को कुल 60 अरब डॉलर से भी अधिक की मदद देगा. संयुक्त अरब गणराज्य द्वारा पाकिस्तान में 30 अरब डॉलर के निवेश की संभावना है. अमेरिका ने कहा है कि वह पाकिस्तान द्वारा अंतरराष्ट्रीय मुद्रा कोष (आइएमएफ) को दिये गये 'बेल आउट पैकेज' समेत उसकी ऋण स्थिति की समीक्षा कर आइएमएफ पर दबाव डालेगा कि वह पाकिस्तान को एक आपात ऋण मंजूर करे.

अपनी विफल होती अर्थव्यवस्था तथा अत्यंत अवहनीय ऋण स्थिति के बावजूद पाकिस्तान अपने इन मित्रों से कुल 100 अरब डॉलर की मदद की उम्मीद कर सकता है. सऊदी अरब ईरान के साथ अपने अमैत्रीपूर्ण संबंधों की पृष्ठभूमि में पाकिस्तान को एक संतुलनकारी शक्ति के रूप में देखता है. चीन द्वारा उसके समर्थन करने के अपने विशेष कारण हैं, जिनमें ग्वादर बंदरगाह तथा अरब सागर तक उसकी पहुंच भी शामिल है. इस तरह, इस प्रायद्वीप में इतिहास की आगामी राह पर ऋण उगाहने की पाकिस्तानी क्षमताओं का असर पड़े बगैर न रहेगा.

(अनुवाद : विजय नंदन)

अमेरिका से भी सावधानी जरूरी

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भारतीय नेतृत्व का अमेरिका के साथ सख्ती से पेश आना जरूरी है, क्योंकि अमेरिका का रुख उसके आर्थिक हितों से ज्यादा उसकी दादागिरी दर्शाता है. अमेरिका को समझना होगा कि उसके आर्थिक हितों के लिए भारत ज्यादा उपयोगी देश है.

विदेशी व्यापार के मामले में अमेरिका और चीन भारत के दो सबसे बड़े साझेदार देश हैं. हमें समझना होगा कि अमेरिका को चीन से 566 अरब डॉलर का घाटा है, जबकि भारत से मात्र 22 अरब डॉलर का. उसके बावजूद अमेरिकी प्रशासन का भारत के प्रति इस प्रकार का व्यवहार उसकी भारत के प्रति दोस्ती पर प्रश्नचिह्न लगाता है. भारत द्वारा अफगानिस्तान में ढांचागत विकास के लिए प्रयासों का मजाक उड़ाना और दूसरी तरफ पाकिस्तान के साथ आवश्यक सख्ती न दिखाना, अमेरिका पर संदेह को पुख्ता करता है.

दूसरी तरफ, चीन से हमारा व्यापार घाटा बढ़ता ही जा रहा है. भारत में चीनी सामान बहिष्कार के देशव्यापी आंदोलन के चलते चीनी वस्तुओं की मांग कम हुई, लेकिन उसके बावजूद चीन से आनेवाले टेलीकॉम उपकरणों, कलपुर्जों, परियोजना वस्तुओं, दवाओं के लिए कच्चे माल सरीखे आयात बढ़ने से चीन के साथ हमारा व्यापार घाटा तेजी से बढ़ा है. चीन द्वारा अपने निर्यातों को बढ़ाने के लिए धोखे से सब्सिडी देने और अपने सामान को सस्ता कर भारतीय उद्योगों को नष्ट करने की साजिश भी चीन के साथ बढ़ते व्यापार घाटे का एक प्रमुख कारण है.

पिछले कुछ सालों से भारतीय नीति-निर्माताओं में चीन से बढ़ते आयातों और उससे बढ़ते व्यापार घाटे पर सजगता बढ़ी है, इसलिए भारत सरकार ने चीनी सामानों पर एंटी-डंपिंग ड्यूटी लगानी शुरू की है. भारत द्वारा जहां कुल एंटी-डंपिंग ड्यूटी लगाने के मामले 140 के हैं, वहीं अकेले चीन की 100 वस्तुओं पर एंटी-डंपिंग ड्यूटी लगायी गयी है. चीनी कंपनियों को उन परियोजनाओं में भाग लेने के लिए प्रतिबंधित किया जा रहा है, जहां चीन भारतीय कंपनियों को अनुमति नहीं देता. वर्ष 2018-19 के बजट और उसके बाद भारत सरकार ने अपने उद्योगों के संरक्षण हेतु कई बार आयात शुल्क बढ़ाया है. इसका असर चीन से आनेवाले आयातों पर हो रहा है. बजट 2018-19 में जिन इलेक्ट्रॉनिक और टेलीकॉम उपकरणों पर आयात शुल्क बढ़ाया गया, अकेले उन्हीं के चीन से होनेवाले आयातों में छह महीनों में 2.5 अरब डॉलर की कमी आयी है. सरकार चीन से आयातों को रोकने की कोशिश कर रही है.

जहां अमेरिका बार-बार हमारे सामान पर आयात शुल्क बढ़ाता जा रहा है, जिससे हमारे निर्यात प्रभावित हो रहे हैं, वहीं भारत का इस बारे में रुख जरूरत से ज्यादा नरमी भरा है. जब भी कोई मुल्क किसी दूसरे मुल्क के सामान पर आयात शुल्क बढ़ाता है, तो उसके जवाब में प्रभावित देश भी आयात शुल्क बढ़ा देता है. लेकिन दुर्भाग्य का विषय यह है कि अमेरिका द्वारा आयात शुल्क बढ़ाये जाने के बावजूद भी भारत की अपेक्षित जवाबी कार्यवाही को लगातार स्थगित किया जाता रहा है. भारत का यह नरम रुख दूसरे मुल्क को और अधिक आक्रामक होने का मौका देता है. देखा जा रहा है कि भारत के साथ व्यापार में अमेरिका और भी ज्यादा आक्रमक होते हुए न केवल आयात शुल्क बढ़ा रहा है, बल्कि काफी बड़ी मात्रा में भारतीय सामान को शून्य प्रतिशत आयात शुल्क जैसी प्राथमिकता को समाप्त करने की धमकी भी दे रहा है.

अमेरिका द्वारा भारत को निर्यात करनेवाली एक बड़ी मद पेट्रोलियम तेल और गैस है, जो 4.5 अरब डॉलर के बराबर है, इसके और बढ़ने की संभावना है. अमेरिका से बड़ी मात्रा में रक्षा सौदे भी हो रहे हैं. इसलिए आनेवाले वर्षों में अमेरिका के साथ व्यापार का सरप्लस घाटे में बदल सकता है. इन सब फायदों के बावजूद अमेरिका लगातार धमकियां दे रहा है कि वह न केवल आयात शुल्कों को और ज्यादा बढ़ायेगा, बल्कि भारत को अमेरिका से व्यापार के संबंध में मिलनेवाली आम प्राथमिकता की व्यवस्था यानी जीपीएस (जनरलाइज्ड सिस्टम ऑफ प्रिफरेंसेस) को समाप्त कर देगा. गौरतलब है कि इस प्रावधान के अंतर्गत अमेरिका में कई भारतीय सामानों को बिना शुल्क आयात किये जाने की अनुमति है. हाल ही में अमेरिका ने इस धमकी को फिर से दोहराया है और इस बार इस बात का ठीकरा भारत द्वारा अपनी ई-कॉमर्स नीति को कड़ाई से लागू किये जाने के निर्णय पर फोड़ा है. गौरतलब है कि अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति स्वयं अपनी उसी कंपनी एमेजॉन के घोर विरोधी हैं.

आज जबकि अमेरिका को व्यापार में भारत से 25 गुना ज्यादा घाटा चीन से है, उसके बावजूद वह चीन से समझौते का हाथ बढ़ा रहा है और भारत के प्रति जरूरत से ज्यादा सख्ती का माहौल बना रहा है. वह भारत से सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी उत्पादों पर आयात शुल्क घटाने की मांग कर रहा है. गौरतलब है कि पिछले साल फरवरी में भारत ने इन उत्पादों पर आयात शुल्क 10 प्रतिशत से बढ़ा कर 20 प्रतिशत कर दिया था. अमेरिका की इस मांग को मानने पर उसको तो कोई फायदा होगा नहीं, अलबत्ता चीन के मोबाइल फोन पहले से कहीं ज्यादा मात्रा में भारत में आने लगेंगे. भारतीय नेतृत्व का अमेरिका के साथ सख्ती से पेश आना जरूरी है, क्योंकि अमेरिका का यह रुख उसके आर्थिक हितों से ज्यादा उसकी दादागिरी को दर्शाता है. अमेरिका को समझना होगा कि अमेरिका के आर्थिक हितों के लिए भारत ज्यादा उपयोगी देश है, लेकिन भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था और भारत में रोजगार का संरक्षण भारत सरकार का पहला दायित्व है. इसलिए चाहे एमेजॉन और वॉलमार्ट पर शिकंजा कसने की बात हो या भारत के इलेक्ट्रॉनिक और टेलीकॉम उद्योग के संरक्षण हेतु आयात शुल्क बढ़ाने की बात हो, भारत की चिंताओं को समझते हुए अमेरिका को अपने रुख को ठीक करना होगा.

बोधि वृक्ष

सृष्टि का सूत्रपात

देखा जाये, तो मनुष्य तब तक सोच सकता है, जब तक वह अपने मन के क्षेत्र में है. और जिस स्तर में, जिस पहलू में, पहुंचने के बाद मन नहीं रहता है, अर्थात जिस पहलू में मन की पैदाइश नहीं हुई, नहीं होती है, वहां की घटनाओं के विषय में, मन को जानना संभव नहीं है. मन की पहुंच जहां नहीं है, वहां की बातें मन कैसे सोच सकता है, कैसे कर सकता है? इसे कहते हैं अनवस्था दोष. इसलिए वहां कार्य-कारण तत्व के अनुसार मनुष्य कुछ समझ नहीं सकता है. क्योंकि मन वहां पर काम नहीं करता है, उसकी पैदाइश ही नहीं हुई रहती है. सृष्टि की प्रथम अवस्था में जो संचर धारा अर्थात एक से अनेक प्रथम स्तर हैं, जो कारण मन है, उसकी ठीक वैसी ही अवस्था प्रतिसंचर धारा अर्थात अनेक से एक में आ सकती है. ऐसा हम दर्शन की दृष्टि से कह सकते हैं, किंतु अनुभूति की दृष्टि से नहीं, क्योंकि आदि बिंदु और अंत-बिंदु दोनों ही मन के दायरे के बाहर हैं. प्रारंभिक स्तर में हम उसे दर्शन की दृष्टि से 'कारण-स्तर', किंतु प्रतिसंचर में उसे 'कारण' नहीं कह सकते, क्योंकि वह चरमबिंदु ही पूर्णता की चरमवस्था है. प्रारंभ बिंदु को यदि हम मान लें चरम ऋणात्मकता तो पूर्णता के स्तर को हम कहेंगे चरम धनात्मकता. इसलिए उसके लिए आनंद मार्ग दर्शन में सूक्ष्म जगत, कहा गया है, उसे कारण नहीं कह सकते. क्योंकि वह अंतिम स्तर है फिर उसे कारण कैसे कह सकते हैं? अंतिम स्तर तो ऋणात्मक नहीं होता, धनात्मक होता है. यह जो बीजात्मक स्तर अथवा मूलभूत स्तर से चरमोत्कर्ष प्राप्त करते हैं, उसी के बीच में जगत, जीव-जंतु, पेड़-पौधे आदि की उत्पत्ति होती है और अंत होता है. यही है ब्रह्मचक्र या चक्रभूमि. प्रश्न यह है कि तब जीवों का उपास्य क्या है? मनुष्य का उपास्य कौन है, ध्येय कौन है, लक्ष्य कौन है? वह अभिप्रकाश का एक निश्चित बिंदु है. जिससे सब निकलते हैं, अंत में उन्हीं में मिल जायेंगे. यही स्वाभाविक व्यवस्था है. परमपुरुष के सिवा और कोई सत्ता नहीं है, जो मनुष्य का ध्येय हो.

श्रीश्री आनंदमूर्ति

आपके पत्र

आतंकी घटनाओं का व्यापक असर

आतंकवाद अपने देश में बहुत तेजी से फैल रहा है. पिछले पांच सालों में 200 से अधिक आतंकी हमले हुए हैं. अगर सुरक्षाबल और आम नागरिक इसी तरह आतंकवादी हमले में मरते जायेंगे, तो अपना भारत भी उन देशों की श्रेणी में आ जायेगा, जहां आतंकवादी हमले बहुत ही आम बात हैं. लगातार आतंकवादी हमलों से देश की छवि अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर खराब होती है और इसका असर बहुत ही व्यापक होता है. विदेशी कंपनियां ऐसे देश में फैक्टरी स्थापित करना नहीं चाहेंगी और विदेशी सैलानी आने से डरेंगे. आतंकवादी घटनाएं देश की आर्थिक स्थिति पर असर डालती हैं. अभी समय बदला लेने का तो है, पर उससे ज्यादा महत्वपूर्ण यह सुनिश्चित करने का है कि भविष्य में ऐसी घटनाएं न हों. आतंकवाद की समस्या एक देश की नहीं है, बल्कि इससे विश्व के कई देश जूझ रहे हैं. इसका निवारण तभी होगा, जब विश्व के सारे देश इसके विरुद्ध एक साथ खड़े होंगे.

अभिषेक मोहन, रांची

पाकिस्तान की आदत नहीं छूटी

मंगलवार को पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री ने लाइव प्रेस कॉन्फ्रेंस कर कहा कि बातचीत का रास्ता खुला है. समझ में नहीं आता कि पाकिस्तान यह पुराना राग कब तक अलापता रहेगा? 26/11 हमले के बाद भी उसने यही कहा था कि बातचीत का रास्ता अपनाना चाहिए. सारे सबूत दें, फिर कार्रवाई होगी, पर बाद में क्या हुआ, सबको पता है. अब भी वह यही चाल चल कर भारत को गुमराह करना चाहता है. पूरी दुनिया जानती है और मानती भी है कि पाकिस्तान किस तरह से आतंकवादियों को पनाह दे रहा है. फिर भी पाकिस्तान को यही लगता है कि बातचीत होनी चाहिए. यानी कि शांति चाहता है पाकिस्तान. अगर ऐसा ही है, तो फिर रोज सीजफायर का क्यों उल्लंघन करता है? अगर पाकिस्तान सही में आतंकियों के खिलाफ है, तो आजतक उसने कोई कार्रवाई क्यों नहीं की? अगर वह आतंकवादी नहीं ढूंढ पा रहा है, तो भारत को मौका दे. कुछ ही दिनों में पाकिस्तान से आतंकवादियों को साफ करने की ताकत रखता है भारत.

पालुराम हेंब्रम, सालगझारी, जमशेदपुर

इंतजार अब भी है!

पुलवामा आतंकी हमले में हमने देश के वीर सपूतों को खोया है. इसका बदला लेने का इंतजार हर किसी को है. अगर ऐसा नहीं होता है, तो हम ऐसे ही अपने सपूतों को खाते रहेंगे और माकूल जवाब देने के वक्त का इंतजार करते रह जायेंगे. इंतजार का यह सिलसिला खत्म होना चाहिए. यह कोई विश्वकप या चुनाव का इंतजार नहीं है. यह देश की अस्मिता की रक्षा का कठोर संदेश देने और जवानों की शहादत का जवाब देने का है. यह इंतजार उन माओं को है, जिन्होंने बेटा खोया है. उन सुहागिनों का है, जिनका सुहाग लुटा है. भले युद्ध समस्या का समाधान नहीं है, मगर आतंकी संगठनों और उन्हें संरक्षण देने वालों को सबक सिखाना एक मात्र उपाय है. सरकार को ठोस निर्णय लेना ही होगा.

सुमंत चौधरी, इमेल से

कुछ अलग

जाने मौसम को क्या हो गया!

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कक्का बनियान पहने खाट पर लेटे हुए थे और धूप को निहार रहे थे. दोपहर का समय था. एकाएक बड़बड़ाने लगे कि पता नहीं मौसम को क्या हो गया है. यह अपना स्वभाव तेजी से खोता जा रहा है. कहने लगे कि अबकी पूस में बिना सूर्य उदय वाला एक भी दिन नहीं गुजरा. रोज धूप खिली. सबने रोज नहाया. कभी उस तरह की पछिया भी नहीं चली, जिसमें दांत किटकिटाने लगते हैं. आठ-नौ बजे सुबह वह कुहासा भी नजर नहीं आया, जिसमें आगे के दृश्य ढक जाते हैं.

कक्का की बात पर मैंने गौर किया. टेंपो में घर लौटते हुए लोग भी कुछ इसी तरह की बातें कर रहे थे कि सर्दी का मौसम आया और अब जा भी रहा है, लेकिन एक भी दिन ऐसा नहीं गुजरा, जिसमें सूर्य नदारद हो. वे पीछे के समय में लौटने लगे थे. उनके सामने वह दृश्य तैरने लगा था, जब सर्दी में सूर्य दस-दस दिनों तक की छुट्टी पर निकल जाता था और वातावरण में ओस-कुहासा-हवा की चुभन स्पष्ट महसूस की जाती थी.

कक्का ने मुझे टोका. कहा कि जहां खेती-किसानी की बात होती है, उसमें मौसम की बातें भी अपने आप शामिल हो जाती हैं. वे यह कह रहे थे कि मौसम के आधार पर ही विभिन्न तरह की फसल उगाने की कल्पना को मूर्त रूप दिया जा सका है. फिर वे यह कहने लगे कि हो सकता है कि मौसम के बदलते मिजाज से किसी को कोई लेना-देना नहीं. लेकिन जिनकी जिंदगी खेतों में उगनेवाले अन्न की उम्मीद पर टिकी रहती है, वे उपयुक्त मौसम का इंतजार करते हैं और उसके ठीक-ठाक रूप में नहीं आने पर उदास हो जाते हैं. कक्का कहने लगे कि मौसम से सेहत और मनोस्थिति के संबंध के बारे में उन्हें ठीक से पता नहीं है. लेकिन, बदल रहे इस मौसम से फसल की सेहत पर पड़ रहे फर्क को वह देख पा रहे हैं. उन्होंने कहा कि ठीक से ठंड नहीं पड़ने का मतलब गेहूं के पौधे बताते हैं. उसके पौधे को पर्याप्त नमी नहीं मिलेगी और कुहासे उसको नहीं ढकेंगे, तो उपज पर इसका सीधा प्रभाव पड़ेगा. मौसम का अपने सही मिजाज के साथ न आने पर भी बढ़िया उपज की लिप्सा में अंधाधुन रासायनिक उर्वरक के इस्तेमाल से दाने की गुणवत्ता को तो हानि होगी ही होगी.

सर्दी के बारे में ये सब कहते हुए कक्का को बरसात की याद आ गयी. पूछने लगे कि बचपन का याद है न! सात-सात दिनों तक बारिश होती रहती थी और ऐसा लगता था कि सूर्य ने काले-काले बादल के असंख्य टुकड़ों के हवाले आकाश को कर दिया हो और खुद छुट्टी मनाने कहीं दूर निकल पड़ा हो. लेकिन, अब तो दूसरे तरह का ही नजारा है. बारिश का मौसम आकर निकल जाता है और लोग पंपसेट के सहारे धान की हरियाली को बचाने की जुगत में लगे रहते हैं.

कक्का इस बात को नोट कर रहे थे कि दिनों-दिन धूप की मियाद लंबी होती जा रही है. गर्मी का मौसम बीत जाता है और लोगों को लगता है कि अभी नहीं बीता है. कक्का यह पूछने लगे कि क्या एक दिन धूप और उसकी गर्मी के चपेट में आकर सारे मौसम खाक हो जायेंगे! क्या किसी के पास जवाब है?

देश दुनिया से

रूस-ईरान-तुर्की के बीच त्रिस्तरीय सम्मेलन

चौदह फरवरी को अस्ताना शांति प्रक्रिया के नेताओं (रूस, ईरान और तुर्की के) ने रूसी ब्लैक सी रिसोर्ट, सोची में त्रिस्तरीय शिखर सम्मेलन का आयोजन किया. अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति ट्रंप द्वारा सीरिया से अमेरिकी सैनिकों को वापस बुलाने की घोषणा के बाद पहली बार ऐसे शिखर सम्मेलन का आयोजन हुआ है. इसमें तीन देशों के बीच होनेवाली बातचीत में तीन मुद्दे हावी थे. पहला, विपक्षी कब्जे वाले इदलिब प्रांत और जिन इलाकों से सेना को हटा लिया गया है, उनका क्या करना चाहिए. दूसरा, अस्ताना शांति प्रक्रिया में शामिल देशों को अपने हितों के टकराव और सहयोग खत्म किये बिना उत्तर-पूर्व सीरिया से सैन्य वापसी के अमेरिकी फैसले का जवाब कैसे देना चाहिए. तीसरा, संवैधानिक समिति के गठन को लेकर क्या कदम उठाने चाहिए. अस्ताना प्रक्रिया के लिए ये तीनों ही मुद्दे बड़ी चुनौती बने हुए हैं. सीरिया गृहयुद्ध को लेकर कई वर्षों तक रूस, ईरान और तुर्की प्रतिद्वंद्वी बने रहे. रूस-ईरान ने जहां सैन्य, वित्तीय और राजनीतिक सहायता देते हुए सीरियाई शासन का समर्थन किया, वहीं तुर्की ने सीरियाई विपक्ष की सहायता की और अपने राजनीतिक व सैन्य नेतृत्व को सुरक्षित आश्रम मुहैया कराया.

मारवान कबालान

ALJAZEERA

कार्टून कोना

साभार : बीबीसी

पोस्ट करें : प्रभात खबर, 15 पी, इंडस्ट्रियल एरिया, कोकर, रांची 834001, **फैक्स करें** : 0651-2544006,
मेल करें : eletter@prabhatkhabar.in पर ई-मेल संक्षिप्त व हिंदी में हो. लिपि रोमन भी हो सकती है

दैनिक जागरण

जनहित सबसे ऊंचा उद्देश्य है

इमरान का बेसुरा राग

पुलवामा में भीषण आतंकी हमले के कई दिन बाद इस घटना पर कुछ बोलने के लिए आगे आए पाकिस्तानी प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान ने ऐसा कुछ भी नहीं कहा जिससे पाकिस्तान पर भरोसा किया जा सके। इमरान ने हमेशा की तरह आतंकी हमले में पाकिस्तान की लिप्तता के सुबूत मांगकर देश-दुनिया को गुमराह करने की ही कोशिश की। इसी के साथ उन्होंने यह कहकर भारत को धमकाया भी कि अगर पाकिस्तान पर हमला हुआ तो उसका जवाब दिया जाएगा। इस सबके साथ ही उन्होंने बातचीत से समस्या का हल निकालने की पेशकश की और यह रोना भी रोया कि पाकिस्तान तो खुद ही आतंकवाद का शिकार है। इस रुदन में किसी की दिलचस्पी इसलिए नहीं हो सकती, क्योंकि खुद उसके पाले-पोसे आतंकियों ने ही उस पर कहर ढाया है। पेशावर के एक स्कूल में हुआ हमला इसका सबसे बड़ा सुबूत था। आखिर पाकिस्तानी प्रधानमंत्री ने यह सोच भी कैसे लिया कि भारत उन पर भरोसा करने के लिए तैयार हो सकता है? इमरान पुलवामा हमले में शामिल जिस आतंकी संगठन जैश-ए-मोहम्मद के खिलाफ सुबूत मांग रहे हैं उसका सरगना तो पाकिस्तानी खुफिया एजेंसी आइएसआइ के साये में ही पल रहा है। क्या इमरान इससे अवगत नहीं कि वह पठानकोट हमले के बाद से ही आइएसआइ के संरक्षण में रह रहा है? यह वही आतंकी सरगना है जिस पर चीन इसलिए संयुक्त राष्ट्र की पाबंदी नहीं लगने दे रहा है, क्योंकि पाकिस्तान को शर्मिंदगी उठानी पड़ेगी। इमरान खान पर भरोसा इसलिए भी नहीं किया जा सकता, क्योंकि एक तो वह दिखावटी प्रधानमंत्री हैं और दूसरे, हर कोई इससे अच्छी तरह परिचित हो चुका है कि पाकिस्तान आतंकी हमलों में अपने लोगों के हाथ होने के सुबूत मांगकर किस तरह वक्त जाया करने के साथ ही नए हमलों की साजिश रचता है। भारत यह कभी नहीं भूल सकता कि मुंबई हमले की साजिश रचने वाले आतंकियों के खिलाफ तमाम सुबूत दिए जाने के बाद भी पाकिस्तान ने कुछ नहीं किया। ये आतंकी न केवल खुले आम घूम रहे हैं, बल्कि पाकिस्तान के शिक्षा संस्थानों में जाकर भारत के खिलाफ आग उगलने में लगे हुए हैं।

मुंबई हमले के गुनहगारों और मसूद अजहर के अलावा पाकिस्तान तमाम सुबूतों के बावजूद एक अन्य आतंकी सरगना दाऊद इब्राहीम को भी कराची में पाल रहा है। ऐसे काम वही कर सकता है जिसने आतंकवाद को अपने शासन की नीतियों का हिस्सा बना लिया हो। पाकिस्तान आतंकवाद का निर्यात भारत के साथ-साथ अफगानिस्तान और ईरान में भी करने में लगा हुआ है और इसी कारण दुनिया उसकी बातों का भरोसा नहीं करती। समस्या यह है कि विश्व समुदाय पाकिस्तान को आतंकवाद का गढ़ मानने के बावजूद उसकी अनदेखी करता है। अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप भले ही उसे आर्थिक मदद देने को तैयार न हों, लेकिन वह अफगानिस्तान को उन तालिबान के हवाले करने को तैयार हैं जिन्हें पाकिस्तान का खुला समर्थन प्राप्त है। ऐसी हालत में भारत को ही यह देखना होगा कि वह पाकिस्तान को सबक सिखाने के लिए क्या कदम उठाए? निःसंदेह केवल इतना ही पर्याप्त नहीं कि भारत ने इमरान के बयान को नकार दिया। इसके साथ ही उसे और भी बहुत कुछ करना होगा।

संयम का वक्त

पिछले दिनों पुलवामा में सीआरपीएफ जवानों के काफिले पर हुए हमले के बाद उत्तराखंड में भी उबाल है। चारों ओर गम और गुस्से के बीच पाकिस्तान के खिलाफ जुलूस प्रदर्शन और नारेबाजी का दौर थम नहीं रहा है। ऐसे में देहरादून और रुड़की में कश्मीर युवाओं का मामला चिंता बढ़ाने वाला है। दून में पढ़ रहे कुछ कश्मीरी छात्रों ने सोशल मीडिया पर ऐसी टिप्पणी वायरल कर दीं, जिससे जन आक्रोश भड़क गया। यही स्थिति रुड़की में भी देखने को मिली। वहां भी एक कश्मीर युवक ने सेना पर टिप्पणी की तो हालात काबू से बाहर होते दिखे, लेकिन पुलिस ने वक्त रहते स्थिति संभाल ली। दरअसल देश की वर्तमान परिस्थितियों को देखते हुए पुलिस कश्मीरी छात्रों और लोगों की सुरक्षा के लिए भी चिंतित है। यही वजह है कि एक दिन पहले उत्तराखंड के पुलिस महानिदेशक (कानून व्यवस्था) ने कश्मीरी छात्र-छात्राओं से अपील की कि वे सोशल मीडिया पर भड़काऊ पोस्ट न करें और भरोसा दिलाया कि पुलिस उनकी सुरक्षा को लेकर पूरी तरह सतर्क है। इसके अलावा पुलिस के आला अफसरों ने कश्मीरी छात्रों की सुरक्षा को लेकर मंथन भी किया। देवभूमि स्वभाव से ही सहिष्णु है। जाहिर है यहां रहने वाले बाहरी छात्र-छात्राओं अथवा लोगों को डरने की आवश्यकता नहीं है। अतिथि देवो भवः की परंपरा निभाने वाली इस भूमि ने सदा ही अतिथियों का स्वागत किया है और उन्हें सुरक्षा दी है, लेकिन इसमें कोई दो राय नहीं है कि जो माहौल बना हुआ है उसमें पुलिस और प्रशासन की जिम्मेदारी न केवल बढ़ गई है, बल्कि संवेदनशील होने की भी दरकार है। दूसरा महत्वपूर्ण पहलू यह है कि जिन शिक्षण संस्थाओं में ये छात्र-छात्राएं अध्ययनरत हैं, उनकी भी जिम्मेदारी है कि वे सुरक्षा का ध्यान रखें। साथ ही यह भी जरूरी है कि प्रवेश देने से पहले यह तहकीकात अवश्य की जाए कि किसी का रिकॉर्ड आपराधिक तो नहीं है, क्योंकि कई बार यह भी देखने में आया है कि पढ़ाई की आड़ में कई असमाजिक तत्व भी संस्थानों में प्रवेश ले लेते हैं।

महंगाई के मोर्चे पर बड़ी कामयाबी

डॉ. कृष्णमूर्ति सुब्रमण्यन

महंगाई का कम होना ही वह पहला, लेकिन महत्वपूर्ण कदम है जिससे आम जनता के साथ-साथ कंपनियों के लिए भी उधारी लागत को घटाना संभव हो पाता है

हाल में लोकसभा से पारित अंतरिम बजट 2019-20 में औसत नागरिकों, विशेषकर मध्यम वर्ग के जीवन को आसान बनाने के लिए कई कदम उठाए गए हैं। चूंकि बजट में घोषित विभिन्न कदम पिछले पांच वर्षों में किए गए अनगिनत उपायों की परिणति के प्रमाण हैं इसलिए हमें यह बात भली-भांति समझनी चाहिए कि इस दौरान मध्यम वर्ग के आम लोगों का जीवन किस तरह से अत्यंत आसान हो गया है। विशेषकर महंगाई में आई उल्लेखनीय कमी और वस्तु एवं सेवा कर यानी जीएसटी की बदौलत प्रभावी कर दरें घट जाने से बचत बढ़ने और उपभोग पर खर्च घटने से लोगों की क्रय क्षमता में खासा इजाफा हुआ है। महंगाई आम लोगों के लिए बहुत दुखदायी होती है। यह एक तरह का कष्टदायक कर होती है। जो महंगाई दर वर्ष 2013-14 में 10.1 प्रतिशत के उच्च स्तर पर पहुंच चुकी थी वह दिसंबर 2018 में काफी घटकर सिर्फ 2.2 प्रतिशत के स्तर पर आ गई। महंगाई के वास्तविक असर को समझने के लिए हमें यह बात अवश्य याद रखनी चाहिए कि महंगाई आम जनता की गाढ़ी कमाई से खाद्य पदार्थों, कपड़े और अन्य आवश्यक वस्तुओं को खरीदने की उनकी क्षमता को बुरी तरह प्रभावित करती है। यदि एक किलोग्राम चावल की कीमत वर्ष 2014 में 50 रुपये थी और यदि महंगाई दर पिछले पांच वर्षों के दौरान निरंतर दहाई अंकों में बरकरार रहती तो ठीक उतने ही यानी एक किलोग्राम चावल की कीमत आज 80 रुपये बैठेगी। अब इसकी दूसरी तस्वीर पर गौर कीजिए। यदि पांच वर्षों की इस अवधि के दौरान महंगाई दर के औसतन 4.5 प्रतिशत रहने से ठीक उतने ही यानी एक किलोग्राम चावल की कीमत आज 62.5 रुपये है। अतः प्रति माह 5,000 रुपये खर्च करने वाला परिवार आज 80 किलोग्राम चावल खरीद सकता है, जबकि महंगाई दर के वर्ष 2014 के स्तर पर ही बरकरार रहने की स्थिति में यह परिवार केवल 62.5 किलोग्राम चावल ही खरीद पाता। इसका मतलब यही हुआ कि महंगाई दर के नरम रहने से परिवार की क्रय क्षमता लगभग 28 प्रतिशत बढ़ गई है। कुल मिलाकर किसी भी औसत परिवार द्वारा उपभोग की जाने वाली विभिन्न वस्तुओं के मामले में यह बढ़ी हुई क्रय या खरीद क्षमता से संबंधित परिवार की खुशहाली में आशातीत वृद्धि हुई है, क्योंकि उसके बजट में एक बड़ा हिस्सा इन वस्तुओं का ही होता है।

दूसरी अहम बात यह है कि महंगाई का असर बचत की वास्तविक दरों पर भी पड़ता है। जब महंगाई दर वर्ष 2014 तक दहाई अंकों में थी तब कोई भी बचतकर्ता प्रति वर्ष (-)2 प्रतिशत ब्याज अर्जित करता था। दूसरे शब्दों में, किसी सावधि जमा में अपनी गाढ़ी कमाई निवेश कर एक औसत नागरिक अपनी क्रय क्षमता को बढ़ाने के बजाय कम करता जा रहा था। इसके विपरीत, पिछले चार वर्षों में महंगाई की औसत दर लगभग 4 प्रतिशत रहने के परिणामस्वरूप बचत की वास्तविक दरें तकरीबन 3 प्रतिशत आंकी गईं जो सही मायनों में पांच प्रतिशत की वृद्धि दर्शाती हैं। अतः यदि महंगाई दर वर्ष 2014 के स्तर पर ही बरकरार रहती तो बचतकर्ताओं की क्रय क्षमता वर्तमान स्तर के मुकाबले लगभग 25 प्रतिशत कम होती। चूंकि वरिष्ठ नागरिक अपनी सेवानिवृत्ति राशि को विशेषकर सावधि जमाओं में लगाकर उस पर अर्जित होने वाले ब्याज पर ही निर्भर रहते हैं, इसलिए बचत राशि की क्रय क्षमता बढ़ने से ये पेंशनभोगी ही सबसे अधिक लाभान्वित होते हैं।

अवधेश राजपूत

एक महत्वपूर्ण ढांचागत बदलाव यथा मौद्रिक नीति की रूपरेखा के कार्यान्वयन की बदौलत ही कम महंगाई संभव हो पाई है। दरअसल, मौद्रिक नीति की रूपरेखा के तहत भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक ने महंगाई दर को 2 से 6 प्रतिशत के बीच लक्षित किया। महंगाई को कम करने में मिली सफलता विशेष मायने रखती है, क्योंकि महंगाई का कम होना ही वह पहला, लेकिन अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण कदम है जिससे आम जनता के साथ-साथ कंपनियों के लिए भी उधारी लागत को घटाना संभव हो पाता है। देश का मध्यम वर्ग कम महंगाई के लाभ के असर को पहले ही महसूस कर चुका है, जो होम एवं कार लोन पर देय ब्याज के साथ-साथ क्रेडिट कार्ड की भुगतान राशि में कमी के रूप में प्राप्त हुआ है। आर्थिक विकास की तेज रफ्तार हासिल करने वाले प्रत्येक देश ने इस मोर्चे पर कामयाबी पाई है, क्योंकि उधारी लागत घटने से अर्थव्यवस्था की विभिन्न गतिविधियों में निवेश को काफी बढ़ावा मिलता है। मध्यम वर्ग द्वारा अदा किए जाने वाले प्रत्यक्ष एवं अप्रत्यक्ष करों की प्रभावी दरों में कमी के साथ-साथ कर रिटर्न दाखिल करना और रिफंड प्राप्त करना आसान हो जाने से भी मध्यम वर्ग काफी लाभान्वित हुआ है।

अब हम वस्तु एवं सेवा कर यानी जीएसटी के असर पर विचार करते हैं। जीएसटी लागू होने से पहले और उसके बाद के पारिवारिक खर्च का विश्लेषण करने से यह तथ्य उभरकर सामने आया है कि लगभग 100 वस्तुओं पर टैक्स की दरें घट गई हैं जिनमें खाद्य एवं पेय पदार्थ, हेयर ऑयल, टूथपेस्ट, साबुन, वाशिंग पाउडर, जूते-चप्पल इत्यादि शामिल हैं। यदि हम हर महीने इन वस्तुओं पर 8,400 रुपये खर्च करने वाले परिवार पर विचार करते हैं तो हम पाते हैं कि जीएसटी के तहत उसके द्वारा अदा की गई टैक्स राशि 320 रुपये कम हो गई है, क्योंकि दोहरा कर अब समाप्त हो गया है। उपभोक्ता आम तौर पर किसी भी उत्पाद की पैकेजिंग पर छपी जीएसटी दर पर ही अपनी नजर डालते हैं और वे यह मान लेते हैं कि टैक्स की प्रभावी दर बढ़ गई है। हालांकि, जीएसटी का भुगतान केवल मूल्य वर्धन (वैल्यू एडिशन) या बढ़े हुए मूल्य पर ही किया जाता है। अतः उपभोक्ताओं को केवल जीएसटी दर के बजाय जीएसटी के तहत अदा की गई वास्तविक राशि को ही ध्यान में रखना चाहिए।

टैक्स की प्रभावी दर में कमी करने के साथ-साथ टैक्स रिटर्न दाखिल करना भी काफी आसान कर दिया गया है, ताकि मध्यम वर्ग के ज्यादातर लोग अपने-अपने टैक्स रिटर्न ऑनलाइन दाखिल कर सकें और जल्द ही रिफंड प्राप्त कर सकें। सरकारी कोशिशों से 99.54 प्रतिशत रिटर्न के लिए किसी भी टैक्स अधिकारी या कर्मचारी से संपर्क करने की जरूरत नहीं पड़ी है। वहीं, दूसरी ओर जिन 0.46 प्रतिशत रिटर्न के लिए किसी टैक्स अधिकारी या कर्मचारी से संपर्क करने की जरूरत पड़ी है, उनमें मध्यम वर्ग के ईमानदार करदाताओं के शामिल होने की संभावना नहीं है। आम जनता के लिए कर अनुपालन अत्यंत आसान हो गया है। दरअसल, इन परिवर्तनों की बदौलत सरलीकरण का वह अगला चरण शुरू करने का भी समय अब आ गया है, जिसमें 24 घंटे के अंदर ही टैक्स रिटर्न का आकलन हो जाएगा और इसके साथ ही रिफंड की प्रोसेसिंग भी पूरी हो जाएगी। बजट भाषण में भी इसका उल्लेख किया गया है। कुल मिलाकर, मध्यम वर्ग के लिए बजट में घोषित किए गए अनगिनत लाभ विगत पांच वर्षों के दौरान निर्मित महत्वपूर्ण संरचना की विशेष अहमियत को दर्शाते हैं।

(लेखक भारत सरकार के मुख्य आर्थिक सलाहकार हैं)

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राजनीतिक नेतृत्व की नाकामी के तीन दशक

राजीव सचान

1989 में कश्मीर के अशांत होने के बाद से ही हम पाकिस्तान के हाथों आहत-अपमानित होते चले आ रहे हैं

पुलवामा में सीआरपीएफ के जवानों पर हुआ हमला राष्ट्र की चेतना और साथ ही उसके स्वाभिमान पर करारा आघात था, लेकिन उसका सामना करने में हम एक राष्ट्र के रूप में वैसी परिपक्वता, एकजुटता और दृढ़ता नहीं प्रदर्शित कर सके जैसी अपेक्षित ही नहीं अनिवार्य थी। देश के मर्म पर चोट करने वाले इस हमले की खबर मिलते ही स्वाभाविक तौर पर उसकी निंदा और भर्त्सना शुरू हो गई। इसे कायराना हमला कहा गया, लेकिन यह तो घिनौने दुस्साहस की पराकाष्ठा थी। जब सर्वदलीय बैठक बुलाने की घोषणा हुई तो ऐसा लगा कि सभी राजनीतिक दल अपने दलगत हित और स्वार्थों का परित्याग कर समवेत स्वर में ऐसा कुछ कहेंगे जिससे दुनिया को भारत की एकजुटता और दृढ़ता का संदेश जाएगा, लेकिन ऐसा कुछ भी नहीं हुआ। इस सर्वदलीय बैठक में जो राजनीतिक प्रस्ताव पारित हुआ वह इतना पिलपिला था कि उसने कहीं कोई प्रभाव नहीं छोड़ा। आश्चर्य केवल यह नहीं कि इसमें पाकिस्तान का दूर-दूर तक नाम न था। यह भी था कि इसकी भाषा में कोई तेज-ओज न था। घिसी-पिटी सरकारी भाषा वाला यह एक नीरस और निष्प्राण प्रस्ताव था। इस भाषा में भी संशोधन करना पड़ा, क्योंकि कुछ दलों को किसी वाक्य पर आपत्ति थी। देश जानना चाहेगा कि वह क्या था जिस पर कुछ दलों को आपत्ति थी और जिसके चलते प्रस्ताव की भाषा बदली गई?

अगर हमारा राजनीतिक नेतृत्व गहन संकट के समय कोई ढंग का राजनीतिक प्रस्ताव भी तैयार नहीं कर सकता तो उससे कोई उम्मीद कैसे की जा सकती है? इस प्रभावहीन प्रस्ताव की जड़ में वह राजनीतिक क्षुद्रता और स्वार्थपरता ही झलकी जिसने पिछले दो-तीन दशकों में अपनी जड़ें और गहरी कर ली हैं। जब देश शोकमग्न था तब राजनीतिक दलों को कैसे अपने राजनीतिक हितों की चिंता सता रही थी, यह उनकी रैलियों और सभाओं से प्रकट हुआ। इनके जरिये आरोप-प्रत्यारोप का सिलसिला कायम हो गया। क्या पक्ष-विपक्ष के राजनीतिक दल कुछ दिन ठहर नहीं सकते थे? जब यह अपेक्षित था कि सभी दल एक स्वर में बोलते तब वे अलग-अलग स्वर में बोलने लगे और इस तरह शोक के वातावरण में राजनीतिक नकारात्मकता घुलने लगी। इसकी एक बानगी तब मिली जब वंदे भारत एक्सप्रेस में क्षणिक खराबी आने पर उसका उपहास उड़ाया जाने लगा। एक क्षण को ऐसा लगा कि यह देश की नहीं, भाजपा की निजी ट्रेन थी, जो उसकी खराबी पर विरोधी दल खुद को आनंदित होने से नहीं रोक पा रहे थे। इस प्रसंग ने एक बार फिर यही बताया कि सरकार विरोध और देश विरोध के बीच का अंतर किस तरह धुंधला हो गया है। क्या विरोधी दल के लोग या फिर सरकार के कटु आलोचक इस पर भी खुश होना पसंद करेंगे कि सूर्यकिरण विमान दुर्घटनाग्रस्त हो गए?

आम तौर पर दुनिया में हर आतंकी हमला सुरक्षा में चूक का नतीजा होता है। पुलवामा हमले में भी सुरक्षा-सतर्कता में कमी साफ दिख रही है। इस कमी का उल्लेख किया ही जाना चाहिए, लेकिन आखिर ऐसे वाहियात सवाल का क्या मतलब कि यह हमला चुनाव के ठीक पहले क्यों हुआ? यह सवाल पश्चिम बंगाल की मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी का है जो प्रधानमंत्री बनना चाह रही हैं। इस चाहत में कोई बुराई नहीं, लेकिन उनके इस सवाल का जवाब तो जैश ए मोहम्मद या फिर पाकिस्तानी सेना ही दे सकती है कि पुलवामा में हमला इसी समय क्यों किया गया?

राजनीतिक दलों के चिंतन और विमर्श में गिरावट रातोंरात नहीं आई। यह एक अर्से से जारी है और इसमें सभी दलों का बराबर योगदान है-कांग्रेस, भाजपा से लेकर कमल हासन की ओर से नए बनाए गए राजनीतिक दल का भी। कमल हासन को लगता है कि कश्मीर में जनमत संग्रह कराया जाना चाहिए। कमल हासन इसके उदाहरण हैं कि हमने कैसे कुछ सतही सोच वाले कलाकारों को फिल्मी पर्दे पर उनके अभिनय के आधार अपना नायक मान लिया है। साफ है कि कमल हासन को इसका ज्ञान भी नहीं कि कश्मीर में जनमत संग्रह संबंधी संयुक्त राष्ट्र का प्रस्ताव क्या कहता है।

पुलवामा में हमले के बाद सबसे गंभीर बात यह है कि देश की न तो कोई कश्मीर नीति दिख रही है और न ही पाकिस्तान संबंधी नीति। ऐसी कोई नीति शायद इसीलिए नहीं बन सकी, क्योंकि सरकारें आती-जाती गईं और वे अपने हिसाब से कश्मीर और पाकिस्तान संबंधी नीति में अपने मन मुताबिक फेरबदल करती गईं। नतीजा यह हुआ कि कहीं कोई स्पष्ट नीति रह ही नहीं गई। यह स्थिति इसलिए भी बनी, क्योंकि राजनीतिक दलों के लिए देश के दीर्घकालिक हित पहली प्राथमिकता नहीं बन सके। एक समय अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी ने कहा था कि दल बनेंगे-बिगड़ेंगे, सरकारें आएंगी-जाएंगी, लेकिन यह देश रहना चाहिए। लगता था कि हमारे राजनीतिक दल इसी भावना से काम करते होंगे, लेकिन अब इसमें संदेह होने लगा है।

कायदे से कश्मीर को शांत करने और पाकिस्तान में पनप रहे खतरे का सामना करने की कोई ठोस नीति तभी बन जानी चाहिए थी जब 1989 में उसने वहां दखल देना शुरू किया था। ऐसा नहीं किया गया। इसके दस साल बाद 1999 में कश्मीर के कारण ही कारगिल में घुसपैठ हुई और वह एक सैन्य संघर्ष में तब्दील हो गई। सैकड़ों सैनिकों ने बलिदान दिया, लेकिन शायद जरूरी सबक नहीं सीखे गए। इसके करीब दस साल बाद 2008 में मुंबई में सबसे भीषण आतंकी हमला हुआ। तमाम गर्जन-तर्जन के बाद भी पाकिस्तान को सबक सिखाने की किसी नीति पर अमल होते हुए नहीं दिखा। इसके बाद रह-रह कर आतंकी हमले होते रहे और हम रह-रह कर इस उम्मीद में पाकिस्तान के साथ वार्ता की मेज पर जाकर बैठते रहे कि शायद अबकी बार वह सही रास्ते पर आ जाए। मुंबई हमले के करीब दस साल बाद पुलवामा में भीषण हमला शायद इसीलिए हुआ, क्योंकि न तो कश्मीर को शांत करने की कोई व्यापक पहल हुई और न ही पाकिस्तान पर लगाम लगाने की।

एक तरह से देखा जाए तो तीस साल बीत गए हैं और हम पाकिस्तान के हाथों आहत-अपमानित होते चले आ रहे हैं। हमारी एक के बाद एक सरकारों ने दुनिया से यह अपेक्षा व्यक्त की कि वह पाकिस्तान को आतंकी राष्ट्र घोषित करे, लेकिन हम खुद वह काम नहीं कर सके जो औरों से चाहते थे। निःसंदेह इसका यह मतलब नहीं कि पाकिस्तान को आतंकी राष्ट्र घोषित करने मात्र से वह काबू में आ जाता, लेकिन आखिर कुछ तो ठोस किया जाना चाहिए था। दूसरी ओर यह साफ दिखता है कि भारत को लहूलुहान करने की अपनी नीति पर पाकिस्तान न केवल कायम है, बल्कि वह उसे और धार भी दे रहा है।

(लेखक दैनिक जागरण में एसोसिएट एडीटर हैं)

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ऊर्जा

सफलता

कामयाबी के शिखर पर कुशलता के सोपानों से चढ़ा जाता है। सफलता बौद्धिक प्रतिभा का संग्रह मात्र नहीं, बल्कि बौद्धिक क्षमता के समुचित सुनियोजन की कुशलता का नाम है। सफलता एक ऐसी तकनीक है, जो अर्जित ज्ञान को समय की मांग के अनुरूप क्रियाशील एवं क्रियान्वित कर सके। नई सोच, नए विचार एवं नित नई कुशलता सफलता के सूत्र हैं। ये सूत्र भौतिक जीवन से लेकर आध्यात्मिक जीवन में भी प्रयुक्त होते हैं। भौतिक जीवन के नूतन आविष्कार और उनकी व्यावहारिक उपयोगिता इसी का परिणाम है। सफलता के लिए समय एवं परिस्थिति के अनुरूप ढलने की आवश्यकता होती है।

पूर्वाग्रही, दुराग्रही एवं हठाग्रही व्यक्ति कभी सफल नहीं हो सकते। ऐसा इसलिए, क्योंकि वे अपनी आदतों, मान्यताओं, आग्रहों और दुराग्रहों की सीमा में इस कदर कैद होते हैं कि वह इससे परे कुछ सोच ही नहीं सकते। ऐसी मानसिकता बदली हुई परिस्थितियों की आहट को सुनने-समझने में पूर्णतः अक्षम-असमर्थ होती है। किसी क्षेत्र में सफलता के लिए उस क्षेत्र के सारे आयामों से संबंधित सूचनाओं के संग्रह की जरूरत होती है। इसके अलावा किसी वांछित विषय के स्वरूप को मनोयोगपूर्वक सही ढंग से समझना और उसे क्रियान्वित करने की तकनीक खोजना महत्वपूर्ण है। सफल होने के लिए उपलब्ध एवं अर्जित ज्ञान को नवीनतम तथ्यों और तकनीकों से समन्वित करके प्रस्तुत करना सफलता का मार्ग है।

कुशल कलाकार अपने कलात्मक कौशल से अपनी कला को सफलता के शिखर तक पहुंचा देता है। हमारे पास जो है या हम जिसे प्राप्त करने जा रहे हैं, उसे वर्तमान में कैसे उपयोगी एवं व्यावहारिक बनाया जा सकता है? इस बात की खोज ही सफलता का आधार है। इसलिए सफल होने के लिए ज्ञानार्जन के अलावा इस बारे में तकनीकी ज्ञान प्राप्त करते हुए इस ज्ञान के प्रयोग की कुशलता का अभ्यास परम आवश्यक है। इसके अलावा एक महत्वपूर्ण बात यह है कि सफलता के लिए धैर्य की भी बहुत आवश्यकता है। जैसे पौधा एक दिन में वृक्ष नहीं बन जाता, ठीक उसी प्रकार सफलता का भी कोई 'शॉर्टकट' नहीं होता। जब हम एक नियत समय तक प्रयास करेंगे तो कालांतर में उसका परिणाम मिलेगा।

डॉ. सुरचना त्रिवेदी

आभा खोती अरावली

देवेंद्रराज सुथार

अवैध खनन ने न केवल अरावली के स्वरूप को बदल दिया है, बल्कि प्राकृतिक जल तंत्र को भी दूषित कर दिया है

राजस्थान में अरावली का 80 प्रतिशत भाग मौजूद है, लेकिन पिछले कुछ सालों से खनन माफियाओं की मनमानी के कारण इसकी आभा खोती जा रही है। खनन माफिया खुलेआम अरावली पहाड़ियों में जमकर अवैध खनन कर रहे हैं। पुलिस-प्रशासन को भी इसकी कोई परवाह नहीं है। बीते दिनों सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने राजस्थान से अरावली की 31 पहाड़ियां गायब होने पर कड़ी टिप्पणी करते हुए राजस्थान सरकार से पूछा था कि क्या अरावली की पहाड़ियों को लोग हनुमान बनाकर उठा ले गए? शीर्ष अदालत ने 48 घंटे के भीतर अवैध खनन को बंद करने के आदेश दे दिए थे, लेकिन तमाम आदेशों के बावजूद भी प्रदेश में चोरी-छिपे अवैध तरीके से अरावली पर खनन कार्य होना राज्य सरकार के अवैध खनन को रोकने के प्रयासों पर सवालिया निशान लगा रहा है। हालांकि वन विभाग के नियमों के अनुसार अगर एक बार कोई वाहन या व्यक्ति अवैध खनन में लिप्त पाया जाता है तो उसके खिलाफ भारी-भरकम जुर्माना लगाया जाता है। अगर तीन बार कोई वाहन अवैध खनन का परिवहन करते पाया जाता है तो उस वाहन को सीज कर दिया जाता है, लेकिन फिर भी खनन माफियाओं में कोई डर नहीं है।

गौरतलब है कि प्री-कैम्बियन काल में बनीं अरावली की पहाड़ियां एक वलित पर्वत श्रृंखला हैं। अरावली शब्द संस्कृत भाषा के दो शब्दों 'अरा' और 'वली' से मिलकर के बना है, जिसका अर्थ होता है 'चोटियों की रेखा', लेकिन कुछ रेफरेंस कहते हैं कि अरावली दरअसल आडावली का अपभ्रंश है। और आडावली इसलिए, क्योंकि यात्रा करते वक्त ये पहाड़ियां यात्रियों के आड़े आती थीं। यह पर्वतमाला देश के उत्तरी-पश्चिमी भाग में फैली हुई है। अर्थात ये पहाड़ियां भारत के चार राज्यों राजस्थान, हरियाणा, गुजरात और दिल्ली में 692 किलोमीटर में फैली हुई हैं। इन पहाड़ियों की औसत ऊंचाई 930 मीटर है। दक्षिणी भाग में ये अधिक चौड़ी और ऊंची हैं, जबकि उत्तर की तरफ जाते हुए इनकी ऊंचाई कम होते जाती है। इसकी दक्षिणी पहाड़ियों में ही हरियाली और घने जंगल पाए जाते हैं, जबकि उत्तर के ज्यादातर क्षेत्र रेतीले और पथरीले हैं। अरावली की सबसे ऊंची चोटी का नाम गुरु-शिखर है जो सागर तल से 1,722 मीटर ऊंची है। यह माउंट आबू शहर में स्थित है।

अगर अरावली की ये पहाड़ियां नहीं बचीं तो इनके माध्यम से मिलने वाले ढेरों खनिजों-सीसा, तांबा, जस्ता आदि के लाभ से हमें वंचित होना पड़ेगा। इससे निकलने वाली बाना, लूनी, साखी, साबरमती, केन, बेतवा, धसान, सिंध, पार्वती, काली सिंधु, बनास जैसी नदियां देखने को नहीं मिलेंगी। यही नहीं इन पहाड़ियों के पश्चिम में विशाल थार मरुस्थल स्थित है। पहाड़ियां इसे पूर्व की ओर फैलने से रोकती हैं। कई ऐसी प्रजातियां जो अन्यथा नहीं पाई जातीं या लुप्त होने के कगार पर हैं, यहां मिल जाएंगी। भील जैसी कितनी ही आदिवासी प्रजातियों का रहवास भी इनमें है। इसकी ही बदौलत माउंट आबू, आबू का विशाल नखी तालाब और उदयपुर जैसे पर्यटक स्थल आय के स्रोत बने हुए हैं। अरावली के उजड़ने का सीधा मतलब इन सबको खोना है।

(लेखक स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)

मेलबाक्स

कब सुधरेंगे कश्मीर के हालात

बलबीर पुंज ने अपने आलेख 'विषाक्त मानसिकता से बिगड़े हालात' के माध्यम से कश्मीर घाटी में व्याप्त आतंकवाद रूपी अराजकता पर दुख व्यक्त किया है। कश्मीर घाटी प्रकृति द्वारा रची गई अद्भुत कला का उदाहरण है। यह प्राकृतिक सौंदर्य का प्रतीक है, परंतु यह दुखद है कि वहां आए दिन आतंकी हमले हो रहे हैं, जिसके कारण वहां के स्थानीय निवासी दहशत में जीवन यापन कर रहे हैं। आतंकवाद के कारण वहां आने वाले पर्यटक भी असुरक्षित महसूस करते हैं। कश्मीर घाटी में व्याप्त आतंकवाद रूपी अराजकता का जिम्मेदार कौन है? आखिर कैसे आतंकी हमारे देश में घुस जाते हैं और देश को क्षति पहुंचाते हैं? यह समझना जरूरी है कि आतंक से किसी का भला नहीं होता, अपितु इससे केवल अशांति का माहौल पनपता है। आतंकवाद कैंसर सरीखा है। फर्क सिर्फ इतना है कि कैंसर मानव शरीर को क्षति पहुंचाता है, परंतु आतंकवाद देश के साथ-साथ संपूर्ण मानवता को नष्ट कर देता है। आतंक मचाने वाले अपनी कमजोर मानसिकता को प्रमाणित करते हैं। इस दुनिया को रचने वाले ने हम सभी मनुष्यों को एक समान बनाया है। हमें बुद्धि दी है ताकि हम मानवता की रक्षा कर सकें। आज मानवता खतरे में है। इसकी रक्षा करना हम इंसानों के हाथों में ही है, जिसके लिए आतंक रूपी अराजकता को त्यागकर प्रेम रूपी वस्त्र को धारण करके मनुष्य होने का प्रमाण देना होगा।

सौरभ पाठक, ग्रेटर नोएडा

देश का माहौल बिगाड़ रहे अराजक तत्व

संपूर्ण देश जहां वीर शहीदों को श्रद्धांजलि दे रहा है वहीं देश के अंदर कुछ अराजक तत्व ऐसे भी हैं जो देश के माहौल को बिगाड़ने में लगे हैं। समाज विरोधी तत्व इस बात से नाखुश हैं कि देश में इतनी एकजुटता कैसे है, यही बात उनको हजम नहीं हो रही है और यही कारण है कि ये लोग अवसर देख पाकिस्तान जिंदाबाद के नारे लगाने से गुरेज नहीं कर रहे हैं। ऐसा कर इन शरारती तत्वों को क्या फायदा मिलता है, यह तो समझ से परे है, लेकिन इतना तो तय है कि राष्ट्रविरोधी लोगों के खिलाफ एकजुट भारत देख उनकी हवाइयां उड़ी है। यह बहुत ही दुखद है कि देश के लिए मर मिटने वाले सैनिकों के प्रति ऐसे लोग श्रद्धांजलि देने के बजाय ऐसी करामात कर रहे हैं, जिससे शहीदों के परिवारों को ठेस पहुंच रही है। जवान अपने प्राणों की आहुति देकर हमारी रक्षा कर रहे हैं और कुछ लोग पाकिस्तान जिंदाबाद के नारे लगा रहे हैं। यह बहुत ही दुःखद है। इस पर देश के सभी नागरिकों को गंभीरता से सोचना चाहिए।

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धारा 370 हटे और शहीद आयोग बने

देश की आत्मा पर आए दिन हो रहे ऐसे हमलों के पीछे कश्मीर में लागू 370 धारा भी है। इसकी वजह से घाटी में आतंकवादियों के हितैषियों को भी खास दर्जा मिलता है। धारा 370 की वजह से वहां पर जांच और ऑडिट जेसे कार्य नहीं हो पाते हैं। दूसरा सबसे बड़ा महत्वपूर्ण निर्णय हमारे वीर जवानों के लिए लेने की आवश्यकता है। अपने देश पर खुद को न्योछावर कर देने वाले ये जवान देश की सरहद पर आते वक्त अपने पीछे अपना भरा पूरा परिवार छोड़ आते हैं। उनके जाने के बाद उनके परिवार को काफी दिक्कतें झेलनी पड़ती हैं। ऐसे में समय की यही मांग है कि सरकार एक शहीद आयोग भी बनाए, जो ताउम्र उन परिवार के साथ खड़ा रहे या उनकी जरूरतों का ध्यान रख सके।

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विरोध की अति में हो रही क्षति

पुलवामा आतंकी हमले के बाद देश में आक्रोश व्याप्त है और ऐसा होना भी चाहिए, लेकिन इसका यह मतलब नहीं कि हम अपने दुश्मन को नीचा दिखाते-दिखाते अपने देश को ही नुकसान पहुंचा बैठें। शायद ही देश का ऐसा कोई कोना बचा होगा, जहां से बदले की चिंगारी न धधकी हो। सभी जानते हैं कि अति में हमेशा क्षति होती है। हम भारतीय पहले से ही इस बात से वाकिफ हैं कि पाकिस्तान के पास परमाणु हथियार हैं और उसकी नीति हमेशा घर के बर्तनों में खाना नहीं, बल्कि गोला बारूद रखने की रही है। पाकिस्तान की इस मानसिकता का असर हमारे अभिन्न अंग जम्मू-कश्मीर पर भी पड़ा है। जहां का आवाम अलगाववाद की चिंगारी में जलकर आतंकवाद के साथ खड़ा है। जब तक इस समस्या का समाधान संवैधानिक रूप से नहीं होगा, तब तक इस समस्या का कोई हल नहीं निकल सकता है।

पिंटू सक्सेना, दिल्ली

इस स्तंभ में किसी भी विषय पर राय व्यक्त करने अथवा दैनिक जागरण के राष्ट्रीय संस्करण पर प्रतिक्रिया व्यक्त करने के लिए पाठकगण सादर आमंत्रित हैं। आप हमें पत्र भेजने के साथ ई-मेल भी कर सकते हैं।

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संस्थापक-स्व. पूर्णचन्द्र गुप्त. पूर्व प्रधान संपादक-स्व.नरेन्द्र मोहन. संपादकीय निदेशक-महेन्द्र मोहन गुप्त. प्रधान संपादक-संजय गुप्त, जागरण प्रकाशन लि. के लिए: नीतेन्द्र श्रीवास्तव द्वारा 501, आई.एन.एस. बिल्डिंग, रफी मार्ग, नई दिल्ली से प्रकाशित और उन्हीं के द्वारा डी-210, 211, सेक्टर-63 नोएडा से मुद्रित, संपादक (राष्ट्रीय संस्करण) -विष्णु प्रकाश त्रिपाठी*
दूरभाष : नई दिल्ली कार्यालय : 23359961-62, नोएडा कार्यालय : 0120-3915800, E-mail: delhi@nda.jagran.com, R.N.I. No. DELHIN/2017/74721 *इस अंक में प्रकाशित समस्त समाचारों के चयन एवं संपादन हेतु पी.आर.बी. एक्ट के अंतर्गत उत्तरदायी। समस्त विवाद दिल्ली न्यायालय के अधीन ही होंगे। हवाई शुल्क अतिरिक्त।

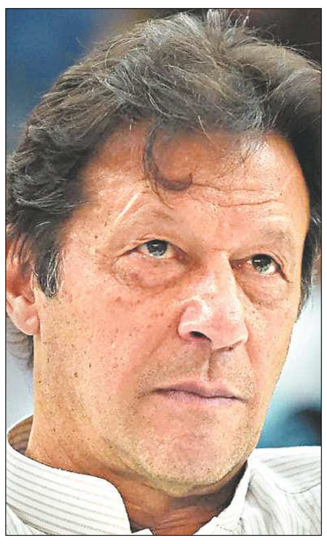
अमर उजाला

प्रवाह

नई दिल्ली | बुधवार, 20 फरवरी 2019

निर्भीक पत्रकारिता का आठवां दशक
स्थापना वर्ष : 1948

यदि आप सौ व्यक्तियों की सहायता नहीं कर सकते, तो केवल एक की ही सहायता कर दें...
- मदर टेरेसा



जैश ने खुद पुलवामा हमले की जिम्मेदारी ली है और इमरान सुबूत मांग रहे हैं! 26/11 से लेकर पठानकोट हमले तक ऐसे कितने उदाहरण हैं, जिनके बारे में सुबूत दिए जाने के बावजूद पाकिस्तान ने आतंकी सरगनाओं के खिलाफ कोई कार्रवाई नहीं की।

और कितने झूठ

पुलवामा में सीआरपीएफ के काफिले पर हुए भीषण आतंकी हमले के पांच दिन बाद पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान का जो बयान आया है, उसमें नया कुछ नहीं है। यह ऐसे हर आतंकी हमले के बाद पड़ोसी मुल्क से आने वाली प्रतिक्रिया की पुनरावृत्ति ही है। इस हमले को पाकिस्तान से अपनी आतंकी गतिविधियां चलाने वाले मसूद अजहर के संगठन जैश-ए-मोहम्मद ने अंजाम दिया था, जिसमें अर्द्धसैनिक बल के चालीस जवान शहीद हो गए। हमले के तुरंत बाद जैश ने इस हमले की जिम्मेदारी ली थी, उसके बाद तो वैसे भी कुछ कहने को रह नहीं जाता। और इमरान कह रहे हैं कि भारत पुलवामा में हुए हमले के सुबूत दे, तो वह कार्रवाई करेंगे! यह सिवाय दुनिया को भरमाने के और कुछ नहीं है। आखिर 26/11 के मुंबई में हुए आतंकी हमले के सिलसिले में भारत द्वारा मुख्य साजिशकर्ता हाफिज सईद के खिलाफ दिए गए दस्तावेजों का उनके मुल्क ने क्या किया? इसी तरह से पठानकोट में हुए आतंकी हमले के बाद, तो भारत ने बकायदा पाकिस्तान की खुफिया एजेंसी की टीम को एयरबेस में जाकर सुबूत इकट्ठा करने का अवसर भी दिया था और दिखाया था कि किस तरह से सीमा पार से आए आतंकियों ने उस हमले को अंजाम दिया था। सच्चाई यह है कि हाफिज सईद और मसूद अजहर जैसे आतंकी सरगनाओं को पाकिस्तान में पूरा संरक्षण प्राप्त है और उनका इस्तेमाल भारत के खिलाफ किया जाता है। आतंकवाद को लेकर पाकिस्तान की नीति में कोई बदलाव नहीं आया है। जनरल परवेज मुशर्रफ ने दिवंगत प्रधानमंत्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी के साथ 2004 में जारी किए गए संयुक्त बयान में कहा था कि वह अपनी जमीन से भारत के खिलाफ आतंकी गतिविधियों को अंजाम देने की इजाजत नहीं देंगे, लेकिन इसके चार साल बाद ही 26/11 के हमले को अंजाम दिया गया था। इसी तरह से सत्ता में आने के बाद इमरान खान ने भी कहा था कि वह अपनी जमीन से आतंकी गतिविधियों को संचालित नहीं होने देंगे, लेकिन पुलवामा के ताजा हमले के बाद उन पर कैसे भरोसा किया जाए! उनका रिकॉर्डेड संदेश ही इस बात का सुबूत है कि वह सेना, आईएसआई और आतंकी सरगनाओं के हाथों को कठपुतली हैं। यदि वाकई वह आतंकवाद को लेकर गंभीर हैं, तो उन्हें जैश-ए-मोहम्मद और मसूद अजहर के खिलाफ ठोस कार्रवाई कर सुबूत देना चाहिए।

जनहितैषी योजनाओं की राजनीति

केंद्र सरकार ने वर्ष 2018-19 के बजट में 50 करोड़ लोगों को स्वास्थ्य सुरक्षा प्रदान करने के उद्देश्य से एक बड़ी योजना की घोषणा की थी। कई राजनीतिक विश्लेषकों ने साहसिक कदम बताकर इसका स्वागत किया। लेकिन बहुत जल्दी जैसे ही इस योजना (आयुष्मान भारत) की रूपरेखा सामने आई, कई राज्यों ने इसे खारिज कर दिया। ओडिशा, तेलंगाना, दिल्ली, पंजाब और केरल ने योजना को अपूर्ण बताया। इन सभी राज्यों ने अपनी स्वयं की योजना को ज्यादा व्यापक पाया, भले ही इसका मतलब केंद्रीय निधि का नुकसान था, जो उनके राज्य में खर्च होती। इसने एक बार फिर सार्वजनिक धन खर्च करने में केंद्र की नीति से संबंधित पहले के विवादों को पुनर्जीवित कर दिया है।

हमारे संविधान के तहत केंद्र और राज्यों की विधायी शक्ति को संविधान के अनुच्छेद 246 में परिभाषित किया गया है। इसके तहत सातवीं अनुसूची में सूची एक, सूची दो और सूची तीन दी गई है। पहली सूची केंद्र की विधायी शक्तियों से संबंधित है, दूसरी सूची में ऐसे क्षेत्र हैं, जिन पर राज्य कानून बना सकते हैं। सूची तीन समवर्ती सूची है। केंद्र और राज्य, दोनों इसमें बताए गए विषयों पर कानून बना सकते हैं, लेकिन प्रधानता केंद्रीय कानून को है। इसके बावजूद, अधिकांश केंद्र प्रायोजित योजनाएं राज्यों की विधायी क्षमता में आने वाले विषयों से संबंधित हैं।

राज्य सूची में आने वाले विषयों पर योजनाएं शुरू करने का केंद्र सरकार का उत्साह कई कारकों पर निर्भर करता है। सबसे पहले, शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य के कई संकेतकों में हमारा प्रदर्शन बहुत खराब है। सहस्राब्दी विकास लक्ष्य के तहत

केंद्र प्रायोजित योजनाओं के तहत राज्यों को संसाधन वित्तीय हस्तांतरण के जरिये किया जाना चाहिए, जिसमें राज्यों को लचीलापन मिलना चाहिए। इन्हें राज्य के विकास को ध्यान में रखकर तैयार किया जाना चाहिए।

बी के चतुर्वेदी, पूर्व कैबिनेट सचिव

हमारी कुछ प्रतिबद्धताएं हैं। इसलिए इन क्षेत्रों में धन उपलब्ध कराया जाना महत्वपूर्ण है, ताकि प्रदर्शन को सुधारा जा सके। दुखद है कि अगर केंद्र इन क्षेत्रों में योजनाएं शुरू नहीं करता है और दिशा-निर्देशों के बिना राज्य सरकारों को धन हस्तांतरित करता है, तो राज्य इन राष्ट्रीय प्राथमिकताओं पर खर्च नहीं कर सकते हैं।

दूसरी बात, कुछ बुनियादी जरूरतें और बुनियादी ढांचे हैं, जो सभी नागरिकों, खासकर गरीबों के लिए आवश्यक हैं। इसमें सस्ती कीमत पर अनाज, ग्रामीण सड़क, ग्रामीण आवास, पेयजल, बिजली तक पहुंच, रोजगार के अवसर और बढ़ती क्षेत्रीय असमानताएं शामिल हैं। इन क्षेत्रों में समस्याएं होने पर केंद्र मूकदर्शक बना नहीं रह सकता। तीसरी बात, राज्यों और केंद्र में सत्ता पर कब्जा के लिए बढ़ते संघर्ष के साथ विभिन्न राजनीतिक दल ऐसी योजनाओं को लॉन्च करना पसंद करते हैं, जो उन्हें वोट दिला सके। चूंकि लोगों (मतदाताओं) के जीवन को प्रभावित करने वाले क्षेत्र आम तौर पर राज्य के हिस्से में हैं, केंद्र इन क्षेत्रों में प्रधानमंत्री योजना का नाम देकर योजनाएं शुरू करने की कोशिश करता है। यह स्पष्ट है कि इन योजनाओं के लिए केंद्र सरकार जिम्मेदार है और उसे इस योजना के तहत नागरिकों द्वारा प्राप्त लाभों का श्रेय दिया जाना चाहिए। राज्यों ने समान उद्देश्य के लिए केंद्रीय योजनाओं के अनुकरण में अपनी योजनाओं को मुख्यमंत्री योजना का नाम देने की कोशिश की। कई बार राज्य केंद्रीय निधियों का नुकसान उठाना पसंद करते हैं, क्योंकि उनका लाभ केंद्र में बैठी पार्टी को मिलता है। एनडीए सरकार के आने के बाद सुशासन के हिस्से के रूप में केंद्र प्रायोजित योजनाओं को तेजी से कम करने पर जोर दिया गया। लेकिन शीघ्र ही केंद्र सरकार द्वारा नई योजनाओं की घोषणा की गई। इनमें से कई स्वास्थ्य, ग्रामीण विकास, कृषि, शहरी विकास, सिंचाई और मध्यम और लघु उद्योग (सभी राज्य के विषय) से संबंधित हैं। नतीजा यह हुआ कि राज्य के अधिकार क्षेत्र के विषयों में केंद्र प्रायोजित योजनाएं फिर से बढ़ गईं।

राज्य विभिन्न आधार पर इसका विरोध करते हैं। पहला, तो यह कि हमारे जैसे विविध और बड़े देश में विभिन्न क्षेत्रों की विकास जरूरतें अलग-अलग हैं। राज्यों से एक समान दृष्टिकोण वाली इन योजनाओं को लागू करने के लिए कहना उनकी निजी विकास खाई की अनदेखी करना है। दूसरा, देश के विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में स्थानीय स्थितियां अलग-अलग हैं। ये योजनाएं इस पर विचार किए बिना एक समान प्रावधान और दिशानिर्देश बनाती हैं। अक्सर इन योजनाओं के तहत निर्धारित मानदंडों को राज्यों में सार्थक क्रियान्वयन के लिए बदलने की जरूरत होती है। पर केंद्रीय योजनाओं में इस लचीलेपन का अभाव होता है।

तीसरा, चूंकि इनमें से ज्यादातर योजनाएं राज्य के अधिकार क्षेत्र से संबंधित होती हैं, इसलिए राज्य अपनी योजनाओं को विकसित करने के लिए पूर्ण स्वतंत्रता चाहते हैं। वे चाहते हैं कि केंद्र अपनी जरूरतों के अनुसार धन के प्रभावी उपयोग के लिए सभी संसाधन उन्हें हस्तांतरित कर दे, जो हमारी नीति की संघीय प्रकृति के अनुरूप है। इससे यह होगा कि योजनाओं को राज्यों की जरूरतों के अनुरूप बनाया जाएगा और धन का उपयोग अधिक उत्पादकता के साथ किया जाएगा।

हमारी स्वतंत्रता के शुरुआती पांच दशकों में राज्यों की वित्तीय स्थिति बहुत अच्छी नहीं थी। पिछले दो दशकों में उनकी वित्तीय स्थिति में लगातार सुधार हुआ है, क्योंकि वित्त आयोग द्वारा की गई कई सिफारिशों को केंद्र सरकार ने समर्थन दिया। केंद्र द्वारा कुछ पूर्ववर्ती योजनाओं के वित्तपोषण में गिरावट के चलते राज्यों के संसाधनों पर अतिरिक्त दबाव के बावजूद उनके समग्र संसाधन में वृद्धि हुई। इसने उन्हें केंद्रीय वित्त पोषण और केंद्र में सत्तारूढ़ पार्टी को चुनावी लाभ देने वाली योजनाओं को खारिज करने के लिए वित्तीय मजबूती प्रदान की। कुछ राज्यों द्वारा आयुष्मान भारत के विरोध के पीछे कुछ हद तक उनकी यही धारणा हो सकती है। लेकिन ऐसा रवैया विकास के लिए ठीक नहीं है।

स्पष्ट है कि केंद्र प्रायोजित योजनाओं के तहत राज्यों को संसाधन वित्तीय हस्तांतरण के जरिये किया जाना चाहिए, जिसमें राज्यों को कुछ लचीलापन मिलना चाहिए। ऐसी योजनाओं का निर्माण राज्य के विकास को ध्यान में रखकर किया जाना चाहिए। ऐसा करने पर यह कई विकास समस्याओं का समाधान करेगा। लेकिन इसे राजनीतिक एजेंडा बनाना और प्रधानमंत्री या मुख्यमंत्री का नाम देना राष्ट्रीय विकास रणनीति की प्रभावशीलता को नष्ट कर देगा।

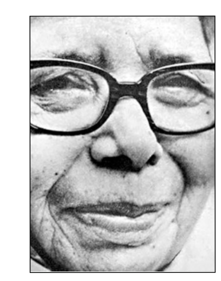
अंतर्ध्वनि

>> महादेवी वर्मा

बचपन की स्मृतियों में एक विचित्र-सा आकर्षण होता है

बचपन की स्मृतियों में एक विचित्र-सा आकर्षण होता है। कभी-कभी लगता है, जैसे सपने में सब देखा होगा। परिस्थितियां बहुत बदल जाती हैं। अपने परिवार में मैं कई पीढ़ियों के बाद उत्पन्न हुई। मैं उत्पन्न हुई, तो मेरी बड़ी खातिर हुई और मुझे वह सब नहीं सहना पड़ा, जो अन्य लड़कियों को सहना पड़ता है।

परिवार में बाबा फारसी और उर्दू जानते थे। पिता ने अंग्रेजी पढ़ी थी। हिंदी का कोई वातावरण नहीं था। मेरी माता जबलपुर से आईं, तब वह अपने साथ हिंदी लाईं। पहले-पहल उन्होंने ही मुझे पंचतंत्र पढ़ना सिखाया। बाबा कहते थे, इसको हम विदुषी बनाएंगे।



उसके उपरांत उन्होंने मिशन स्कूल में रख दिया मुझको। वहां का वातावरण दूसरा था, प्रार्थना दूसरी थी। मेरा मन नहीं लगा। वहां जाना बंद कर दिया। तब उन्होंने मुझे क्रास्थवेस्ट गर्ल्स कॉलेज में भेजा, जहां मैं पांचवें दर्जे में भर्ती हुई। वहां छात्रावास के हर एक कमरे में हम चार छात्राएं रहती थीं। उनमें पहली ही साथिन सुभद्रा कुमारी मिलीं। वह मुझसे दो साल सीनियर थीं। वह कविता लिखती थीं और मैं भी बचपन से तुक मिलाती आई थी। बचपन में मां लिखती थीं, पद भी गाती थीं। मीरा के पद विशेष रूप से गाती थीं। सुन-सुनकर मैंने भी ब्रजभाषा में लिखना आरंभ किया। पर यहां आकर देखा कि सुभद्रा कुमारी जी खड़ी बोली में लिखती थीं। मैं भी वैसा ही लिखने लगी।

सुभद्रा जी मुझसे बड़ी थीं, प्रतिष्ठित हो चुकी थीं। उनसे छिपा-छिपाकर लिखती थी मैं। एक दिन उन्होंने कहा, तुम कविता लिखती हो। तो मैंने डर के मारे कहा, नहीं। अंत में उन्होंने मेरी डेस्क की किताबों की तलाशी ली, और बहुत-सा निकल पड़ा उसमें से। उन्होंने एक हाथ में कागज लिए और एक हाथ से मुझे पकड़ा और पूरे होस्टल में दिखा आईं कि यह कविता लिखती है। फिर हम दोनों की मित्रता हो गई।

-दिवंगत हिंदी कवयित्री

मंजिलें और भी हैं

>> स्नेहा

सैनिटरी पैड बनाते हुए अमेरिका तक का सफर

मैं उत्तर प्रदेश के हापुड़ जिले के एक गांव की रहने वाली हूं। मेरी उम्र तेईस साल है और मैं पुलिस में भर्ती होना चाहती हूं। लेकिन शादी के सामाजिक दबाव से बचने के लिए जरूरी था कि मैं पुलिस अधिकारी बनने से पहले कोई काम करूं। यही वजह है कि मैं एक एनजीओ से जुड़कर काम करने लगी। यह एनजीओ ग्रामीण महिलाओं की सबसे अहम जरूरत यानी सैनिटरी नैपकिन बनाने का काम करती है। जब मैंने यह काम शुरू किया था, तो मेरी सबसे बड़ी दिक्कत यह थी कि घर वालों को अपने काम के बारे में क्या बताऊं। शुरू में मैं अपने पिता को अपने काम के बारे में साफ-साफ नहीं बता पाई। मैंने उन्हें बताया कि मैं एक डाइपर फैक्टरी में काम करती हूं। लेकिन आगे चलकर मैंने अपनी झिझक तोड़कर सब कुछ साफ कर दिया।

घर वालों से सकारात्मक प्रतिक्रिया मिलने के बाद मेरा आत्मविश्वास पहले से बढ़ गया। मैंने अपने दोस्तों और रिश्तेदारों से भी इस विषय पर बात करनी शुरू कर दी। मैं सबसे सैनिटरी पैड का इस्तेमाल करने की अपील करने लगी। मुझे इस काम के बदले बहुत ज्यादा कमाई तो नहीं होती, पर इन पैसों से मेरी कोचिंग की फीस निकल आती है। ऐसा नहीं है कि मेरे घर वाले मेरी पढ़ाई के लिए सक्षम नहीं है, लेकिन उन्हें यह देखकर अच्छा लगता है कि मैं खुद से कुछ कर पा रही हूं।

चंद हजार रुपये कमाने के अलावा मैंने लोगों को जागरूक करने की जो गाढ़ी कमाई हासिल की है, वह अनमोल है।

चूंकि हमारा काम समूह आधारित है, इसलिए कई अन्य जरूरतमंद लड़कियां भी मेरे साथ काम करती हैं। जिस एनजीओ के तहत हम काम करते हैं, उनकी मदद भी कुछ नेकदिल अमेरिकियों ने की है। लॉस एंजिलिस के एक स्कूल की दस बच्चियों और उनकी शिक्षिका ने हमारे एनजीओ को पैड बनाने वाली मशीन दान की है। दरअसल उनके कानों तक कहीं से यह खबर पहुंच गई थी कि हमारे इलाके में कई लड़कियां मासिक धर्म की वजह से स्कूल जाना छोड़ देती हैं।

यह बिल्कुल सच है कि न सिर्फ हमारे इलाके में, बल्कि भारत के कई इलाकों में यही सच्चाई है। इसके अलावा अधिकतर महिलाओं या लड़कियों के लिए दुकान से पैड खरीदना बहुत मुश्किल काम है। हमारी सामाजिक संरचना उन्हें असहज कर देती है। यही देखते हुए हमारे समूह की एक टीम लोगों के दरवाजे पर जाकर पैड सप्लाई करती है। इस तरह उत्पादन से लेकर विपणन तक का सारा काम हम खुद अंजाम देते हैं। फिलहाल हमारी यूनिट से हर दिन सात से आठ सौ पैड बेचे जाते हैं। भैंसों के बाड़े के पास में स्थित दो कमरों की फैक्टरी में हम लकड़ी की लुगदी से इको-फ्रेंडली सैनिटरी नैपकिन बनाते हैं, जिसके लिए हम पैडमैन नाम से मशहूर अरुणाचलम मुरुगनांथम द्वारा बनाई गई लो-कॉस्ट मशीन का इस्तेमाल करते हैं। करीब डेढ़ साल पहले हमारे काम पर आधारित एक फिल्म शूट हुई थी। तब मुझे नहीं पता था कि यह फिल्म ऑस्कर के लिए शॉर्टलिस्ट होगी। अब मुझे ऑस्कर समारोह के लिए अमेरिका जाना है, क्योंकि फिल्म में मुख्य किरदार मेरा ही है। अमेरिका जाने को मैं रोमांचित तो हूं, पर एक किस्म का भय भी है। दिल्ली के करीब होने के बावजूद अब तक मैं दिल्ली भी नहीं गई। लेकिन सच कहूं, तो हर महीने चंद हजार रुपये कमाने के सिवा मैंने कई लोगों को जागरूक करने की जो गाढ़ी कमाई हासिल की है, वह अनमोल है।

-विभिन्न साक्षात्कारों पर आधारित।

'चार सौ बीस' किलो का धोखा-बम

कश्मीर की मौजूदा पीढ़ियों का यह दुर्भाग्य रहा कि उनके नेताओं ने उनका इस्तेमाल अपने लालच की तोप के बारूद की तरह किया है। उनके लिए किसी कश्मीरी युवा की हैसियत 350 किलो बारूद में 70 किलो के डेटोनेटर से ज्यादा कुछ नहीं रह गई।

विजय क्रांति

कश्मीर के पुलवामा में एक आतंकवादी ने अपनी कार बम को सीआरपीएफ की बस से टकराकर चालीस जवानों की जान ले ली। सुरक्षा विशेषज्ञ इसे एक खतरनाक संकेत बता रहे हैं, क्योंकि भारत में यह अपनी तरह का पहला विस्फोट था, जिसमें 350 किलो बारूद का इस्तेमाल किया गया। लेकिन बम का वजन गिनाते हुए हम सब 70 किलोग्राम के उस बारूद को गिनना भूल गए, जो इस कार बम का असली डेटोनेटर था। इस बारूद का नाम था आदिल अहमद डार वल्द गुलाम अहमद डार और फहमीदा डार, उम्र बीस साल, निवासी कश्मीर घाटी का गांव लेथीपुरा। यानी पूरे बम का वजन था 420 किलोग्राम। अब सवाल है कि यह चार सौ बीसी किसके साथ हुई? कश्मीरी जनता के साथ, भारत के साथ, आदिल के साथ, गुलाम मियां और फहमीदा बेगम के साथ या फिर सबके साथ?

यह पहला मौका है, जब कश्मीर में सत्तर साल से चली आ रही हिंसा और अशांति में किसी इंसान को कार बम की तरह ठीक वैसे ही इस्तेमाल किया गया जैसा, अब तक सिर्फ पाकिस्तान, अफगानिस्तान और सीरिया जैसे इस्लामी मुल्कों में 'असली इस्लाम बनाम नकली इस्लाम' की लड़ाई में किया जाता रहा है। धीरे-धीरे छन कर सामने आ रही बातों से पता चल रहा है कि आदिल एक गरीब कश्मीरी परिवार से था, जो कुछ मुल्ला मौलवियों और आतंकवादियों के फंदे में फंसकर उनकी सियासत का बारूद बनने को तैयार हो गया।

मरने वालों की लिस्ट में आज तक किसी नेता अब्दुल्ला, मुफ्ती, गिलानी या मलिक के बेटे का नाम नहीं आया। डार परिवार को पता ही नहीं चल रहा कि उनका बेटा कब जैश-ए-मोहम्मद के हाथ पड़ा और कैसे उसे आतंकवादी बना दिया गया। लेकिन जैश-ए-मोहम्मद के आकाओं के लिए आदिल का फोटो पाकिस्तानी हुक्मरानों और जनता से पैसे बटोरने का जैकपॉट बन चुका है। आतंक और झूठ पर पलने वाले मरियल संगठन हुर्रियत को भी थोड़ा-सा और ग्लूकोज मिल गया। नेशनल कांफ्रेंस और पीडीपी के नेताओं ने पहले तो इस घटना को 'दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण' बताकर अपना शोक जताया। लेकिन धीरे-धीरे वे भी हुर्रियत की तर्ज पर आदिल की 'शहादत' में से राजनीतिक दूध दुहने की पुरानी होड़ में जुट गए हैं।

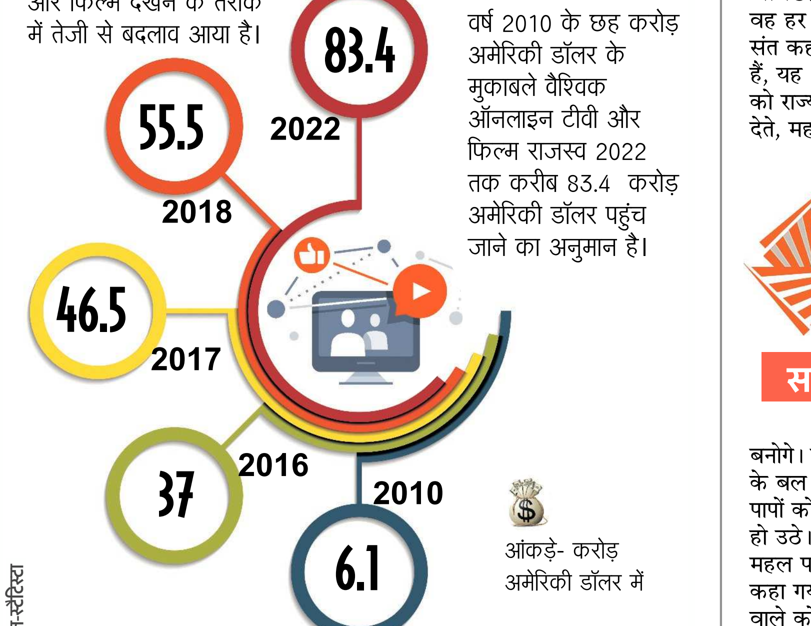
आदिल तो चला गया। पर उसकी मौत के विस्फोट ने कश्मीर के भीतर धीरे-धीरे खड़ी की गई धोखे की दीवार को गिराकर एक डरावने सच को नंगा कर दिया है। भारत के इकलौते मुस्लिम बहुल राज्य में वहां के ये कश्मीरी खिलाड़ी यह समझने को ही तैयार नहीं हैं कि उन्होंने शेष भारत के मुस्लिम समाज की छवि पर कितना बड़ा बट्टा लगाया है। पिछले सत्तर साल में जिस तरह से उन्होंने कश्मीर घाटी से किस्त-दर-किस्त वहां के गैर मुस्लिम नागरिकों को भगाया है, उसने शेष भारत के सामने बहुत खराब उदाहरण पेश किया है कि जहां-जहां मुस्लिम समाज बहुमत में आएगा, वहां गैर मुस्लिमों के साथ कैसा व्यवहार किया जाएगा।

कश्मीर का इतिहास दिखाता है कि इससे भी बुरा दुर्भाग्य कश्मीर घाटी से भगाए गए पंडितों, सिखों और दूसरे कई समाजों को भी झेलना पड़ा। लेकिन उन समाजों ने दूसरे समाजों के साथ मिलकर रहने और अपने लिए तरक्की का रास्ता चुनकर अपने लिए नई जगह भी बना ली है और अपना भविष्य भी संवारा है। लेकिन कश्मीर की मौजूदा पीढ़ियों का यह दुर्भाग्य रहा कि उनके नेताओं ने उनका इस्तेमाल अपने लालच की तोप के बारूद की तरह किया है। उनके लिए किसी भी कश्मीरी युवा की हैसियत कार में भरे 350 किलो बारूद में 70 किलो के डेटोनेटर से ज्यादा कुछ नहीं रह गई। क्या आपको लगता है कि कश्मीर के साथ इस चार सौ बीसी के लिए इतिहास कश्मीरी नेताओं को कभी माफ करेगा?

खुली खिड़की

ऑनलाइन टीवी और फिल्म राजस्व

दुनिया भर में टेलीविजन और फिल्में देखने के तरीके में तेजी से बदलाव आया है।



वर्ष 2010 के छह करोड़ अमेरिकी डॉलर के मुकाबले वैश्विक ऑनलाइन टीवी और फिल्म राजस्व 2022 तक करीब 83.4 करोड़ अमेरिकी डॉलर पहुंच जाने का अनुमान है।

आंकड़े- करोड़ अमेरिकी डॉलर में

स्रोत-स्टैटिस्टा

भामंडल का अहंकार

सत्संग

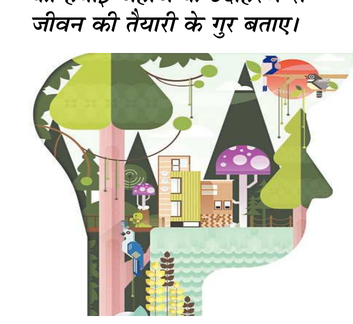
भामंडल नामक राजा थे तो धर्मात्मा, पर प्रमाद में ग्रस्त रहते थे। वह हर क्षण संत-महात्माओं के सत्संग के लिए आतुर रहते थे। संत कहते, आप पूजा-उपासना करते हैं, शास्त्रों का अध्ययन करते हैं, यह अच्छी बात है। अपनी बढ़ी आयु को देखते हुए राजकुमार को राज्य सौंपें और शेष जीवन आत्मोद्धार में लगाएं। राजा उत्तर देते, महाराज, यदि मैंने राज्य त्याग दिया, तो मेरे वियोग में रानी जीवित नहीं रहेंगी और प्रजा का भी ठीक ढंग से पालन नहीं हो सकेगा। इसी आशंका से मैं यह दायित्व छोड़ने में हिचकिचा रहा हूं। एक बार उनके गुरु महल में पधारे। उन्हें जानकारी थी कि राजा भोग-विलास और आकांक्षाओं के प्रपंच में पड़कर अपना शेष जीवन वैराग्य में बिताने को तैयार नहीं। गुरु ने कहा कि अपनी आयु को देखते हुए राज्य का दायित्व राजकुमार को सौंपो और भोग से विरत हो जाने का दृढ़ संकल्प लो। यदि ऐसा नहीं करोगे, तो पाप के भागी बनोगे। राजा ने अहंकार में उत्तर दिया, गुरुदेव, मैंने यज्ञ और ध्यान के बल पर इतने पुण्य अर्जित कर लिए हैं कि भयंकर से भयंकर पापों को भी क्षण भर में भस्म कर डालूंगा। गुरु यह सुनकर हतप्रभ हो उठे। कुछ ही क्षण बाद आकाशीय बिजली गड़गड़ाहट के साथ महल पर गिरी और राजा काल के गाल में समा गए। *पद्मपुराण* में कहा गया है कि सत्ता के मद में चूर होकर यम को चुनौती देने वाले को कोई भी शक्ति नहीं बचा सकती।

-संकलित

हरियाली और रास्ता

हवाई जहाज जैसी जीवन यात्रा

एक शिक्षक की कथा, जिसने छात्रों को हवाई जहाज के उदाहरण से जीवन की तैयारी के गुर बताए।



शिक्षक ने पूछा, हवाई जहाज और आम इंसान में क्या समानताएं होती हैं? सभी बच्चे शिक्षक की तरफ देखने लगे। शिक्षक बोले, आपने कभी सोचा है कि एक हवाई जहाज कुछ ही देर में कितने सारे लोगों को एक जगह से दूसरी जगह पहुंचा देता है। पक्षियों से भी ऊंची उड़ान भरता है, और कितनी बारीकी और सफाई से अपना गंतव्य हासिल कर लेता है! सभी बच्चे शिक्षक की बात गौर से सुन रहे थे। शिक्षक बोले, हम सब भी एक जहाज की तरह होते हैं। हमारे इस जहाज का ईंधन होता है हमारा ज्ञान। हम जितना ज्यादा ज्ञान प्राप्त करते हैं, हम उतनी ही लंबी उड़ान भर सकते हैं। हर उड़ान से पहले हमें ढेर सारा ज्ञान ग्रहण करना होता है। तभी हम लंबी उड़ान भर पाते हैं। हमारे इस जहाज का इंजन होता है हमारा विवेक, जो हमें सिखाता है कि हमें ज्ञान का किस तरह उपयोग करना है कि हम आगे बढ़ पाएं। और हमारे पंख होते हैं हमारा आत्मविश्वास, जो हमें हर उड़ान लेते वक्त, हवा में, और नीचे उतरते वक्त हमारा संतुलन बनाए रखता है। कई बार जब बादल रूपी विपरीत परिस्थितियां हमें घेर लेती हैं, तो यही विश्वास भरे पंख हमें उनसे बाहर निकालते हैं। कभी अगर ईंधन खत्म भी हो जाए, तो ये पंख हमें हवा के बहाव के साथ बहते हुए नीचे ले आते हैं। और नीचे जो रनवे होता है, वह होता है हमारा परिवार, हमारे मित्र, हमारे हितैषी। हमारा रनवे ही हमें सही मार्ग पर बढ़ने और अपनी उड़ान भरने में हमारी मदद करता है। और हमारी जिंदगी में एक और बहुत महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका होती है हमारे एयर कंट्रोल टावर की। यानी हमारे मार्गदर्शक, हमारे शिक्षकों की, जो हमें हर वक्त हमारी स्थिति का सटीक ब्योरा देते रहते हैं। तो बच्चों आप उड़ने के लिए तैयार हैं न? सभी बच्चे उड़ान भरने को एकदम तैयार थे।

जिंदगी रूपी यात्रा के लिए सही तैयारी बहुत जरूरी है।