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दैनिक जागरण
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दैनिक जागरण
करुणा ईश्वरीय गुण है

मजबूत राजनीतिक जमीन पर मोदी

संजय गुप्त

आखिर विपक्षी दल यह क्यों नहीं देख पा रहे कि मुद्दा यह नहीं है कि बालाकोट में कितने आतंकी मरे, बल्कि यह है कि भारत ने करीब 50 सालों में पहली बार पाकिस्तान के भीतर तक जाकर मार की?

चुनाव आयोग की ओर से आम चुनाव की घोषणा कभी भी की जा सकती है। यह घोषणा जब भी हो, यह तय है कि आम चुनाव उस परिदृश्य से भिन्न दशा में होंगे जो कुछ समय पहले तक दिख रहा था। पहले 14 फरवरी को पुलवामा में एक आतंकी हमले में सीआरपीएफ के 40 जवानों की शहादत के बाद देश का माहौल बदला। फिर इस हमले का बदला लेने के लिए 26 फरवरी को भारतीय वायुसेना की ओर से की गई कार्रवाई ने। पाकिस्तान ने इस सैन्य कार्रवाई का जवाब देने की कोशिश की, लेकिन उसे नाकामी का सामना करने के साथ भारतीय पायलट विंग कमांडर अभिनंदन को लौटाना पड़ा। इस पूरे घटनाक्रम से देश का माहौल बिल्कुल बदल गया है। यह बदला हुआ माहौल आम चुनाव पर भी असर डालता दिख रहा है। पाकिस्तान को सबक सिखाने के लिए की गई कार्रवाई पर देश की जनता न केवल सरकार के साथ खड़ी है, बल्कि वह देशप्रेम की अपनी भावना भी खुलकर प्रकट कर रही है। उसे यह पता है कि मोदी सरकार ने राजनीतिक इच्छाशक्ति का परिचय देते हुए दो बार पाकिस्तान पर धावा बोला-पहले सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक के रूप में और फिर एयर स्ट्राइक के रूप में। ये दोनों सैन्य कार्रवाइयां पिछली सरकारों के रवैये के उलट रहीं। आम लोग इस राजनीतिक इच्छाशक्ति के कारण मोदी के कायल हो गए हैं। इसका मोदी को राजनीतिक लाभ मिलता भी दिख रहा है। आम जनता मोदी के उस रवैये की भी प्रशंसा कर रही है जिसके तहत वह पाकिस्तान पर दबाव बनाए हुए हैं। यह दबाव बनाए रखना इसलिए आवश्यक है, क्योंकि वह अर्से से अपने आतंकी संगठनों के जरिये भारत को तंग किए हुए है। हालिया एयर स्ट्राइक के बाद प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने पाकिस्तान को खुलकर यह चेतावनी दी कि वह आतंकियों को उनके घर में घुसकर मारेंगे। आम जनता उनके ऐसे तेवरों का तो खुलकर समर्थन कर ही रही है, विश्व समुदाय भी भारत के साथ है। उसने बालाकोट पर हमले को लेकर जिस तरह भारत का पक्ष लिया वह भारतीय कूटनीति की कामयाबी का परिचायक है। चूंकि इस कामयाबी का श्रेय प्रधानमंत्री मोदी को जाता है इसलिए भाजपा उनकी साहसिक फैसला लेने की क्षमता को उभारने में लगी हुई है और इस कोशिश में भी है कि देशभक्ति का जो जज्बा लोगों में जगा है वह उसके पक्ष में वोटों में तब्दील हो।

ऐसा लगता है कि विपक्षी दल जमीनी हकीकत को समझने से इन्कार कर रहे हैं। वे इस या उस बहाने बालाकोट हमले पर बेजा सवाल पूछ रहे हैं। कुछ नेताओं के सवाल तो इतने बेजा हैं कि उन्हें पाकिस्तान अपने पक्ष में भुना रहा है। समझना कठिन है विपक्षी दल यह क्यों नहीं देख पा रहे कि मुद्दा यह नहीं है कि बालाकोट में कितने आतंकी मरे, बल्कि यह है कि भारतीय वायुसेना ने करीब 50 सालों में पहली बार पाकिस्तान के भीतर तक जाकर मार की। बालाकोट में सैन्य कार्रवाई के बाद कांग्रेस कुछ ज्यादा ही बेचैन दिख रही है। इसका एक कारण यही लगता है कि 2008 में मुंबई हमले के बाद पाकिस्तान के खिलाफ किसी तरह की सैन्य कार्रवाई करने से कदम पीछे खींच लिए गए थे। यह सही है कि विपक्षी दल भाजपा का मुकाबला करने के लिए गठबंधन की राजनीति पर बल दे रहे हैं, लेकिन वे इसकी अनदेखी नहीं कर सकते कि बालाकोट हमले के बाद देश में जो माहौल बना है उसमें औसत मतदाता जाति-मजहब के आधार पर वोट देने की मानसिकता से ऊपर उठकर मतदान कर सकता है।

अवधेश राजपूत

यह भी ध्यान रहे कि मतदाताओं का एक ऐसा तबका होता है जो मतदान के पहले तक दुविधा में रहता है। इस बार वह देशप्रेम की भावना के चलते भाजपा के पक्ष में वोट कर सकता है। मतदाताओं का ऐसा तबका कई बार निर्णायक भी साबित होता है। विपक्ष के सामने समस्या केवल यह नहीं है कि चुनाव के ठीक पहले मोदी एक मजबूत नेता के तौर पर फिर से उभर आए हैं, बल्कि यह भी है कि राष्ट्रीय दल के रूप में जहां कांग्रेस बेहद कमजोर है वहीं क्षेत्रीय दल केवल अपने-अपने गढ़ तक ही सीमित हैं। वे अपने गढ़ों में कांग्रेस को ज्यादा सीटें देने को भी तैयार नहीं। इससे इन्कार नहीं कि कुछ क्षेत्रीय दल अपने-अपने राज्य में पहले जैसे मजबूत दिख रहे हैं, लेकिन राष्ट्रीय मसलों और खासकर राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा को लेकर उनके पास कोई ठोस विचार नहीं दिखते। लोकसभा चुनाव में राष्ट्रीय मसले सतह पर होते हैं और यह किसी से छिपा नहीं कि क्षेत्रीय दल क्षेत्रीयता में ही अधिक उलझे रहते हैं। मतदाता को यह भी पता है कि क्षेत्रीय दलों का कोई भी नेता अपने बलबूते प्रधानमंत्री बन सकने में समर्थ नहीं और वह इससे तो पहले से ही परिचित है कि गठबंधन सरकारें किस तरह की मजबूरियों से ग्रस्त होती हैं।

यह संभव है कि महागठबंधन को आकार देने की कोशिश कर रहे दल कोई न्यूनतम साझा कार्यक्रम लेकर सामने आ जाएं, लेकिन केवल इसके आधार पर उन्हें मजबूती नहीं हासिल होने वाली। जहां तक क्षेत्रीय दलों को अपने नेतृत्व में एकजुट कर रही कांग्रेस की बात है, वह राहुल गांधी के नेतृत्व में मोदी सरकार पर हमलावर अवश्य है, लेकिन उसके पास सरकार की निंदा-आलोचना करने के अलावा और कोई एजेंडा नहीं दिख रहा है। वह ले-देकर उन्हीं लोकलुभावन मुद्दों और खासकर कर्ज माफी को आगे कर रही है जो वह पहले भी आजमा चुकी है। बीते 25 दिनों से प्रियंका वाड्रा का मौन रहना भी काफी कुछ कहता है। इसमें संदेह है कि राफेल सौदे को तूल देते रहने से कांग्रेस को कुछ हासिल होने वाला है, क्योंकि जनता इससे अवगत है कि कांग्रेस ने सत्ता में रहते समय किस तरह राफेल सौदे को टालने का काम किया। शायद यही कारण है कि मोदी बार-बार कह रहे हैं कि आज अगर राफेल विमान होते तो नतीजे शायद अलग होते।

ऐसा नहीं है कि भाजपा केवल मोदी सरकार के पाकिस्तान को सबक सिखाने के अपने इरादों के कारण ही बेहतर स्थिति में दिख रही हो। इसके अलावा उसके पास मोदी सरकार की ओर से किए गए विकास और जनकल्याण के तमाम काम भी हैं। विपक्ष कुछ भी कहे, इससे इन्कार नहीं कि जनधन, उज्ज्वला, हर घर बिजली पहुंचाने और प्रधानमंत्री आवास योजना के साथ कुछ अन्य योजनाओं ने गरीबों को राहत दी है। आयुष्मान भारत योजना को भी गरीब तबका एक वरदान के रूप में देख रहा है। हाल में किसानों के लिए शुरू की गई किसान सम्मान निधि योजना न केवल कर्जमाफी योजना की काट करने वाली, बल्कि बाजी पलटने वाली भी है। किसानों के खाते में सीधे धन पहुंचाने वाली इस योजना के शुरू होने के बाद कर्जमाफी की चर्चा थमती दिख रही है। यह भी एक सच्चाई है कि बिजलीघर, सड़क, पुल और मेट्रो जैसी विकासपरक योजनाएं भी जमीन पर नजर आ रही हैं। इसी तरह जीएसटी ने व्यापक असर दिखाया है तो दीवालिया संहिता ने भी। आम चुनावों में मतदाताओं का फैसला कुछ भी हो, आज के दिन भाजपा के लिए आम चुनाव की चुनौती पहले की तुलना में आसान दिख रही है।

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पाकिस्तान की चालबाजी

एक ऐसे समय जब यह दिखने लगा था कि भारत और पाकिस्तान के रिश्ते तनाव मुक्त होने की दिशा में बढ़ने लगे हैं तब भारत सरकार की ओर से यह स्पष्ट करना आवश्यक था कि वह पाकिस्तान में आतंकियों की तथाकथित धरपकड़ से संतुष्ट नहीं। आतंकियों की गिरफ्तारी के साथ आतंकी संगठनों पर पाबंदी लगाने के हाल के उसके कदम यह बिल्कुल भी सुनिश्चित नहीं करते कि वह आतंकवाद पर सचमुच लगाम लगाने जा रहा है। आखिर यह एक तथ्य है कि पाकिस्तान अपने संरक्षण वाले चुनिंदा आतंकी संगठनों के खिलाफ इस तरह की कागजी कार्रवाई पहले भी कर चुका है। यह भी विचित्र है कि वह जैश और लश्कर जैसे आतंकी संगठनों पर तो कार्रवाई का दिखावा कर रहा है, लेकिन हिजबुल मुजाहिदीन जैसे आतंकी संगठन के खिलाफ दिखावे की भी कार्रवाई नहीं कर रहा है। ध्यान रहे कि बीते दिनों इसी पाकिस्तान आधारित आतंकी संगठन के एक गुर्गे ने जम्मू में विस्फोट किया था। यह अच्छा हुआ कि भारत ने पाकिस्तान के कदमों को अपर्याप्त और एक तरह की दिखावे की कार्रवाई करार दिया, लेकिन उसे यह सुनिश्चित करना होगा कि वह दुनिया को धोखा न देने पाए।

यह एक धोखा ही है कि पाकिस्तान के विदेश मंत्री आतंकी संगठन जैश ए मुहम्मद के खिलाफ कार्रवाई करने की बात करते हैं तो पाकिस्तानी सेना के प्रवक्ता यह कहते हैं कि इस नाम का कोई संगठन तो अब अस्तित्व में ही नहीं है। इससे तो यही पता चलता है कि पाकिस्तान एक बार फिर दुनिया की आंखों में धूल झोंकने की कोशिश में जुट गया है। भारत को इस तरह की चालबाजी को लेकर न केवल खुद सतर्क रहना होगा, बल्कि विश्व समुदाय को भी इसके प्रति आगाह करना होगा कि पाकिस्तान उसे झांसा देने की कोशिश कर रहा है। इस मामले में पाकिस्तान के प्रति नरमी बरतने वाले चीन सरीखे देशों के रवैये को लेकर कहीं अधिक सतर्क रहने की जरूरत है। भारत को अमेरिका के रवैये पर भी निगाह रखनी होगी, क्योंकि वह अफगानिस्तान से निकलने की कोशिश में पाकिस्तान के संरक्षण वाले तालिबान से समझौते की जल्दी में है। तालिबान से जल्दबाजी में किया गया कोई समझौता न केवल अफगानिस्तान को खतरे में डालेगा, बल्कि पाकिस्तान के दुस्साहस को भी बढ़ाएगा। यह ठीक है कि विदेश मंत्रालय के प्रवक्ता ने यह साफ कर दिया कि करतारपुर गलियारे को लेकर अगले हफ्ते शुरू होने वाली बातचीत को द्विपक्षीय वार्ता की शुरुआत के तौर पर नहीं देखा जाना चाहिए, लेकिन इसका अंदेशा तो है ही कि पाकिस्तान इसकी आड़ में उस दबाव से मुक्त होने की कोशिश कर सकता है जो भारत ने बालाकोट हमले के बाद उस पर बनाया हुआ है। निःसंदेह बालाकोट हमले के जरिये भारत ने यह दिखा दिया कि वह सीमा पार आतंकवाद के खिलाफ ठोस कार्रवाई करने की क्षमता रखता है, लेकिन अभी यह सुनिश्चित करना शेष है कि आगे भी इस तरह की कार्रवाई की स्थिति में पाकिस्तान पलटवार करने का दुस्साहस न दिखा सके। इस दुस्साहस के दमन के बाद ही पाकिस्तान के सही रास्ते पर चलने की कुछ उम्मीद की जा सकती है।

उद्घाटन की सियासत

तृणमूल कांग्रेस प्रमुख एवं पश्चिम बंगाल की मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी की उपस्थिति में शनिवार को जलपाईगुड़ी में कलकत्ता हाईकोर्ट की सर्किट बेंच का दूसरी बार उद्घाटन किया गया। इस मौके पर राज्यपाल केसरीनाथ त्रिपाठी और कलकत्ता हाईकोर्ट के कार्यवाहक मुख्य न्यायाधीश विश्वनाथ समाद्दार समेत कानून मंत्री मलय घटक और कलकत्ता हाईकोर्ट के अन्य न्यायाधीश भी मौजूद थे। इस सर्किट बेंच का आठ फरवरी को ही प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने उद्घाटन कर दिया था। इसके बाद इसे लेकर सियासत शुरू हो गई थी। ममता ने एलान किया कि 9 मार्च को फिर से इसका धूमधाम से उद्घाटन किया जाएगा। इस पर किसी को भी आश्चर्य हो सकता है। हालांकि मुख्यमंत्री के सर्किट बेंच का दोबारा उद्घाटन करने के पीछे उनका अपना तर्क है। फिर भी यह सवाल तो उठता ही है कि आखिर जब देश के प्रधानमंत्री ने किसी परियोजना का उद्घाटन कर दिया तो फिर से उसका दोबारा उद्घाटन करना कहां तक उचित है? इसका जवाब मुख्यमंत्री के उस बयान में छिपा है जब उन्होंने पिछले माह प्रधानमंत्री के सर्किट बेंच का उद्घाटन करने के बाद दिया था। मुख्यमंत्री के मुताबिक सर्किट बेंच तैयार करने में राज्य सरकार ने 300 करोड़ रुपये खर्च किए। सरकार ने उसके लिए जमीन भी उपलब्ध कराई थी, लेकिन प्रधानमंत्री ने राज्य सरकार को अंधेरे में रखकर सर्किट बेंच का उद्घाटन कर दिया। कलकत्ता हाईकोर्ट के कार्यकारी मुख्य न्यायाधीश को भी उद्घाटन समारोह में आमंत्रित नहीं किया गया। ऐसा कर प्रधानमंत्री ने संघीय ढांचे पर आघात किया है। मुख्यमंत्री का तर्क अपनी जगह कुछ हद तक सही है। राज्यवासियों के हित में कोई बड़ी परियोजना का उद्घाटन प्रधानमंत्री करते हैं उसमें मुख्यमंत्री को आमंत्रित किया जाना चाहिए। लेकिन इस तरह के मामले में ऐसा देखा जाता है कि आमंत्रण पत्र संबंधित सभी पक्षों को भेजा जाता है, लेकिन सही समय पर नहीं मिलने पर कोई पक्ष नहीं भी उपस्थित रह सकता है। जब केंद्र और राज्य के बीच टकराव चरम पर पहुंच गया हो और प्रधानमंत्री के साथ मुख्यमंत्री का मंच साझा करना सहज नहीं रह गया हो तब तो संवादहीनता की आशंका बनेगी ही।

सुबूतों की चुकाई भारी कीमत

अभिषेक मेहरोत्रा

पप्पन भाई के बदन पर बंधी पट्टियां और सूजी आंखें बता रही थीं कि इस बार सुबूत मांगना उन्हें कितना भारी पड़ा

लो जी क्या दौर आ गया है, अब तो हमारी जुबान का मोल ही नहीं रह गया। एक जमाना था कि अगर हमारे टाइप किसी भारीभरकम दिमाग वाले ने अपनी जुबान से कोई बात कह दी तो फिर किसकी मजाल कि उस पर अंगुली उठा सके, पर अब तो जमाना ही उल्टा हो गया है। चंद दिनों पहले की ही तो बात है जब हमारे पप्पन पहलवान ने ही हमारी सौ टके की बात को दो कौड़ी का बना दिया। अरे मामला यूं था कि हमने पप्पन पहलवान को कल बड़े लजीजदार जायके वाली लस्सी क्या पिलाई, उन्होंने तो हम पर ही सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक कर दी।

दरअसल जब वो लस्सी की तारीफ करते हुए बोले कि ऐसी जानदार लस्सी आज तक नहीं पी, कहां से लाए हो ऐसा शुद्ध दही। तब बरबस हमारे मुंह से निकल गया कि भाई लस्सी का दही तो हमारे पड़ोस में पंजाब से आई भैंस के दूध से बना है। लो हम इतना क्या बोल दिए, पप्पन भाई तो हम पर लट्ठ लेकर ही चढ़ गए। बोले-हम कैसे मान लें कि यह भैंस पंजाब की है। हो सकता है यह गाजियाबाद की लोकल ही हो और आप बेवजह डींगें मार रहे हैं। खामखां उन पर अपनी तरफ से पंजाबियत का लेवल चस्पां कर रहे हो। देखा भाई लोगों, अब क्या भैंस का आधार कार्ड लाकर इनको सुबूत दिखाएं। मगर इनसे तो दो कदम आगे हमारी मथुरा वाली मौसी निकलीं, हमारी और पप्पन पहलवान की बहसबाजी सुनकर तुरंत बोलीं, अरे मुन्ना जा पप्पन को उस गाजियाबाद वाली भैंस के तबेले में छोड़ आ, वहां जब भैंस की पांच-सात लात खा-खाकर दूध दोहेगा तो अगली बार से इसके दिमाग में ज्यादा खुजली नहीं होगी। वैसे ऐसी खुजली हमारे पप्पन पहलवान के दिमाग में अक्सर होती रहती है। एक बार वह हमारे साथ हमारी ससुराल गए। वहां हमारे साले साहब का आलीशान तिमंजिला मकान देखकर बोला कि लगता है आपके साले साहब ऊपरी कमाई बहुत करते हैं तो मैंने कहा कि भाई आप तो बस कुछ भी बोल देते हो। अगला मल्टीनेशनल कंपनी में जनरल मैनेजर है तो लाखों में कमाता है, इसलिए आलीशान मकान में रहता है। बस हमारा इतना कहना था कि हमारे पप्पन पहलवान फिर एकदम से उखड़ गए। बोले आप उनका इनकम टैक्स रिटर्न देखो, पक्का कह रहा हूं कि कुछ गड़बड़ निकलेगी। उनका यह कहना ही था कि इतने में वहां हमारे साले साहब के चार्टड अकाउंटेंट भी आ गए और पप्पन पहलवान को देखते हुए तुरंत बोल पड़े, अरे पप्पन गुरु वो तुमने पिछले दो साल की रिटर्न फाइल फीस अभी तक जमा नहीं कराई है।

अब न पप्पन भाई साहब इधर देख पा रहे थे न उधर। हमने उन्हें डांटते हुए कहा कि आप ये जो हर बात पर सुबूत मांगते रहते हैं न, किसी दिन आपको इसके चलते ही लेने के देने न पड़ जाएं, मगर पप्पन पहलवान कहां सुधरने वाले, अभी दो रोज पहले ही टकरा गए एक असली पहलवान से। वह चौराहे पर पंजा लड़ा रहा था अपने दूसरे साथी के साथ। बस यह देखते ही पप्पन पहलवान कूद गए उनके बीच और बोले, अरे भाई, पंजा लड़ाने से असली ताकत का पता नहीं चलता, ताकत दिखानी है तो वाकई में कुछ बड़ा करके दिखाओ। कुछ ऐसा करो कि पूरी दुनिया तुम्हारी पहलवानी के सुबूत देख सके। अब पहलवान तो ठहरे पहलवान, ये सुनते ही उन दोनों का पारा पहुंचा सातवें आसमान पर और दोनों ने मिलकर धो डाला पप्पन को, उनके ऊपर निकाल दी अपनी पूरी भड़ास। पप्पन पहलवान इस बार जब हमसे मिलने आए तो उनके हाथ-पैर पर बंधी पट्टियां और सूजी आंखें अपने आप इतने सुबूत दे रही थीं कि हम उनसे बिना पूछे ही समझ गए कि इस बार लगता है सुबूत कुछ ज्यादा भारी पड़ गए हैं।

पर सुबूतों के तलबगारों में शुमार हो चुके पप्पन पहलवान को मोहल्ले वाले कहां छोड़ने वाले थे, सबने उनसे कहा कि क्यों पप्पन इस बार तो सुबूतों की फाइल शरीर पर लिए घूम रहे हो। अब यह बताओ कि कौन से सुबूत का दर्द सबसे ज्यादा है। जैसे ही पप्पन ने कहा कि अरे चचा, दर्द तो सबसे ज्यादा नाक में हो रहा है, जिस पर पंजे वाले पहलवान का मुक्का पड़ा था, इतना सुनते ही शैतान टिल्लू ने पप्पन की नाक क्या छुई, पप्पन तुरंत चीख उठे। उनकी चीख सुनते ही टिल्लू बोला, लो जी इस बार तो पक्का वाला सुबूत मिल गया है पप्पन चाचा को। उनकी तेज चीख बता रही है कि वाकई नाक में दर्द तो है अंकल के। ये सुनकर हमसे रहा न गया और हमने सलाह दे डाली, भाई पप्पन ढंग से दवा करना ताकि ये सुबूत जल्दी ही गायब हो जाएं वरना क्या पता पूरी उम्र इनमें से कुछ सुबूत लेकर ही बितानी पड़े। अब यह तो भगवान ही मालिक है कि वह जिस डॉक्टर के पास इलाज कराने के लिए जाएं कहीं उसी से ही कोई सुबूत मांगकर बंटाधार न करा लें।

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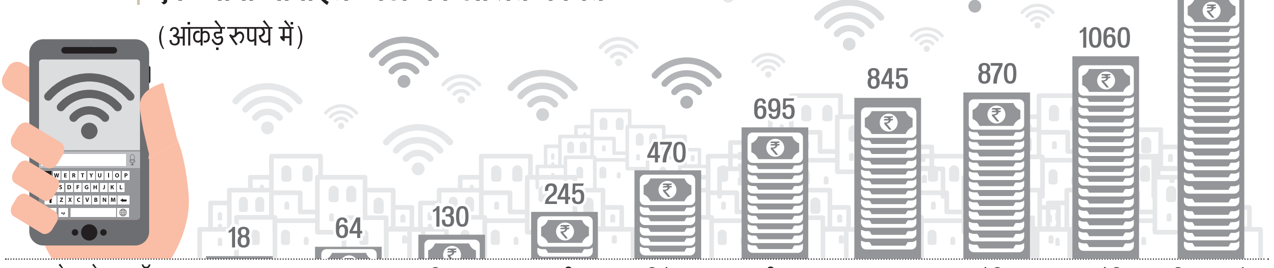
तथ्य-कथ्य | एक जीबी मोबाइल डाटा की औसत कीमत

(आंकड़े रुपये में)



स्रोत: केबलकॉक

ऊर्जा

सहजता

जीवन में सहजता का बहुत महत्व है। इससे तात्पर्य है समस्त घटनाओं, प्रक्रियाओं और स्थितियों-परिस्थितियों को सहज भाव बोध के साथ स्वीकार करना और उसके अनुरूप अपने कर्तव्यों का निर्वहन करना। जीवन को सर्वोत्तम तरीके से जीने के लिए इस गुण की सर्वाधिक आवश्यकता होती है। हमें पता है कि काल द्वारा निर्धारित नियति और होनी पर हमारा कोई वश नहीं होता। यह ज्ञान होते हुए भी हम अपनी इच्छाओं के प्रतिकूल उत्पन्न होने वाली घटनाओं और परिस्थितियों के समय मोह, माया, काम और क्रोध के वशीभूत होकर अस्थिर हो जाते हैं। उस समय हमारे भाव-विचारों में सहजता का बोध नहीं होता। जो होना है और जिस पर हमारा वश नहीं, उसके लिए हम भावनात्मक और आत्मिक विकार पालने लगते हैं।

होनी द्वारा पीड़ित, प्रताड़ित और तन-मन से कलुषित हमारा व्यक्तित्व अपना मूल स्वभाव भूल जाता है। हममें विवेचना शक्ति नहीं रहती। होनी से घिरे होने पर जब कुछ समय व्यतीत होता है तो हमारी चेतना जागृत होती है। तब हमें कुछ सोचने-समझने का अवसर मिलता है और स्वभावतः हम यही सोचते हैं कि जब होनी पर किसी का वश नहीं तो उसके लिए हमारे रोने-बिलखने का क्या लाभ। यह सहज ज्ञान का योग है। योगी मनुष्यों को यह ज्ञान योग सदैव स्मरण रहता है। इस स्थिति में मानव के पास स्वयं के साथ-साथ पूरे संसार की दृश्य-अदृश्य घटनाओं और परिघटनाओं को देखने की एक विस्तृत दृष्टि होती है। वह जगतव्यापी सभी क्रियाकलापों और उपक्रमों को साक्षी भाव से देख सकने में समर्थ होता है। साक्षी भाव से देखने का अर्थ है जीवन में जो कुछ घट रहा है, उसे हर बंधन से मुक्त होकर देखना। यह दृष्टि जिसे मिलती है, वही वास्तव में संत या महात्मा हो पाता है। जो मनुष्य इस अवस्था में पहुंच जाता है, वह असाधारण होता है। उसमें सहजता के ध्यान योग से विकसित अपार शक्तियां होती हैं। वह विधाता का प्रतिनिधि बनने योग्य हो जाता है। जीवन में हमारे प्राथमिक कर्तव्य क्या हों, हम समाज और मानव जाति के कल्याण के लिए समर्पित किस प्रेरणा से हों, ऐसे विचारों का समन्वय हमारे भीतर तब हो पाता है, जब जीवन-जगत के सुंदर विस्तार और इसकी दैनिक घटनाओं के प्रति हम सहजतापूर्वक आकृष्ट होते हैं।

विकेश कुमार बडोला

जीवाणुओं का जटिलता भरा संसार

मुकुल व्यास

विज्ञान में तमाम सफलताओं के बावजूद तमाम जीवाणुओं की गुत्थी अभी भी अनसुलझी है जिसे सुलझाना बेहद जरूरी है

ब्रिटेन के शोधकर्ताओं ने मनुष्य की आंतों में पाई जाने वाली करीब 2,000 नई बैक्टीरियाई प्रजातियों की पहचान की है। इनको अभी प्रयोगशाला में कल्चर नहीं किया गया है। ब्रिटेन स्थित इएमबीएल- यूरोपियन बायोइन्फॉर्मेटिक्स इंस्टीट्यूट और वैल्कम सेंगर इंस्टीट्यूट के शोधकर्ताओं ने दुनिया भर से एकत्र किए गए लोगों के नमूनों का विश्लेषण करने के बाद नई प्रजातियों का पता लगाया है। 'नेचर' पत्रिका में प्रकाशित अध्ययन के अनुसार शोधकर्ता उत्तर अमेरिकी और यूरोपीय लोगों की आंतों में पाई जाने वाली जीवाणु प्रजातियों की एक विस्तृत सूची बनाने के करीब पहुंच चुके हैं, लेकिन दुनिया के दूसरे क्षेत्रों में रहने वाले लोगों के बारे में अभी पर्याप्त आंकड़े नहीं मिल पाए हैं।

मनुष्य की आंतों में जीवाणुओं की अनेक प्रजातियों का वास होता है। वैज्ञानिक इन्हें 'गट माइक्रोबायोटा' भी कहते हैं। मानव शरीर में करीब 100 ट्रिलियन जीवाणु पाए जाते हैं। शरीर के अंदर जीवाणु प्रजातियों की विविधता के कई अनुमान लगाए गए हैं। जीवाणुओं की सबसे बड़ी आबादी आंतों में रहती है। त्वचा और प्रजनन अंगों में भी इनका वास होता है। जीवाणु कोशिका और उसकी आनुवंशिक सामग्री जन्म के समय से ही मनुष्य के साथ रहती है। मनुष्य की प्रतिरोधी प्रणाली के लिए इन जीवाणुओं का विशेष महत्व है। आनुवंशिकी के क्षेत्र में हुई प्रगति के बाद हम इन जीवाणुओं को ज्यादा बेहतर ढंग से समझ पा रहे हैं। शोधकर्ता आज भी आंतों में वास करने वाली अलग-अलग जीवाणु प्रजातियों की पहचान करने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं और यह पता लगाने की भी कि ये जीवाणु मनुष्य के स्वास्थ्य में क्या भूमिका निभाते हैं।

हमारी आंतों में वास करने वाली कुछ जीवाणु प्रजातियों के बारे में अभी तक कोई जानकारी नहीं मिल पाने के कई कारण हैं। एक कारण यह हो सकता है कि आंतों के अंदर इनकी बहुतायत या तो कम है या ये आंतों के बाहर जीवित रहने में असमर्थ हैं। शोधकर्ताओं ने 'मेटाजेनोमिक' विश्लेषण के जरिये इन जीवाणुओं को चिन्हित करने की कोशिश की है। इन विधियों का प्रयोग करके शोधकर्ता इन जीवाणुओं के जीन-समूह (जीनोम) को पुनर्निर्मित करने में सफल रहे हैं। इस प्रोजेक्ट पर काम करने वाले एक शोधकर्ता रॉब फिन का कहना है कि हम इन विधियों से उस बैक्टीरिया को समझ सकते हैं जिसका अभी प्रयोगशाला में कल्चर नहीं कर सकते।

यह इस बात को रेखांकित करती है कि आंतों में पाई जाने वाली जीवाणु-प्रजातियों की संरचना दुनिया में एक जैसी नहीं है। इसमें विविधता है। इस विविधता का पता लगाने के लिए अलग-अलग क्षेत्रों में रहने वाले लोगों के नमूनों का अध्ययन आवश्यक है। इन विधियों से यह पता चलता है कि मनुष्य की आंतों में रहने वाली जीवाणु प्रजातियां किस प्रकार विकसित हुई होंगी और वे अपने जीवाणु-समुदाय में कैसी भूमिका अदा करती होंगी। वैल्कम सेंगर इंस्टीट्यूट के ग्रुप लीडर ट्रेवर लाली का मानना है कि इस रिसर्च से मनुष्य की आंत का ब्लू प्रिंट तैयार करने में मदद मिलेगी जो भविष्य में मनुष्य के स्वास्थ्य को बेहतर करने और रोगों का उपयुक्त उपचार करने में मदद करेगा।

(लेखक स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)

राजरंग

एंट्री हो तो पांडा जैसी

चुनावी मौसम में नेताओं का पार्टी और निष्ठा बदलना वैसे तो आम बात है, लेकिन बीजद सांसद रहे बैजयंत जय पांडा की भाजपा में एंट्री कुछ ज्यादा ही खास रही। पार्टी में शामिल होने के कुछ ही घंटों में उन्हें राष्ट्रीय उपाध्यक्ष और प्रवक्ता जैसी दो बड़ी जिम्मेदारियों से एक साथ नवाजा गया। ऐसे में पांडा और उनके समर्थक खुशी से फूले नहीं समा रहे हैं। खुश हो भी क्यों ना। बीजद में इतने साल खपाने के बाद भी उन्हें हाशिए पर कर दिया गया था। वैसे दिलचस्प बात यह रही कि पांडा तक इस खुशखबरी को पहुंचाने के लिए पार्टी नेताओं को काफी इंतजार करना पड़ा, क्योंकि जब उन्हें यह सूचना दी जा रही थी, तब वह हेलीकॉप्टर उड़ा रहे थे। इसके चलते उनसे संपर्क नहीं हो पा रहा था। आखिरकार पार्टी नेताओं ने उनके अधीनस्थों से संपर्क साधा तो जानकारी मिली कि पांडा साहब तो हवा में सैर कर रहे हैं। फिर तो उनके जमीन पर उतरने तक का इंतजार किया गया। जैसे ही जमीन पर उतरे तो उन्हें तुरंत यह खुशखबरी दी गई।

बुलेटिन से गायब 'गांधी'

सियासत में नारों और हकीकत के बीच फासले को आज के दौर में अजूबा नहीं माना जाता। मगर राजनीति के अखाड़े का यह असर जब संस्थाओं की कार्यशैली पर दिखाई दे तो ध्यान बरबस चला जाता है। देश में समाचार और सूचनाओं के सबसे बड़े व भरोसेमंद माध्यम के रूप में पहचाने जाने वाले आकाशवाणी के अंदाज में जब यह फर्क दिखे तो कान खड़े होना स्वाभाविक है। बीते दिनों आकाशवाणी के एक समाचार बुलेटिन में कांग्रेस महासचिव प्रियंका गांधी वाड्रा से जुड़ी खबर के प्रसारण में उनका 'गांधी' उप नाम गायब था। राबर्ट वाड्रा से विवाह के बाद भी प्रियंका ने अपना गांधी सरनेम हटाया नहीं, बल्कि आगे वाड्रा जोड़ लिया। इसीलिए कांग्रेस में आधिकारिक रूप से प्रियंका गांधी वाड्रा बोला और लिखा जाता है। मगर आकाशवाणी ने अपने बुलेटिन में खुद ही 'गांधी' उपनाम को गायब कर उन्हें श्रीमती वाड्रा के रुप में ही संबोधित किया। सियासत में आने वाली प्रभावशाली महिलाओं तक के पैतृक उपनाम गायब करना जब सामान्य बात बन जाए तो राजनीति में महिलाओं की भागीदारी के लिए आरक्षण की राह कितनी कठिन होगी इसे समझना मुश्किल नहीं।

तूफान के पहले की शांति

हेलीकॉप्टर घोटाले में जल्द ही बड़ा खुलासा होने की उम्मीद है। क्रिश्चियन मिशेल और राजीव सक्सेना के भारत लाए जाने के बाद जांच में कोई प्रगति नहीं दिखने के बारे में पूछे जाने पर प्रवर्तन निदेशालय यानी ईडी के वरिष्ठ अधिकारी ने कहा कि यह तूफान के पहले की शांति है। राजीव सक्सेना इस मामले में सरकारी गवाह बन चुका है और घोटाले के सारे राज मजिस्ट्रेट के सामने उगल चुका है, लेकिन ईडी ने अभी तक यह पता लगने नहीं दिया कि सक्सेना ने क्या कहा है। एजेंसी अंदरखाने उन लोगों के खिलाफ सुबूत जुटाने में लगी है, जिनके बारे में सक्सेना ने बताया है। बात लीक होने की स्थिति में वे सभी सुबूत मिटाने में जुट जाते।

वक्त मिजाजपुर्सी का

इन दिनों सरकार पूरी तरह चुनाव मोड में है। इसलिए मीडिया वालों को खुश करने के लिए सारे मंत्री जीतोड़ मेहनत कर रहे हैं। चुनाव की घोषणा से पहले वे अपने मंत्रालय की बीट कवर करने वाले संवाददाताओं को चायपान पर बुला रहे हैं। उनके साथ सरकार की पांच वर्षों की उपलब्धियों के बारे में अनौपचारिक चर्चा कर रहे हैं। इन आयोजनों से दोनो पक्षों को आपसी गिले-शिकवे दूर करने का मौका भी मिल रहा है। मजे की बात यह है कि जहां एक तरफ पत्रकारों को पुचकारा जा रहा है, वहीं दूसरी तरफ उन्हें इस बात का अहसास भी कराया जा रहा है कि कुछ भी लिखो या दिखाओ हमें उसकी परवाह नहीं है। यही नहीं, इशारों-इशारों में यह भी समझा दिया जाता है कि दुस्साहस के कैसे परिणाम हो सकते हैं। कुछ मंत्री तो इतने अति आत्मविश्वास का शिकार हैं कि पत्रकारों और मीडिया समूहों का नाम ले-लेकर बताते हैं कि उन्हें कैसे काबू में किया गया। इन आयोजनों में बड़े-बड़े पत्रकारों को मंत्रियों की तारीफों के पुल बांधते अथवा अपमानित होते देख छोटे-मोटे संवाददाता आयोजन का गवाह बनने में ही अपनी भलाई समझते हैं।

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।

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बदहाल यूरोप को राहत पैकेज

जैक इविंग

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यूरोपीय केंद्रीय बैंक ने हाल ही में प्रोत्साहन पैकेज को जिस अप्रत्याशित तरीके से मंजूरी दी है, उसी से यूरोप के आर्थिक संकट की भीषणता का पता चलता है। ज्यादा खतरनाक यह है कि ट्रंप के व्यापार युद्ध और चीन की खराब आर्थिक स्थिति को देखते हुए पूरी दुनिया के ही सुस्ती की चपेट में आने की आशंका व्यक्त की जा रही है।

कुछ ही महीने हुए, जब यूरोपीय केंद्रीय बैंक ने वित्तीय संकट को देखते हुए जारी किए जाने वाले एक प्रोत्साहन पैकेज पर रोक लगा दी थी। लेकिन विगत बृहस्पतिवार को उसने अप्रत्याशित रूप से अपना रवैया बदला और उस प्रोत्साहन पैकेज के एक बड़े हिस्से को मंजूरी देते हुए मंदी के बढ़ते खतरे का एहसास दिलाया। केंद्रीय बैंक का तेजी से अपना रुख बदलना और आत्मविश्वास का चिंता में परिणत होना वैश्विक अर्थव्यवस्था की व्यापक कमजोरी को ही प्रतिबिंबित करता है। चीन में सुस्ती की, जिसे अमेरिका के साथ व्यापार युद्ध के कारण और गति मिली है, अनुगूंज दुनिया भर में सुनाई पड़ रही है, जिसने यूरोप और दूसरी जगहों में भी विकास पर असर डाला है। अमेरिका यूरोप का सबसे बड़ा कारोबारी सहयोगी है, जबकि उसकी कारों, फार्मास्यूटिकल्स और तैयार सामान के लिए चीन भी उतना ही महत्वपूर्ण बाजार है। औद्योगिक पावर हाउस जर्मनी ताजा तिमाही में बड़ी मुश्किल से मंदी से निकल पाया, क्योंकि उसकी अर्थव्यवस्था एक ओर उसके इस्पात पर अमेरिका द्वारा लगाए गए शुल्क से प्रभावित हुई, तो दूसरी तरफ उसके मशीनों के औजार और वॉक्सवैगन कारों की चीन में मांग अब नहीं रह गई है।

यूरोप की अपनी हालत चूंकि मजबूत नहीं है, ऐसे में, वैश्विक ताकतों के आगे उसकी स्थिति दयनीय है। यूरोपीय संघ से ब्रिटेन के निकलने की अनिश्चितता का असर ब्रिटिश अर्थव्यवस्था पर पड़ा है, तो इटली और स्पेन अपनी राजनीतिक परेशानियों से हिले हुए हैं। वैश्विक स्तर पर व्याप्त इस उथल-पुथल में इतनी ताकत तो है ही कि वह उस अमेरिका पर असर डाल सके, दुनिया भर की अर्थव्यवस्थाओं में जिसका प्रदर्शन सबसे अच्छा है। इतिहास गवाह है कि अमेरिका यूरोप की आर्थिक बदहाली से प्रभावित हुए बिना नहीं रह सकता, क्योंकि दोनों में गहरे कारोबारी रिश्ते हैं। जबकि चीन की सुस्ती ने खतरा और बढ़ा दिया है।

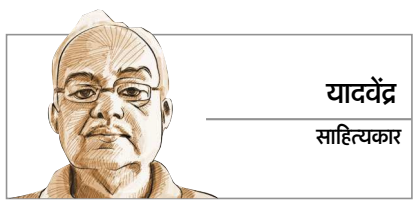
इस पृष्ठभूमि में यूरोपीय केंद्रीय बैंक की गवर्निंग काउंसिल ने पिछले बृहस्पतिवार को सर्वसम्मति से प्रोत्साहन पैकेज को मंजूरी दी, ताकि उधारी को प्रोत्साहन मिले। यह कदम इटली जैसी कमजोर अर्थव्यवस्थाओं वाले देश के बैंकों के लिए मददगार साबित होगा,

जिन्हें पूंजी बाजार से मुनासिब दर पर कर्ज लेने में मुश्किलें आ रही हैं। प्रोत्साहन पैकेज का इस्तेमाल इससे पहले 2008 में मंदी के असर से यूरो जोन को ध्वस्त होने से बचाने के लिए किया गया था। इस पैकेज के तहत व्यावसायिक बैंक केंद्रीय बैंक से बगैर ब्याज के उधार ले सकते हैं, लेकिन उन्हें वायदा करना होता है कि यह पैसा वे व्यापार-उद्योग या उपभोक्ताओं को कर्ज देंगे।

यूरोपीय केंद्रीय बैंक के अध्यक्ष मारियो द्राघी के मुताबिक, यूरोप की आर्थिक बदहाली के लिए व्हाइट हाउस की नीतियां जिम्मेदार हैं। अलबत्ता वह स्वीकारते हैं कि इसके बावजूद उन्होंने मंदी की आशंका नहीं की थी। यूरोप के लिए पिछला दशक सचमुच बहुत कठिन था। लेकिन पिछले साल से तो स्थिति बहुत ही खराब हो गई थी। यह देखते हुए द्राघी ने विगत दिसंबर में बांड खरीदने का कार्यक्रम रोक दिया। जबकि ब्याज दर बढ़ाने की पृष्ठभूमि केंद्रीय बैंक ने उससे पहले सितंबर में ही तैयार कर ली थी। ये कदम बैंक के आत्मविश्वास की ही तस्दीक करते थे कि दुनिया की बड़ी अर्थव्यवस्थाएं अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप के व्यापार युद्ध को ठेंगा दिखाते हुए अपनी आर्थिक मजबूती का सिलसिला बरकरार रखेंगी। लेकिन कुछ ही महीने में स्थिति बेहद खराब हो गई। इटली में मंदी आ गई और जर्मनी में भी हालत करीब-करीब वैसी ही हो गई। यूरोपीय संघ से ब्रिटेन के बाहर निकलने की कोशिश तो और भी कठिन साबित हुई और इसने जो गतिरोध पैदा किया, वह आशंका से भी अधिक था।

ऐसे में, मौसम का बदलता मिजाज भी मानो यूरोप के खिलाफ साजिश रच रहा था। अस्वाभाविक रूप से गर्म और सूखे मौसम के कारण राइन नदी का जलस्तर इतना नीचे चला गया कि उस पर बड़े नाव और क्रूज का चलना असंभव हो गया, जिससे रसायनों और ईंधन की आपूर्ति बाधित हुई और इनकी कीमत बढ़ गई। यूरोप की यह बदहाली अमेरिकी शेयर बाजार को बुरी तरह प्रभावित कर सकती है।

हालांकि इन सबके बावजूद पिछले बृहस्पतिवार को यूरोपीय केंद्रीय बैंक ने जिस तरह प्रोत्साहन पैकेज की घोषणा की, वह अप्रत्याशित थी। इसकी एक वजह बैंक के अपने अर्थशास्त्रियों की आशंकित करने वाली राय भी थी। कुछ महीने पहले ये अर्थशास्त्री इस साल यूरो जोन की आर्थिक विकास दर 1.7 फीसदी आंक रहे थे, पर अब वे मानते हैं कि यह दर 1.1 प्रतिशत रह सकती है। यही कारण है कि गवर्निंग काउंसिल के सभी सदस्य प्रोत्साहन पैकेज जारी करने के मामले में एकमत थे। जबकि ऐसा अमूमन होता नहीं है। इससे पहले संकट के समय गवर्निंग काउंसिल में, जिसमें यूरो जोन में शामिल सभी 19 देशों के केंद्रीय बैंकों के अधिकारी शामिल होते हैं, ज्यादातर मुद्दों पर अलग-अलग विचार सामने आते थे। हालांकि यह पैकेज जारी करने के बाद यूरोपीय केंद्रीय बैंक अब फूंक-फूंककर कदम उठाएगा।

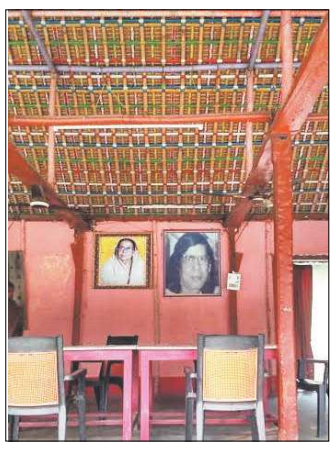


यादवेंद्र
साहित्यकार

रेणु के गांव में अब बैलगाड़ी नहीं दिखती

पटना के समाजविज्ञानी मित्र श्रीकांत ने जैसे ही पूर्णिया चलने का प्रस्ताव रखा, मैंने हामी भर दी। फणीश्वर नाथ रेणु की रचनाओं की माटी, नदी और पेड़ पौधे छूने देखने की पुरानी इच्छा मुझमें जाग गई।

युवावस्था में जिस लेखक के कथा संकलन ने मेरे मन पर अमिट छाप छोड़ी थी, वह रेणु की *ठुमरी* था। घर में प्रेमचंद के *मानसरोवर* के आठों खंड थे। अम्मा की लाइब्रेरी में रवींद्रनाथ, शरतचंद्र, बंकिम चंद्र और बिमल मित्र सरीखे बड़े लेखक भी थे, जो ज्ञान विस्तार के नए द्वार तो खोलते थे, पर खिलंदड़ेपन के साथ गुदगुदी कम कर पाते थे। मेरा किशोर मन सिनेमा जैसी शब्दावली ढूंढ रहा था, जिसमें हर पल कहीं कुछ नया होता रहे। रेणु से उन्हीं दिनों पाठक के रूप में मुलाकात हुई, सो उनकी दुनिया में प्रवेश पाते ही मन खिल उठा। पूर्णिया-अररिया जाने का सबब बनते ही जिस बात ने मेरे मन के अंदर सबसे ज्यादा जोर मारा, वह रेणु के गांव जाने का स्वर्णिम अवसर था। दरभंगा से आगे निकलने पर राष्ट्रीय राजमार्ग के दोनों ओर मीलों दूर तक पकते धान के खेत, पोखर, बंसवाड़ी और कोसी नदी और उसके कछार और तटबंध दिख रहे थे। पर गांव बहुत कम और आबादी विरल। गांवों में जो घर दीखते थे, उनमें बहुतायत फूस और बांस के बने हुए थे, पक्के मकान बहुत कम। चौड़े राजमार्ग के किनारे एक जगह हमें 'रेणु ग्राम' लिखा दिखा, तो हम आह्लादित होकर अंदर की सड़क पर उतर आए। पर वह सड़क नाम को डामर वाली पक्की सड़क थी, बड़े-बड़े गड्ढे इतनी संख्या में थे कि सारी खुशी मिनट भर में काफूर हो गई। आवाजाही कम थी, जो थे भी, उनमें मोटरबाइक का बड़ा हिस्सा था। हीरामन की बैलगाड़ी तो अब स्मृतियों में रह गई हैं। *ठुमरी* की कहानियों में कभी मोटरबाइक या कार की चर्चा नहीं मिली। पर मेरा जिद्दी मन था कि रेणु के गांव के नाम पर *ठेस, तीसरी कसम, रसप्रिया, लाल पान की बेगम, पंचलाइट* और *सिरीपंचमी* के चलते-फिरते किरदारों के घर और शक्लें ढूंढ रहा था।



अमर शब्द शिल्पी फणीश्वरनाथ रेणु ने अपनी रचनाओं में गुलाबबाग के जिस मेले को अमर कर दिया है, वह मेला कब का खत्म हो चुका है। ऐसे ही बैलगाड़ियों की जगह मोटर बाइक ने ले ली है।

बीच में एक छोटा-सा बाजार पड़ा और वहां भी हमें रेणु द्वार दिखा। धान के खेतों के बाद मूंगफली और आलू के हरे-भरे खेतों और खूब घुमावदार रास्तों से होते हुए हम औराही हिंगना गांव में पहुंचे। वहां जब हमारे ड्राइवर ने विधायक जी का घर पूछा (रेणु जी के बड़े बेटे पराग पद्मराय वेणु विधायक रह चुके हैं) तो मुझे गुस्सा आया-रेणु जी के नाम से दुनिया में मशहूर गांव में उनका घर क्यों नहीं पूछा?

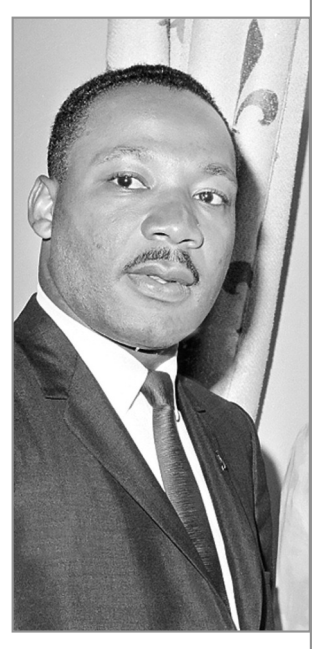
घुमावदार रास्तों और बांस के सघन झुंडों के बीच बसे ज्यादातर कच्चे घरों वाले गांव के बीचोबीच हमें गुलाबी रंग का एक नया बना दुमंजिला दिखाई दिया। यह राज्य सरकार द्वारा निर्मित 'रेणु स्मृति भवन' है, जो दो साल पहले से बनकर ताला बंद पड़ा है। रेणु जी के बेटे दक्षिणेश्वर पप्पू ने बताया कि पिछले कुछ वर्षों में मुख्यमंत्री पांच बार गांव में आए, पर भवन आबाद नहीं हुआ। रेणु जी के घर पहुंचते ही हमें सुघड़ कलात्मकता के दर्शन हुए। आंगन में मूंगफली के पौधे और बकरियों की सहज उपस्थिति बहुत नॉस्टैल्जिक थी। जिस प्रशस्त आंगन में *तीसरी कसम* फिल्म की शुरुआत में बुहारते हुए रेणु जी की पत्नी दिखाई देती हैं, हम उसे पार करके जब रेणु जी की कोठरी में गए, तो तन-मन सिहर उठा। कितने आख्यान और चरित्र यहां बैठकर गढ़े गए हैं। भारत ही क्या, नेपाल की राजनीति में क्रांतिकारी बदलाव करने वाली कितनी रणनीतियां बनाई गई हैं इस कोठरी में। दीवार पर टंगे आठ-दस फ्रेम में रेणु और उनकी दोनों जीवन संगिनियां थीं।

रेणु जी के परिजनों से बात करते हुए मैंने पूछा कि उनकी रचनाओं में यह इलाका जिस तरह से चित्रित हुआ है, उसमें और अब में क्या फर्क आया है, तो उन्होंने बताया कि उनकी कहानियों में बार-बार मेलों का जिक्र होता है। गुलाब बाग का मेला इस अंचल का बहुत मशहूर मेला हुआ करता था, पर उसे उजड़े जमाना हो गया। रेणु की कहानियों में बैलगाड़ी बार-बार आती है। पर इस यात्रा में बैलगाड़ी पर नजर बिल्कुल नहीं पड़ी। हां, बांस और मूंज प्रचुर मात्रा में अब भी उपलब्ध हैं। पटसन की खेती वैसे ही उजड़ गई है, जैसे नील की खेती। वैसे पटसन की डंठल के गुच्छों के ऊपर गोबर लपेट कर ईंधन के ढेर हर जगह दिखाई दिए। लोगों ने बताया कि पटसन की जगह अब मूंगफली यहां की मुख्य नकदी फसल हो गई है।

आधुनिक औद्योगिक विकास से अछूता यह अंचल अब भी बेहद हरा-भरा है। कोसी की बाढ़ से कमोबेश मुक्ति मिल गई है, पर जमीन में पर्याप्त नमी रहती है। कोसी के अलावा कजरी, परमार सरीखी नदियां हरियाली बनाए रखती हैं। रेणु जी अपनी कहानियों में इस हरे-भरे अंचल में रहने वाली किसिम-किसिम की चिड़ियों-कूखनी, कोयल, पंडुक, महोक आदि की बात करते हैं। कभी यह इलाका बड़े जमींदारों के आतंक का केंद्र रहा था, पर गरीब किसानों के जीवन में अत्याचार था, तो मेले, नौटंकी, बिदापत, रसप्रिया, बिरहा, चांचर, लगनी, बारहमासा, निरगुन आदि लोक संगीत भी कम नहीं थे। अब वह सब खत्म हो चुका है।

मार्टिन लूथर किंग और एक पिछड़ा भारतीय

अमेरिकी नागरिक अधिकार कार्यकर्ता को पत्र लिखने वाले एम.के. अच्युतन ने वंचित परिवार से निकलकर इंजीनियरिंग की पढ़ाई की, निश्चित रूप से उन्हें स्कूल, कॉलेज और कार्य स्थल पर उच्च वर्ग से भेदभाव का सामना करना पड़ा होगा।



रामचंद्र गुहा
जाने-माने इतिहासकार

फरवरी, 1959 में डॉ. मार्टिन लूथर किंग और उनकी पत्नी कोरेट्टा तीन हफ्ते के प्रवास पर भारत आए थे। अमेरिकी सिविल राइट नेता की गांधी की भूमि की इस तीर्थ यात्रा के बारे में काफी कुछ लिखा गया है। हालांकि बोस्टन यूनिवर्सिटी में डॉ. किंग के दस्तावेजों पर काम करने के दौरान मुझे एक दिलचस्प फुटनोट मिला, जिस पर बात करना जरूरी लग रहा है। डॉ किंग और उनकी भारत यात्रा के बारे में जिन लोगों ने पढ़ा उनमें एक सज्जन एम.के. अच्युतन भी शामिल थे। वह मूलतः तमिलनाडु के थे और उस समय ऑल इंडिया रेडियो के कलकत्ता स्टेशन पर तकनीकी सहायक के रूप में काम कर रहे थे। अच्युतन ने 28 अप्रैल, 1959 को डॉ किंग के मोंटगोमेरी, अलबामा स्थित घर के पते पर एक पत्र भेजा। अच्युतन ने लिखा कि वह 28 वर्ष के हैं और मद्रास यूनिवर्सिटी से टेलीकम्यूनिकेशंस इंजीनियरिंग में स्नातक हैं। उन्होंने डॉ. किंग को लिखा, 'मैं अमेरिका आने को उत्सुक हूं, ताकि आगे की पढ़ाई या प्रशिक्षण हासिल कर सकूं और मैं इसे हकीकत में बदलने के लिए अपने स्तर पर सारे प्रयास कर रहा हूं। वह अमेरिका की कई यूनिवर्सिटी को इससे पहले लिख चुके थे, लेकिन उनके भाग्य ने साथ नहीं दिया, इसलिए उन्होंने डॉ. किंग से सीधे अपील करने का फैसला किया।

अच्युतन ने डॉ. किंग को अपनी निजी पृष्ठभूमि की भी जानकारी दी। उन्होंने लिखा, 'कई अर्थों में मैं अत्यंत वंचित हूं, क्योंकि मेरा जन्म भारत के सर्वाधिक पिछड़े समुदायों में से एक निचली जाति के अत्यंत गरीब परिवार में हुआ है।' इसके बाद अच्युतन ने लिखा, 'मेरे समुदाय में प्राथमिक कक्षा से आगे की पढ़ाई बहुत दुर्लभ है और इंजीनियरिंग स्नातक तक की पढ़ाई मैं इसलिए कर सका, क्योंकि मेरा अकादमिक रिकॉर्ड बहुत अच्छा रहा है और मुझे मद्रास की राज्य सरकार के हरिजन कल्याण विभाग की छात्रवृत्ति मिली थी, ताकि मैं फीस और अन्य खर्च वहन कर सकूं और इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेज में मेरा दाखिला स्वतंत्रता प्राप्ति के बाद राष्ट्रीय सरकार द्वारा शैक्षणिक संस्थाओं में पिछड़े वर्गों के लिए की गई आरक्षण की व्यवस्था के कारण हो सका...।'

भारत में पढ़ाई करने के लिए अनुसूचित जनजाति के लोगों के लिए आरक्षण था, मगर जो भारत से बाहर जाकर पढ़ाई करना चाहते थे, उनके लिए यह व्यवस्था नहीं थी। इसलिए अच्युतन ने लिखा, 'यों तो भारत सरकार हर साल पढ़ाई करने के लिए कुछ लोगों को विदेश भेजती है, लेकिन इसकी चयन प्रक्रिया में पिछड़े वर्ग के लोगों के लिए कोई विशेष व्यवस्था नहीं है, इसलिए इससे संबंधित छात्रवृत्तियां सामान्य तौर पर सामाजिक और आर्थिक रूप से उच्च वर्ग के लोगों को ही मिलती हैं।'

अच्युतन ने अनेक अमेरिकी यूनिवर्सिटी को लिखकर छात्रवृत्तियां और अन्य तरह की वित्तीय मदद के बारे में जानकारियां मांगीं, लेकिन उन्हें उनसे या तो 'बहुत रूखा-सा जवाब मिला या फिर कोई जवाब ही नहीं मिला'। उन्होंने रेखांकित किया, ठीक इसी समय जो (उच्च जाति के भारतीय) लोग पहले से ही अमेरिका में थे, उन्होंने आसानी से अपने रिश्तेदारों या करीबी दोस्तों को अमेरिका बुलवा लिया और उनके लिए आर्थिक मदद भी हासिल कर ली, यहां तक कि उन्हें फॉर्म वगैरह लेने में मदद भी की।

अच्युतन की यह शिकायत एकदम वाजिब थी। सरकारी फंड से पढ़ाई के लिए विदेश भेजे जाने वाले तकरीबन सारे भारतीय उच्च जातियों से थे; और उच्च जातियों के पास ही सांस्कृतिक वर्चस्व और पारिवारिक संपर्क था, जिसके कारण वे अपनी निजी क्षमता से पढ़ाई करने के लिए विदेश जा सकते थे। अपनी पृष्ठभूमि के ही कारण उन्होंने डॉ. किंग से मदद मांगी ताकि वे यूनिवर्सिटी से कह सकें कि वे उनके लिए जरूरी फॉर्म भेजें।

अच्युतन ने डॉ. किंग को लिखे इस पत्र का समापन इस तरह से किया : 'यह पहला मौका है, जब मैं अमेरिका को निजी पत्र लिख रहा हूं और मुझे विश्वास है कि स्वाभाविक कारणों से आप मेरे प्रति सहानुभूतिपूर्ण दृष्टिकोण रखेंगे, इसलिए मैं आपको लिखने के लिए प्रेरित हुआ...। आपका शीघ्र जवाब मिल सका तो, मैं आपका आभारी रहूंगा। एक बार फिर मैं आपसे क्षमा चाहता हूं, क्योंकि मैंने आपको इस पत्र के माध्यम से कष्ट दिया है।'

28 अप्रैल, 1959 को कलकत्ता से छोड़े गए इस पत्र को मई के पहले हफ्ते में मोंटगोमेरी पहुंच जाना चाहिए था। हालांकि डॉ. किंग का जवाब (जिसकी एक प्रति बोस्टन यूनिवर्सिटी के आर्काइव में रखी है) दो महीने बाद 14 जुलाई को ही भेजा जा सका था। विलंब से जवाब भेजने के लिए उन्होंने क्षमा याचना भी की। उनके मुताबिक यह विलंब इसलिए हुआ क्योंकि वह शहर से बाहर थे और जब लौटे तो चिट्ठियों का अंबार लग गया था।

डॉ. किंग ने अच्युतन को लिखा, मैंने आपका पत्र गहरी चिंता के साथ पढ़ा। आपकी परेशानी वास्तविक है और मैं उम्मीद करता हूं कि इसे सुलझाया जा सकता है। आपकी दृढ़ता और सही समझ के लिए आपकी प्रशंसा की जानी चाहिए। डॉ. किंग ने उन्हें बताया कि वह अकादमिक क्षेत्र से नहीं हैं और यूनिवर्सिटी के कामकाज से उनका सीधा संपर्क नहीं है। इसके बावजूद वह उनके आग्रह से इतना भावुक हुए कि उन्होंने लिखा, 'आपकी परेशानी के बारे में मैं कॉलेज के कुछ ऐसे प्रेसिडेंट्स से बात करूंगा जिन्हें मैं निजी तौर पर जानता हूं। चूंकि आपकी दिलचस्पी इंजीनियरिंग में है, इसलिए हॉवर्ड यूनिवर्सिटी आपकी जरूरतों के लिहाज से ठीक रहेगी।' डॉ. किंग ने कहा कि वह इसके डीन को लिखेंगे और उनका जवाब मिलते ही उन्हें सूचित करेंगे।

डॉ किंग ने अपने पत्र का समापन इस तरह से किया : 'एक बार फिर, मैं आपकी सकारात्मकता और कुछ हासिल करने के लिए आपके समर्पण से प्रभावित हूं। मैं आपके उज्जवल भविष्य की कामना करता हूं।'

एक भुला दिए गए भारतीय और एक सुप्रसिद्ध अमेरिकी के बीच हुआ यह पत्र व्यवहार भावुक कर देने वाला है। इस तरह का पत्र भेजना साहस का काम था, लेकिन एम.के. अच्युतन ने तो अपनी सारी जिंदगी ऐसे साहस का परिचय दिया, उन्होंने वंचित परिवार से निकलकर इंजीनियरिंग की पढ़ाई की, निश्चित रूप से उन्हें स्कूल, कॉलेज और कार्य स्थल पर उच्च वर्ग से भेदभाव का भी सामना करना पड़ा होगा। डॉ. किंग का पत्र भी काफी गरिमापूर्ण और विनम्र था।

दोनों के बीच हुए इस व्यवहार का श्रेय इन दोनों को ही जाता है। लेकिन उस अनजाने शख्स का आखिर क्या हुआ? डॉ. किंग के 1959 से 1968 के दौरान किए गए पत्र व्यवहार और उनके अन्य दस्तावेज सुरक्षित हैं। लेकिन मैं यह जानने में असमर्थ रहा कि आखिर एम.के. अच्युतन के साथ फिर क्या हुआ। यही कह सकते हैं कि उन्हें उनके साहस और प्रतिभा का फल जरूर मिला होगा, जिसके वह हकदार थे।

बदलते कथानक वाला चुनाव

राफेल पर ताजा घटनाक्रम से सियासी कहानी बदलती दिख रही है। लेकिन यदि जैश ने फिर से हमला किया और चुनाव में व्यस्त मोदी सरकार ने फिर से करारा जवाब दिया, तो कहानी फिर बदल जाएगी।

चार सवाल हैं। क्या उग्र राष्ट्रवाद ही लोकसभा चुनाव 2019 का नया कथानक है? क्या यह कथानक अप्रैल के पहले हफ्ते में होने वाले पहले चरण के चुनाव से पहले बदल सकता है? क्या यह कथानक भाजपा को चुनाव जिताने के लिए काफी है? अगर कथानक राष्ट्रवाद से बदलकर किसानों का दर्द और नौजवानों का रोजगार हो गया, तो क्या भाजपा चुनाव हार जाएगी? इस सवाल को थोड़ा बदलकर पूछा जा सकता है कि अगर कथानक किसान नौजवान हो गया, तो क्या कांग्रेस चुनाव जीत जाएगी? (यहां कांग्रेस जीते या संयुक्त विपक्ष)।

विजय विद्रोही

भाजपा ने अपनी तरफ से नया कथानक चुनावी बाजार में फेंका है। वह है 'उग्र राष्ट्रवाद'। भाजपा खुद को राष्ट्र, राष्ट्र हितयुक्त, भ्रष्टाचार मुक्त, परिवारवाद मुक्त पार्टी के रूप में प्रस्तुत कर रही है। वह इस बात पर जोर दे रही है कि पाकिस्तान पर उसके हवाई हमले पर सवाल उठाने वाले देशद्रोही हैं। भाजपा की नजर में कथानक है, पाकिस्तान के घर में उसे मारना और मोदी सरकार की विभिन्न योजनाओं के 22 करोड़ लाभार्थी। उसे लगता है कि एक तिहाई सांसदों के टिकट काट दो, कुछ जगह फिल्मी सितारों से लेकर क्रिकेट सितारों को उतार दो और बाकी का काम मोदी के भाषण-अमित शाह के बूथ के यूथ कर ही देंगे। लेकिन यह क्या इतना आसान है। इसके लिए हमें दो उदाहरण देखने होंगे।

पुलवामा में सीआरपीएफ के काफिले पर हमले के बारहवें दिन पाकिस्तान के बालाकोट में भारतीय वायुसेना के पराक्रम के बाद सब कुछ भाजपा के पक्ष में दिख रहा था। कांग्रेस इस कदर पस्त थी कि उसने चुनावी रैली छोड़ पत्रकार वार्ता करना तक बंद कर दिया था। उधर भाजपा के अमित शाह से लेकर नरेंद्र मोदी चुनावी रैलियां भी कर रहे थे और पाकिस्तान के खिलाफ कभी तरजीही देश का दर्जा हटाने तो कभी पानी बंद कर देने जैसे फैसले कर रहे थे। लेकिन दो दिन बाद विंग कमांडर अभिनंदन जब पाकिस्तान की सेना के कब्जे में आए और वीडियो जारी हुआ, तो भाजपा समर्थकों को सांप सूंघ गया। राष्ट्रवाद का उन्माद फैलाने वालों के हाथ पैर फूले। यहां तक न्यूज चैनलों के एंकर भी मध्यम स्वर में बोलने लगे। दो दिन बाद ही अभिनंदन की सुरक्षित रिहाई के साथ ही कथानक फिर बदला। भाजपा ने हर जगह बात फैलाई कि मोदी जी के कारण पाकिस्तान डर गया और इमरान खान को खुद अभिनंदन की रिहाई की घोषणा करनी पड़ी। लेकिन भाजपा भी जान गई थी कि अगर पाकिस्तान के साथ तनातनी इसी तरह जारी रही और अभिनंदन जैसे एक-दो हादसे और हो गए तो कहानी बदल सकती है।

कहानी कैसे बदलती है। इसकी दूसरी मिसाल सुप्रीम कोर्ट में राफेल की सुनवाई थी। भारत सरकार की तरफ से अटॉर्नी जनरल ने दस्तावेज रक्षा मंत्रालय से

चोरी होने की बात कही, तो सोशल मीडिया में हल्ला मच गया। लस्त-पस्त कांग्रेस को मानो संजीवनी मिल गई और एक बार फिर राफेल-राफेल शुरू हो गया। अदालत में एक बयान से कहानी बदल गई। लेकिन यदि जैश ने फिर से हमला किया और चुनाव में व्यस्त मोदी सरकार ने फिर से करारा जवाब दिया, तो कहानी मोदी के पक्ष में भी जा सकती है।

हालांकि एक टीवी चैनल का पुलवामा और बालाकोट के बाद का सर्वे मोदी सरकार के लिए चिंता का विषय है। सर्वे कहता है कि बेरोजगारी अब भी सबसे बड़ा मुद्दा है। 36 फीसद लोग इसे भी सबसे बड़ा मुद्दा बता रहे हैं। आतंकवाद 23 फीसद लोगों के लिए मुद्दा है और किसानों की परेशानियां 22 फीसद को परेशान किए है। यानी आज भी 58 फीसद जनता किसान और नौजवान की बात कर रही है। हालांकि भाजपा के लिए राहत की बात है कि मोदी की खुद की लोकप्रियता में इजाफा हुआ है। एक अन्य सर्वे बताता है कि इस साल जनवरी में मोदी की लोकप्रियता करीब 51 फीसद थी और राहुल गांधी 38 फीसद के साथ टक्कर दे रहे थे, लेकिन पुलवामा बालाकोट के बाद मोदी की लोकप्रियता 64 फीसद तक पहुंच गई और राहुल की दस फीसद तक गिर गई।

विपक्ष या कहें कांग्रेस तो वह किसानों की तकलीफों और बेरोजगारी के अपने कथानक को उग्र तरीके से सामने ला सकती है। किसानों की आय 2022 तक दोगुना करने का वायदा जुमले से कम नहीं। किसानों को 17 रुपये रोज देकर उनके साथ धोखा किया जा रहा है। किसानों की आय कुछ सालों में और ज्यादा गिरी है, लागत का डेढ़ गुना किसी को नहीं मिल रहा है, उल्टे किसानों को न्यूनतम समर्थन मूल्य से भी पंद्रह-बीस फीसद कम में फसल बेचनी पड़ रही है। ये कुछ ऐसे मुद्दे हैं, जिन्हें कांग्रेस जोरदार तरीके से उठाकर मोदी सरकार की घेरेबंदी कर सकती है।

इसके बावजूद विपक्ष सीट-दर-सीट ही भाजपा को सामूहिक रूप से टक्कर दे सकता है। अगर भाजपा बिहार में पांच सीटें और महाराष्ट्र में भी कुछ सीटों का त्याग कर सकती है, तो कांग्रेस दिल्ली में आम आदमी पार्टी से समझौता क्यों नहीं कर सकती! वह भी तब जब वह कर्नाटक में बीच का रास्ता निकाल सकती है, तमिलनाडु में डीएमके की बात मान सकती है, तो दिल्ली में क्या अड़चन है। उत्तर प्रदेश में भी सपा-बसपा कांग्रेस को छह-सात सीटें दे सकते थे, लेकिन उसने प्रियंका गांधी को मैदान में उतारा है, जिनकी मौजूदगी से कुछ सीटों में त्रिकोणा मुकाबला हो सकता है, जिसका सीधा फायदा भाजपा को मिलेगा यह बताने की जरूरत नहीं है।

कांग्रेस को नया दौर लाना है, तो नए दौर का गाना गाना ही पड़ेगा...*साथी हाथ बढ़ाना*। तभी वह नामुमकिन को मुमकिन बना पाएगी।

दूसरी नज़र

■ पी चिदंबरम

राष्ट्र-विरोधी अखबार!

रफाल विवाद खत्म नहीं होने वाला। अगर पुलवामा आतंकी हमले और इसके बाद वायुसेना की जवाबी कार्रवाई की वजह से यह दब गया था तो प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी की उकसाने वाली यह टिप्पणी कि 'अगर हमारे पास रफाल होता...' से फिर से यह छा गया है।

यह उनका दुर्भाग्य कि इस टिप्पणी के दो दिन के भीतर ही 'द हिंदू' ने रफाल सौदे पर एक और खोजी रिपोर्ट छाप दी। इस रिपोर्ट ने भारत के नियंत्रक और महालेखा परीक्षक (कैग) के उन नतीजों की हवा निकाल दी, जिनमें कहा गया था कि एनडीए का रफाल सौदा यूपीए के रफाल के सौदे से 2.86 फीसद सस्ता था। (सरकार का दावा था कि उसने नौ से बीस फीसद सस्ता सौदा किया था, जिसे कैग की रिपोर्ट में खारिज कर दिया गया है।)

कौन-सा सौदा सस्ता?

मामला एकदम सीधा-सादा है। यूपीए के वक्त में किए गए सौदे में दासो के लिए बैंक गारंटी और परफॉरमेंस गारंटी देना अनिवार्य था। एनडीए के दौरान हुए सौदे में इन दोनों ही अनिवार्य शर्तों से कंपनी को छूट दे दी गई। गारंटी मुहैया कराने की कीमत बैंक अपने ग्राहक (इस सौदे में दासो) से वसूलेगा। यह गारंटी की 'लागत' है- ऐसा मामला है, जिसे सभी कारोबारी जानते हैं। रफाल सौदा चूंकि साठ हजार करोड़ रुपए का है, इसलिए गारंटी संबंधी शुल्क काफी ज्यादा होते।

अगर एक सौदा जिसमें गारंटी शुल्क काफी ज्यादा हों, और दूसरा सौदा जिसमें कोई गारंटी शुल्क न हो, तो यह सामान्य-सा ज्ञान है, जिससे हमें पता चल जाएगा कि जब दो कीमतों की तुलना की जा रही है, तो पहले सौदे में से गांरटी शुल्क हटा दिया जाना चाहिए। सीएजी ने दो हिस्सों में इन शुल्कों की गणना की-

बैंक गांरटी शुल्क-	यूरो एएबी1 मिलियन
परफॉरमेंस गांरटी और	
वारंटी शुल्क	यूरो एएबी2 मिलियन
कुल	यूरो एएबी3 मिलियन

कैग ने वर्णमाला अक्षरों और अंकों का उपयोग इसलिए किया है कि उसने सरकार से वादा किया था कि वह दाम संबंधी सूचना को 'ठीक तरह से' पेश करेगा। उसने खुल कर सरकार के पक्ष में काम किया। हालांकि कैग निम्नलिखित नतीजा निकालने के लिए मजबूर था-

'इसलिए, बैंक शुल्क नहीं देने से विक्रेता को जो कुल एएबी3 मिलियन यूरो की बचत हुई, वह मंत्रालय को हस्तांतरित कर दी जानी चाहिए। बैंक गांरटियों की जांच के हिसाब-किताब से मंत्रालय सहमत हो गया है, लेकिन दावा किया है कि यह मंत्रालय की बचत थी, क्योंकि बैंक गारंटी शुल्कों का भुगतान किया ही नहीं जाना था।'

हालांकि ऑडिट में कहा गया है कि यदि इसकी तुलना 2007 की पेशकश से की जाए तो वास्तव में यह बचत मैसर्स डीए के लिए थी।

कैग ने नहीं निभाई जिम्मेदारी

गारंटी शुल्कों को अभी तक जनता से छिपाया जा रहा है और दोनों सौदों की तार्किक तुलना अभी तक नहीं की जा सकी है। द हिंदू की रिपोर्ट में जो जानकारी दी गई है, वह भारतीय वार्ताकार दल (आइएनटी) की रिपोर्ट से खोज कर निकाली गई है। ये शुल्क सत्तावन करोड़ चालीस लाख यूरो के थे। अगर इस राशि को यूपीए के वक्त के सौदे से निकाल भी दिया जाए और दोनों सौदों की तुलना की जाए तो भी एनडीए का सौदा चौबीस करोड़ इकसठ लाख यूरो ज्यादा महंगा बैठता है। मौजूदा विनिमय दर अस्सी रुपए पर एनडीए का रफाल सौदा 1968 करोड़ रुपए महंगा है। इस तरह छत्तीस रफाल विमानों में हर विमान 54.66 करोड़ रुपए महंगा पड़ेगा।

यह रहस्य ही है कि क्यों प्रधानमंत्री कार्यालय ने आइएनटी को नजरअंदाज करते हुए समानांतर बातचीत शुरू कर दी। यह भी रहस्य ही है कि भ्रष्टाचार निरोधी उपबंध को क्यों खत्म कर दिया गया। यह रहस्य है कि भुगतान सुरक्षा प्रणाली- संप्रभु गारंटी, बैंक गारंटी और ऐस्क्रू अकाउंट को सौदे से एकदम अलग कर दिया गया। दासो से 'मुहब्बत और लगाव' में तो ऐसा नहीं किया गया होगा। तथ्य संकेत देते हैं कि जरूर इसके पीछे मकसद कुछ और था। कैग का कर्तव्य बनता था इन रहस्यपूर्ण पहलुओं की जांच करने और सच्चाई को सामने लाने का। लेकिन उसने अपना कर्तव्य नहीं निभाया।

द हिंदू एक-एक करके छिपाई गई सूचनाओं और तथ्यों का पर्दाफाश कर रहा है। और इस पर सरकार का जवाब क्या है? सरकार अखबार पर 'चुराए गए दस्तावेजों' का इस्तेमाल करने का आरोप लगा रही है और आपराधिक आरोप लगाने की धमकी दे रही है। सरकार ने ऐसी धमकियों के लिए ही अटार्नी जनरल को मैदान में उतारा है।

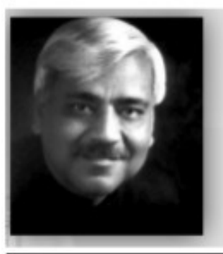
चोरी के मशहूर दस्तावेज

भारत सरकार ने 2012-14 के दौरान स्विस बैंक खाताधारकों के नाम हासिल कर लिए थे, जो कि हैक करके फ्रांस और जर्मनी को दे दिए गए थे। आयकर विभाग ने नोटिस जारी किए, आयकर की मांग निकाली और ऐसे मामलों की सुनवाई शुरू की। तब क्या आयकर विभाग चुराए गए दस्तावेजों के आधार पर कार्रवाई कर रहा था? इसी तरह 2016 में एक लॉ फर्म के कंप्यूटर से एक करोड़ पंद्रह लाख दस्तावेज लीक कर एक जर्मन अखबार- ज़िदडॉयचे ज़ायतुंग को दे दिए गए थे, जिसने ये दस्तावेज खोजी पत्रकारों के अंतरराष्ट्रीय कंसोर्टियम के साथ साझा किए थे। आयकर विभाग को खाताधारकों जो कि भारतीय या अप्रवासी भारतीय थे, के नाम जारी करने को लेकर कोई संदेह नहीं था और इन्हें नोटिस भेजे गए थे।

इसी तरह मशहूर पेंटागन पेपर भी दरअसल एक गोपनीय रिपोर्ट थी, जो वियतनाम युद्ध पर अमेरिकी रक्षा मंत्री ने तैयार कराई थी। 1971 में यह लीक हो गई थी। वाशिंगटन पोस्ट इसे छापने की तैयारी कर रहा था। अमेरिकी सरकार ने अखबारों पर मुकदमा कर दिया। अमेरिका के सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने फैसला दिया कि न्यूयार्क टाइम्स और वाशिंगटन पोस्ट को बिना किसी सेंसर या सजा के खतरे के ये दस्तावेज छापने की इजाजत दी जाए। न्यायमूर्ति ब्लैक, डगलस, ब्रेनेन जूनियर, स्टेवार्ट, वाइट और मार्शल ने अभिव्यक्ति की आजादी को राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा की अस्पष्ट चिंताओं से ऊपर रखते हुए कहा था कि लोकतांत्रिक प्रक्रिया को अक्षुण्ण रखने के लिए सूचना का प्रसार जरूरी है।

अब इस बार भारत में इतिहास अपने को दोहरा रहा है। मोदी और उनके मंत्री द हिंदू को राष्ट्र-विरोधी या इससे भी खतरनाक करार देंगे। इतना सब कुछ होने के बावजूद पाठक द हिंदू पढ़ते रहेंगे। रफाल विमान आएगा। खुली जांच होगी। सच सामने आएगा। देश में जीवन चलता रहेगा।

भीड़ हांकने का हुनर



तीरंदाज

■ अश्विनी भटनागर

एक अकेला कुत्ता सैकड़ों भेड़ों को कैसे हांक लेता है? 2014 में ब्रिटेन और स्वीडेन के वैज्ञानिकों ने इस रहस्य पर से पर्दा उठाने के लिए एक रोचक अध्ययन किया था।

वैसे तारीख की शुरुआत से ही श्वान और भेड़-बकरियां मानव जाति से जुड़े हुए हैं। कहा जाता है कि सबसे पहले कुत्ते ने आदमी से दोस्ती की थी और उसके जीवन में एक परिवार के सदस्य की भांति शमिल हो गया था। उसके बाद मनुष्य ने जब भेड़ और बकरियां पालनी शुरू की, तो पाया कि कुत्ता वफादार तो है ही, पर अच्छा चौकीदार भी है। वह अपने तरीके से चौकीदारी के साथ भेड़ों का संचालन भी बखूबी कर सकता है। भोटिया कुत्ते से लेकर बॉर्डर कुली और जर्मन शेफर्ड नस्ल के श्वान वास्तव में हांकने का काम इस तरतीब से कर लेते हैं कि सैकड़ों भेड़ों के झुंड को वे बिना चूक एक साथ रख लेते हैं और गंतव्य तक सुरक्षित पंहुचा देते हैं।

कार्य प्रभावी ढंग से जरूर होता आ रहा है, पर आज तक यह नहीं पता था कि भोटिया जैसे शीप डॉग किस तरकीब से झुंड को हांकते हैं और उसको कैसे बिखरने नहीं देते हैं। गड़ेरिए कई तरह से विशेष नस्ल के कुत्तों की प्रवृत्ति को समझाते रहे हैं, पर उनकी व्याख्या से वैज्ञानिक पूरी तरह संतुष्ट नहीं थे। उन्होंने पहरी श्वान और उसकी निगहबानी में भेड़ों के झुंड का अध्ययन करने के लिए दोनों जानवरों पर जीपीएस सिस्टम लगाया और फिर उनके कार्यकलाप को रिकॉर्ड किया।

आखेट इन नस्लों की सहज वृत्ति है, जिसके लिए वे अपनी प्राकृतिक प्रवृत्ति के अनुसार शिकार को घेरते, डराते और दौड़ाते हैं। एक प्रशिक्षित भोटिया इन प्रवृत्तियों का इस्तेमाल भेड़ों के झुंड को काबू में रखने के लिए करता है। दूसरी तरफ, भेड़ों की प्रथम प्रवृत्ति स्वरक्षण की होती है। भेड़ों का झुंड जब भौंकने की आवाज सुनता है और कुत्ते को अपनी ओर आक्रामक रूप में आता देखता है, तो भेड़ें बचने के लिए झुंड के बीच में घुसने लगती हैं। प्रत्येक भेड़ भयभीत होकर अपने और शिकारी के बीच में किसी और भेड़ को डालने का प्रयास करती है। इसके चलते झुंड और घना होता जाता है। भोटिया कुत्ता भेड़ों की इस प्रवृत्ति से प्राकृतिक रूप से वाकिफ होता है और वह बार-बार भौंक कर, आक्रामक तेवर दिखा कर, उन्हें झुंड में इकट्ठा कर लेता है।

वैज्ञानिकों ने पाया कि शीप डॉग झुंड को संग्रहित करने और उसको अपनी मर्जी से चलाने के लिए दो तरीके इस्तेमाल करता है। पहले वह झुंड के पीछे से आता है और भौंक कर तथा इधर-उधर से घेर कर भेड़ों को जमा करता है। भेड़ें अपने रक्षण के लिए एक-दूसरे से सट जाती हैं और गहरे झुंड का निर्माण अनायास ही कर देती हैं।

भोटिया इस प्रक्रिया में लगातार इस बात पर निगाह लगाए रखता है कि सफेद बालों के बीच में कहीं कोई काला रिक्त स्थान तो नहीं है। जहां भी वह सफेदी के मध्य दूसरा रंग पाता है, वह उसको हटाने के लिए आक्रामक हो जाता है और भेड़ें अपने को बचाने के लिए झुंड के मध्य की तरफ चल देती हैं।

सैकड़ों अलग-अलग बिखरी भेड़ों को भीड़ में तब्दील करने के बाद, भोटिया उनको हांकना शुरू करता है। वह झुंड को जिस दिशा में हांकना चाहता है, उसकी विपरीत दिशा से भौंकना और दौड़ना शुरू कर देता है। एक तरफ से हो रहे आक्रमण से बचने के लिए भेड़ें दूसरी, और भोटिया द्वारा चाही, दिशा में मुड़ जाती हैं। इस तरह आशंकित कर के भोटिया भेड़ों को बड़ा झुंड बनाने के लिए मजबूर कर देता है और उनको बाड़े तक हांक ले जाता है।

वैज्ञानिकों ने जीपीएस से प्राप्त डाटा को जब जमा किया, तो पाया कि उससे वे एक वास्तविक गणितीय मॉडल बना सकते हैं। यह मॉडल वे सारे नियम बताता है, जोकि झुंड बनाने और उसको चलने के लिए कुत्ता और भेड़ प्राकृतिक रूप से उपयोग करते हैं।

> ग्रीक दार्शनिक सुकरात का कहना था कि सार्वजनिक जीवन में सफल होने के लिए बहुत जरूरी है कि नायक उत्तेजित गतिविधि में लिप्त रहे और जनता को हांकने के लिए आक्रामक तेवर बनाए रहे। राजनीति परिभाषित रूप में झुंड बनाने की प्रक्रिया है और झुंड तभी बनेगा जब लोग भयभीत हों।

वास्तव में स्वरक्षण वृत्ति का उपयोग करके हम किसी भी बिखरे हुए समुदाय को झुंड या भीड़ में तब्दील कर सकते हैं। भोटिया कुत्ता भौंक कर और दौड़ा कर भेड़ों को झुंड बनाने के लिए मजबूर करता है। दूसरे शब्दों में, शोर और उसके साथ भय उत्पन्न करने वाली उत्तेजित गतिविधि द्वारा नागरिक जीवन में भी भेड़चाल उत्पन्न की जा सकती है।

वैज्ञानिकों का दावा है कि श्वान-भेड़ की प्रवृत्ति पर बना मॉडल मनुष्य काज के लिए बेहद उपयोगी है, खासकर उन परिस्थितियों में जहां लोगों को किसी आपदा से बचाने के लिए झुंड में आनन-फानन तब्दील करना जरूरी हो, जैसे इमारत में लगी आग से बचने के लिए उन्हें जमा कर के निश्चित दिशा में ले जाने के लिए आदि। वे ऐसा रोबोट भी बनाने की फिराक में हैं, जो मनुष्यों का पशुचारण सुचारु रूप से कर सके।

ग्रीक दार्शनिक सुकरात ने शायद वैज्ञानिकों से पहले ही कुत्ता-भेड़ प्रवृत्ति को मनुष्य मानस में भांप लिया था। उनका कहना था कि सार्वजनिक जीवन में सफल होने के लिए यह बहुत जरूरी है कि नायक उत्तेजित गतिविधि में लिप्त रहे और जनता को हांकने के लिए आक्रामक तेवर बनाए रहे। राजनीति परिभाषित रूप में झुंड बनाने की प्रक्रिया है और झुंड तभी बनेगा जब लोग भयभीत हों। ओजस्वी भाषणों का इस भय को उत्पन्न करने और उसका पोषण करने में बड़ा महत्त्व है। सब शोर को ही सुनते हैं और उसी के अनुसार क्रिया करते हैं। जितना शोर होगा, उतना झुंड बनेगा और जैसे जैसे शोर बढ़ता जाएगा, झुंड भी बढ़ता जाएगा।

ग्रीक दार्शनिक का कहना था कि नागरिक असल में भेड़-बकरी होते हैं, जिनकी प्रवृत्ति जल्दी सहम जाने की होती है। मूलतः उन्हें हांके जाने से कोई परहेज नहीं होता है, क्योंकि उनमें विवेकशीलता लगभग नगण्य होती है। किसी प्रकार का भी खतरा, चाहे वे कितने भी काल्पनिक क्यों न हों, उन्हें झुंड बनाने और उसमें अधिक से अधिक धंसने के लिए मजबूर कर देता है। सफल नायक इसीलिए हमेशा खतरा दिखाता रखता है और भेड़ों को बाड़े में हांक देता है।

नफरत की सियासत

वक़्त की नब्ज़

■ तवलीन सिंह

ऐसा लगने लगा है जैसे एअर स्ट्राइक के बाद हमारे विपक्ष के सारे नेता बौखला से गए हैं, इतना कि अपनी सुधबुध खो बैठे हैं। या फिर, जैसा नरेंद्र मोदी खुद कह रहे हैं, उनको मोदी से नफरत इतनी ज्यादा है कि देख नहीं पा रहे हैं कि इस नफरत की भावना को वे देश के लिए भी दिखाने लगे हैं। वरना क्या कारण है कि मोदी को नीचा दिखाने के मारे उन्होंने पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री के गुण इतनी जोर-जोर से गाए हैं कि पाकिस्तान में कुछ लोगों ने मुहिम शुरू की है इमरान खान को नोबेल शांति पुरस्कार दिलवाने की। ऐसी बातें सुन कर इमरान खान खुद शर्मिंदा हुए और शर्माते हुए कहा कि वे अपने आप को इतने बड़े पुरस्कार के हकदार नहीं समझते हैं। 'यह पुरस्कार मिलना चाहिए उनको जो कश्मीर में शांति लाने का काम करते हैं।'

चर्चा शुरू हुई भी है अगर, तो सिर्फ इसलिए कि भारत में विपक्ष के आला राजनेताओं ने एक स्वर में कहा है एअर स्ट्राइक के बाद कि उनको विश्वास नहीं है कि बालाकोट में उस जिहादी मुख्यालय पर बम गिरे हैं, जहां वायुसेनाध्यक्ष कहते हैं कि हमारे लड़ाकू विमान गिरा कर आए थे। सबूत मांगे हैं अपने प्रधानमंत्री से बार-बार। और पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री की तारीफ करते नहीं थके हैं, जबसे उन्होंने हमारे पायलट विंग कमांडर अभिनंदन वर्तमान को सही सलामत वापस देश भेजा है।

मैंने जब ट्वीट करके पूछा कि ऐसा क्यों है कि हमारे विपक्ष के नेता पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री की बातों पर भरोसा करते हैं और हमारे प्रधानमंत्री पर नहीं, तो ट्रोल सेना पीछे पड़ गई मेरे, यह कहते हुए कि हमारे प्रधानमंत्री ने पिछले चार वर्षों में इतने झूठ बोले हैं कि उन पर विश्वास करना मुश्किल हो गया है। सो, विश्वास उस प्रधानमंत्री पर करना आसान है क्या, जो अभी तक मानने को तैयार नहीं है कि उसके देश की सरजमीं से जिहादी हमले हो रहे हैं भारत पर? पाकिस्तान के पूर्व सेनाध्यक्ष परवेज मुशर्रफ ने खुद स्वीकार किया है कि पाकिस्तानी सेना ने जैश-ए-मोहम्मद को पैदा किया था और इस संस्था की सारी गतिविधियां पाकिस्तान से होती हैं, लेकिन अब उनको रोक देना चाहिए, क्योंकि इस संस्था ने उनको ही जान से मारने की दो बार कोशिश की है।

और हमारे विपक्ष के नेता हैं, जो अब भी मोदी से सवाल करते फिर रहे हैं, न कि पाकिस्तान के नेताओं से। इतनी शंका जताई है इन्होंने पुलवामा और बालाकोट को लेकर कि मेरे एक पाकिस्तानी दोस्त ने मुझसे पिछले हफ्ते पूछा कि क्या यह बात सही है कि मोदी ने पुलवामा में आत्मघाती हमला खुद करवाया चुनाव जीतने के लिए। मैंने अपने इस दोस्त को खूब समझाने की कोशिश की कि भारत एक लोकतांत्रिक देश है, जहां ऐसी बात हुई होती, तो उसको छिपाना बहुत मुश्किल है। कोई भी प्रधानमंत्री अपने जवानों को इस घिनौने तरीके से नहीं मार सकता है।

मेरी बातें सुनने के बाद दोस्त ने कहा, 'भई, मैं आपके टीवी चैनल देखता हूं और मैंने देखा है कि आप ही के मीडिया के लोग और आपके सियासतदान शंका जाता रहे हैं। बल्कि इतने लोगों को आपकी वायुसेना की कार्रवाई पर शक होने लगा है कि विदेशी मीडिया में भी इमरान खान को अमनपरस्त बताया जा रहा है और मोदी को युद्धपरस्त।' यह सच है और काफी हद तक इसलिए कि भारत के ही पत्रकारों ने लंदन और न्यू यॉर्क के बड़े अखबारों में लिखा है मोदी के खिलाफ।

> जैसे जैसे चुनाव पास आ रहा है, वैसे वैसे दिखने लगा है कि इस महागठबंधन के पास एक ही चीज है और वह है मोदी से नफरत। यही ईंधन है, जिस पर यह महागठबंधन चल रहा है, यही गोंद हैं जिससे इसको जोड़ा गया है।

रही बात अपने विपक्ष के राजनेताओं की, तो उनको यह सुझाव देना जरूरी हो गया है कि अगर वास्तव में चुनाव जितवाना चाहते हैं अपने महागठबंधन को, तो शायद उनको मोदी को नीचा दिखाना बंद करना पड़ेगा। मोदी की छवि वैसे भी काफी अच्छी थी भारत के आम आदमी की नजरों में, लेकिन एअर स्ट्राइक के बाद और भी अच्छी हो गई है। वह इसलिए कि आम भारतीय तंग आ गया था बार-बार पाकिस्तान से मार खाकर। इतने जिहादी हमले किए गए हैं भारत में, जिसमें पाकिस्तान का हाथ साफ दिखा है, लेकिन आज तक हमारे किसी भी प्रधानमंत्री ने लौट कर वार करने की हिम्मत नहीं दिखाई है। सो, करोड़ों भारतीयों का दिल खुश हुआ था, जब हमारी वायुसेना ने एअर स्ट्राइक की थी सीमा पार।

इस स्ट्राइक के बाद पाकिस्तान से ज्यादा हमारे विपक्ष के नेता बौखलाए हुए दिखे। पहले तो राहुल गांधी ने वायुसेना की तारीफ की, लेकिन ऐसे की जैसे सारा श्रेय उन्हीं को देने की कोशिश कर रहे हों। क्या जानते नहीं हैं कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष कि लोकतांत्रिक देशों में ऐसे हमले तब होते हैं जब प्रधानमंत्री की इजाजत हो? क्या जानते नहीं हैं कि वायुसेना किसी भी हाल में बिना इजाजत के दुश्मन देश पर हमला नहीं कर सकती? बौखलाहट सिर्फ कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष में नहीं दिखी। पश्चिम बंगाल की मुख्यमंत्री और भी ज्यादा बौखलाई हुई दिखीं। अपने खास अंदाज में उन्होंने भाषण दिया पिछले हफ्ते, जिसमें कहा कि उनका पूरा समर्थन वायुसेना को है, लेकिन 'मोदी बाबू' को नहीं। इसका मतलब क्या हुआ? यही कि ममता दीदी भी समझी नहीं हैं कि मोदी की इजाजत के बिना वायुसेना का एक भी लड़ाकू विमान उड़ान नहीं भर सकता है?

जैसे जैसे चुनाव पास आ रहा है, वैसे वैसे दिखने लगा है कि इस महागठबंधन के पास एक ही चीज है और वह है मोदी से नफरत। यही ईंधन है, जिस पर यह महागठबंधन चल रहा है, यही गोंद हैं जिससे इसको जोड़ा गया है। सवाल यह है कि इसके आगे उनके पास अगर न नीतियां हैं न विचारधारा, तो इनको जिताएगा कौन? बहुत खोखला लगने लगा है यह महागठबंधन।

शौर्यकथा और चौर्यकथा

बाखबर

■ सुधीश पचौरी

कानून का डर अच्छा है... ये डर अच्छा है... आज राफेल की कमी महसूस होती है... सेना की आलोचना करने वाले देश को कमजोर कर रहे हैं...

पराक्रमी भारत के लिए भारत माता की जय! विजयी भारत के लिए भारत माता की जय! वीर जवानों के लिए भारत माता की जय!

सेना ने दो सौ पचास मारे!

सरकार ने कोई आंकड़ा नहीं दिया!

सेना टारगेट हिट किया करती है। मारे गयों की गिनती नहीं करती!

एक बड़ा भाजपा नेता : तीन सौ मारे!

एक और भाजपा नेता : चार सौ मारे!

एक कांग्रेस नेता : लाशें दिखाओ कि कितने मारे?

शौर्यगाथा में जोश होता है, लेकिन अधिक जोश में होश कहां? जोश-जोश में किसी ने ढाई सौ मारे, किसी ने तीन सौ मारे, किसी ने साढ़े तीन सौ मारे, तो एक ने पूरे चार सौ मारे! इस तरह कुल मिलाकर तेरह सौ तो मारे ही!

इसे कहते हैं 'एकोसद्विप्रा बहुधा वदंति' यानी सत्य 'एक' होता है, पंडितजन अलग-अलग तरीके से बांचते हैं। ये बांचने की बात है मित्रो! फिर 'जाकी रही भावना जैसी!'

लेकिन दुष्ट विपक्ष को चैन कहां? कहता है : सबूत दो! सबूत दो!

एक परम राष्ट्रप्रेमी चैनल गरजा : विपक्ष के नेता तो पाकिस्तान के मीडिया के 'पोस्टर बॉय' हैं! ज्यादातर चैनल गरजते रहे कि सेना की बात गलत और पाक की बात सही! पाकिस्तान के एजेंट हैं ऐसे लोग!

एक चैनल पर दुर्दमनीय सिद्धू बोलते दिखे : हवाई हमलों के जरिए पाकिस्तान के आतंकी मारे कि सिर्फ कुछ पेड़ उड़ाए?

एक देशभक्त बोला : खाते यहां की हैं, गाते पाक की हैं! धिक्कार है!

कई अंग्रेजी चैनलों ने मोटे-मोटे रोमन अक्षरों में लाइनें लगाईं :

'घुस के मारा'! 'घर में घुस के मारा'!

इतने में शिवसेना बोली कि पब्लिक प्रमाण मांग रही है, तो देते क्यों नहीं?

सर जी, ये शिवसेना दोस्त है कि दुश्मन? लगता है कि शिवसेना वाले अपनी 'सेना' का भी भरोसा नहीं करते? हर विपक्षी सबूत मांग रहा है। सिब्बल मांग रहे हैं। ममता मांग रही हैं। सबूत बड़ा है कि देश? कितने देशद्रोही लोग हैं ये?

दिग्विजय जी ने फिर ललकारा कि आतंकी हमला एक 'दुर्घटना' थी! इसके बाद कुछ चैनलों में ज्ञानीजनों के बीच 'घटना' 'दुर्घटना' और 'हमले' के बीच बड़े ही 'तत्त्वमीमांसापरक' विचार चले। लेकिन इस बीच 'दुर्घटना' शब्द एक भाजपा नेता को इतना पसंद आया कि उसने भी पुलवामा को 'दुर्घटना' कह दिया! हाय हाय! जोश में फिर होश खो दिए भाई जी ने! इसे देख दिग्विजय ने फौरन चिपकाया : अब क्या कहना है भाजपा का?

सबूत फिर भी मांगे जाते रहे! एक एंकर ने कहा कि अमेरिका ने लादेन को मारा तो वीडियो दिया। इजराइल ने फिलस्तीनों को मारा तो वीडियो दिखाया! आप भी वीडियो दिखा दें। सारी बहस खत्म!

यह क्या बात हुई? हम क्यों दें सबूत? हम ही हैं सबूत! जब आज तक नहीं दिए किसी बात के सबूत, तो अब क्यों दें सबूत? क्या देशद्रोहियों को दें सबूत? एक मंत्री जी ने तंज कसा : बालाकोट जाकर देखें सबूत! दूसरे मंत्री जी बोले : पाक जाकर देख आएं सबूत!

एक चैनल पर एक ज्ञानीजन रोने लगा कि जरा-सा कुछ पूछो तो पाकिस्तानी कह देते हैं! अरे भैये! यही तो है, देशभक्ति का धोबीपाट!

अंत में कुछ चैनल बालाकोट के सेटेलाइट फुटेज खोज ही लाए और बुधवार को दिन भर बजाते रहे कि एनटीआरओ ने बताया है कि बालाकोट के टारगेट में तीन सौ मोबाइल सक्रिय थे, यानी तीन सौ आतंकी सक्रिय थे। सेटेलाइट बताती है : ये हमले से पहले वाली बिल्डिंग है और ये हमले के बाद वाली है। बाद वाली बिल्डिंग की छत में छेद ही छेद दिखते हैं। ये हमारे बमों ने किए हैं। रायटर झूठ कहता है कि कुछ नहीं हुआ! अरे, जब हम 'घर में घुस कर मारते हैं' तो ऐसे ही मारते हैं।

> बुधवार की सुबह इस शौर्यगाथा पर अचानक गाज गिरी! खबर आई कि राफेल की फाइल चोरी हो गई है और जो पेपर 'रिव्यू पिटीशन' में दाखिल किए गए हैं, उन पर विचार नहीं होना चाहिए!

लेकिन बुधवार की सुबह इस शौर्यगाथा पर अचानक गाज गिरी! खबर आई कि राफेल की फाइल चोरी हो गई है और जो पेपर 'रिव्यू पिटीशन' में दाखिल किए गए हैं, उन पर विचार नहीं होना चाहिए!

कई चैनलों पर हिंदू के एन. राम ने कहा कि हमने न कोई जासूसी की, न पेमेंट किया। राफेल दस्तावेज जनहित में छापे। संविधान की धारा उन्नीस और आरटीआई कानून सुरक्षा देते हैं... 'आफिशियल सीक्रेट्स एक्ट' कोलोनियल समय का, 1923 का है... मैं डरता नहीं!

ज्यादातर एंकर चकित-विस्मित कि इतनी संगीन चोरी की खबर पहले क्यों नहीं दी गई?

राहुल ने प्रेस कान्फ्रेंस कर तुरंत टीप जड़ी : ये गायब... वो गायब... अब राफेल की फाइल गायब! इसकी जांच होनी चाहिए!

जाने किस दुष्ट की नजर लगी कि एक सुंदर 'शौर्यकथा' की जगह अचानक एक 'चौर्यकथा' छा गई और कहानी फिर निगोड़े राफेल पर आ टिकी!

फिर भी, अपनी धरती वीरों से खाली नहीं हुई। कबीरनगर की मीटिंग में एक भाजपा सांसद और एक एमएलए ने आपस में ऐसी 'जूतालीला' की कि उसे देख लोग कुछ देर के लिए बालाकोट की वीरता भूल गए!

सीन देख एक चैनल ने यह लाइन जड़ी : 'मेरा बूट सबसे मजबूत'!

The Tribune

ESTABLISHED IN 1881

Same old Congress story

Grand Old Party remains emaciated in UP

THE Congress has stuck to the tried-and-tested path by fielding UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and party president Rahul Gandhi from their pocket boroughs — Rae Bareli and Amethi, respectively. For the record, these were the only two seats the Grand Old Party had won in the 2014 parliamentary elections from the key state of Uttar Pradesh, which sends the most number of MPs (80) to the Lok Sabha.

Over the past three decades, the Congress has been reduced to an also-ran in UP, having remained out of power since 1989. A major reason for the party's consistently poor show has been the abject failure to look beyond the Gandhi family and nurture leaders from the grassroots. Efforts to strengthen the state cadre have left much to be desired. The party no longer has stalwarts of the stature of Chaudhary Charan Singh, whose legacy continues to hold sway over the masses. Charan Singh had quit the party in 1967 and gone on to become the first non-Congress CM of the state. His successor ND Tiwari and CB Gupta, both three-time Chief Ministers, were merely holding the fort for the high command, without nurturing the organisation or pursuing politics of empowerment.

The *gathbandhan* between the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party forced the Congress to pitchfork Priyanka Gandhi Vadra into the political arena in a bid to lift the morale of party workers. Whether she will contest or not — and if yes, from where — is open to relentless speculation. The party has announced nine other names in its first UP list, including former Union ministers Salman Khurshid, Jitin Prasada and RPN Singh, conveying its intention of going solo if its prospective allies continue to sideline it. Akhilesh Yadav and Mayawati have been reluctant to cede ground to the Congress beyond Rae Bareli and Amethi. However, despite all the posturing, Rahul and Co are clutching at straws in the face of formidable odds, even as the SP-BSP duo has managed to get Ajit Singh's Rashtriya Lok Dal on board. In the absence of strong state-level leaders, the chances of a Congress turnaround in UP appear remote.

Eschewing purdah

Not yet curtains for the antediluvian custom

SO, the women of Panjkosi village in Abohar, Punjab, on the border with Rajasthan, came out of the purdah in public in May last year. Emboldened by the cajoling of their Sub-Divisional Magistrate, a woman herself, they eschewed the veil to face the camera. That done, they coyly went back to being behind the *ghunghat,* meekly submitting to the weight of the centuries-old tradition and custom. Perhaps, accustomed to the practice all their lives, they feel safe in this net of social sanction. The only other time they lifted their veil in front of strangers in 2018 was while casting their vote during the panchayat elections seven months later. Hopefully, they will gather courage to shun the screen of seclusion totally.

Guiding them towards a more participatory and inclusive existence in society is the beacon of light lit by the villagers themselves: they have started sending their girls to schools and colleges, with some of them even equipped to venture out and work. Education is the only true path towards the uplift of women in India, as the progressive Maharani Gayatri Devi practised and propagated. When she eschewed the all-pervading purdah in the 1940s, her husband, Maharaja Sawai Man Singh, was keen that the other women, too, come out of the veil. That's when the queen quipped: give me a school and within 10 years, the purdah would be pierced. And, Rajasthan's first all-girls' school, Maharani Gayatri Devi School in Jaipur, has been liberating women from that and many more oppressive and patriarchal practices since then.

But sadly, many girls remain repressed and tied down, denied wind under their wings to fly and achieve their full potential. A Social Attitude Research, India (SARI) survey in 2016 found that a whopping 98 per cent young women in rural Rajasthan, 90 per cent in urban Rajasthan, 91 per cent in rural Uttar Pradesh and 90 per cent in urban Uttar Pradesh practise the veil in varying degrees of prudishness. Reinforcing women's unequal position, it shows that it is not yet curtains for the prejudices against them.

Modi doing an Indira

Striving for edge, he's turning the narrative around himself, much like the fiery leader

RANAJOY SEN

POLITICAL COMMENTATOR

OPINION MATTERS: Election victory would be determined by the extent to which a leader can successfully convey to the people about being the better option.

WHILE campaigning in Patna, Prime Minister Narendra Modi dwelt upon the menace of terrorism. A chain of events, from the Pulwama attack, the Indian Air Force strike on Pakistani terror camps, attempts of Pakistani retaliation, capture and subsequent release of an IAF Wing Commander, to a successful turning of an international spotlight upon Pakistan-sponsored terrorism by India, a resolute and uncompromising response to terrorism is bearing heavily in the Indian public consciousness. The BJP-led NDA dispensation at the Centre wants credit and adherence for it.

From the rostrum at Patna's Gandhi Maidan, Modi stated that his political opponents spoke of removing him from power. But, he is keen to provide leadership that would root out the scourge of terrorism from the country, thereby removing an obstacle from the path toward greater socio-economic amelioration. By doing so, it seems that Modi is trying to turn the focus of the electoral narrative around himself, to the disadvantage of his opponents. The method reflects an uncanny resemblance to the principal narration of another parliamentary election that took place nearly five decades ago.

During the 1971 parliamentary elections, the then PM Indira Gandhi campaigned arduously. The preceding two years witnessed critical watersheds in the trajectory of Indian politics. It played out in the form of Indira Gandhi's struggle for complete supremacy in the Congress against a handful of leaders, who controlled the party. To achieve it, she had, on some pretext, initially refused to support the party's official candidate for the post of India's President. Thereafter, the failure to paper over differences between the party bosses and herself led to a split in November 1969. Consequently, continued administering of a minority government with the support of other parties was irksome to Indira Gandhi.

> Modi's persistence on the subject of national security is keenly akin to Indira's utterances of wanting to remove poverty in 1971. The campaign style, too, is similar.

In December 1970, mid-term parliamentary elections were announced for March 1971. Just before that, she had undertaken what was then dubbed radical, progressive and people-oriented measures: nationalisation of several banks, certain insurance companies, and abolition of privy purses. Just before campaigning begun, a 'grand alliance' was formed against Indira Gandhi. It coined the slogan 'Indira Hatao'. She came up with a resounding electoral battle cry of 'Garibi Hatao'.

Its appeal was instant and electric. The overwhelming majority of the poor, which then constituted an even greater share of the electorate than it is now, was overwhelmed with the belief that they had at last found their redeemer. At almost every election meeting, Indira Gandhi stated that while her opponents wanted to remove her from power, she was concerned about removing poverty from the country. Everywhere, people shouted approval to her. She drew most attention to herself during that election. When the results were declared, Indira's Congress had won a sensational victory. Is Modi trying to emulate that campaign approach?

Modi and other leaders of the BJP are inveterately opposed to and unremittingly critical of the Nehru-Gandhi family. But, the principal import of his speech at Patna indicates that despite explicit articulations, he might have unspoken admiration for some facets of Indira Gandhi's political style, personality and leadership. His manner of presentation on the subject of national security today sounds keenly akin to that of her utterances of wanting to remove poverty in 1971. Would it provide an electoral edge to the BJP? The response, at this stage, would be an incomplete affirmative.

Bold acts against terrorism resonate well with the people. But, there are other issues of governance, political approach and economic development, which would get aggregated with it. The Modi government has often been accused of political high-handedness. Issues of social cohesiveness and religious arguments that require a more sensitive approach have allegedly been given more short shrift than otherwise. Furthermore, as several recent Assembly election defeats of the BJP bear out, the party possibly requires administering correctives within than prolonging its alleged hubris and contemptuous approach toward the Opposition.

On the economic front, appropriate reforms and an emphasis on infrastructure building has been given an earnest heed. But, the just-released data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy indicates a relative increase in unemployment compared to the previous year. Nevertheless, there has also been a relative decline in the number of job seekers. Even then, however, weak prices in the farm sector, attendant farmer woes, and a prevailing low rate of job growth could cast a negative fallout on the electoral prospects of the BJP and its allies.

The Congress and regional parties are chastising the BJP for maladministration and dissatisfactory economic policies. They accuse the BJP of politicising the laudable acts of the country's armed forces. Nevertheless, the key to victory for a political party in the approaching elections would be largely determined by the extent to which its unquestioned political leader can successfully convey to the people about being the better option. Something that Indira Gandhi so successfully gave effect to in the beginning of 1971.

Curd-rice or Pandit Nehru?

JS RAGHAVAN

ONE of the essential victuals in the school bag in those days was a loaded, circular, stainless-steel tiffin box to be in readiness to appease hunger pangs at lunchtime. In the one I carried, there would invariably be curd-rice, with nothing greater and inviting than a lowly, lamented slice of sour, tangy, oily lemon pickle as a side dish.

On that day, as I trudged wearily to the school, I checked the lunchbox involuntarily. The lid was intact and the contents had not leaked or spilt out, soiling the books.

The Board High School, which was my seat of learning, was spartan, offering no frills. Not even a hall for the students to take lunch. We had to push off to the garden at the back of the school, where a leafy canopy of trees, whose botanical names baffled me, provided us with shade and shelter. Before I squatted, I looked sharply to see if there were ants that delighted in foraying into my anatomy, through the half-trousers, to bite at will wherever and whenever they pleased. As abundant caution, I also looked up to see if there was any congregation of crows who would choose to 'bless' me while I was eating.

Soon, I opened the lunchbox listlessly. The curd-rice was there but not in all its creamy colloidal glory at the time of packing. It was like lumpy clay in a metallic mould. The slice of lime pickle that resembled a bright cherry atop a scoop of ice cream had sunk deep, leaving a mini oily spill as evidence.

To add water to loosen the coagulated mass was the work of a moment. Before I could take my first morsel, with a need-based liking, there was a commotion. Many boys who were lunching at a distance were hurrying out. The reason was a news flash that Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru would be passing through the highway abutting the school, any moment. The scramble was to have a look at him, the Muhammad having come to the mountain.

I was on the horns of a dilemma. Should I abort my lunch, suppressing my wolfish hunger, and join the line-up for the PM? Or finish the bland but habituated bill of fare? Illogically, the scale tilted in favour of getting over with the luncheon monotony that was permanent than to crave for a transient excitement. Eventually, when I rushed towards the highway, the boys were returning. Pandit Nehru had gone. I could have postponed, not sacrificed, my lowly lunch for the man who had sacrificed a lot for the nation.

Detested at the foul-up in priorities, I looked at the lunchbox I had carried absentmindedly. Though empty, it felt heavy. But not as heavy as my heart.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Leaders who seek power and control end up losing both. — **Henry Cloud**

ON THIS DAY...100 YEARS AGO

The Tribune.

LAHORE, SUNDAY, MARCH 9, 1919

A Betrayal of Trust.

IT is with shame the ratepayers of the premier municipality of the Province learn how at the special meeting of the Lahore Municipal Commissioners betrayed the sacred trust reposed in them by the ratepayers by first voting that a non-official should not be elected President and then electing the Deputy Commissioner of Lahore ex-officio President in place of Mr. H.P. Tollinton who was President by name. In vain did Mr. Duni Chand point out the ludicrousness of electing the Deputy Commissioner ex-officio to rule over when they did not know whom the Government would nominate to the office of Deputy commissioner as Mr. Tollinton's successor, and plead hard that they might at least postpone a decision till the announcement on the point had been made when they would be in a position to arrive at a decision on the merits. In vain did Mr. Ganpat Rai urge that the interests of Lahore and the welfare of the ratepayers should override all other considerations.

The Fifth Primary Class.

IN reply to another question by the same Hon. Member, the Hon. Mr. Rohey said:-"Rural schools with effect from April 1, will consist of either four or six classes; the ordinary small village school consisting of four classes, schools at large centres containing six." This shows that the apprehension which was entertained by a large section of the public, when the Primary Education Bill was passed, that one effect of it would be not only to make new primary schools consist of four instead of five classes, but to abolish the fifth class even in existing schools, was only too well founded.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mediation on Ayodhya

Refer to 'SC refers Ayodhya dispute to mediation' (March 8); with due regard to the wisdom of the learned Supreme Court judges, this order should have been postponed or deferred till the completion of the election process. Whatever be the outcome of this mediation and the occurrence of events in the aftermath, ultimately, it is going to influence the electorate. It will hinder the principle of free and fair elections. This is the single largest emotive issue which will be used by the political class and other vested groups to further their interests. Though the SC has asked for in-camera proceedings and banned media reporting of this mediation, who will stop propagandists at poll rallies and spewing of venom on social media?

AVTAR SINGH, CANADA

Temple dispute

The Supreme Court's suggestion on an amicable out-of-court settlement to the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute in Ayodhya two years ago did not take off as all sides involved said they wanted the court to take a call. The SC's order on Friday to constitute in-camera mediation in the Ayodhya case as a roadmap to solve the dispute by a three-member panel seems an honest effort. Mediation can show the path to the shared destiny of Hindus and Muslims.

SS PAUL, NADIA

Population exchange

Refer to 'The Pakistan albatross' (March 4); while making a demand for Pakistan as a homeland for the entire Muslim population of India, Jinnah was clear in his concept of Pakistan. In his statement on April 30, 1947, he said: 'If Hindu minority in Pakistan wishes to emigrate and go to their homeland of Hindustan, they will be at liberty to do so, and vice versa those Muslims who wish to emigrate from Hindustan can do so and go to Pakistan. Sooner or later the exchange of population will have to take place and the Constituent Assemblies of Pakistan and Hindustan can take up the matter and subsequently the respective governments can effectively carry out the exchange.' Gandhi, Nehru and other Congress leaders did not accept this sane advice. Ambedkar had also suggested in his book *Pakistan or the Partition of India* that it was in the interest of Hindus to accept the creation of Pakistan with complete exchange of Population. If this had been done, we would not have faced Islamic terrorism.

ANAND PRAKASH, PANCHKULA

Poorly handled

Unfortunately, both ruling party and the Opposition have landed the IAF's brave act into a quagmire ('Feeding the falsehoods'; March 8). Neither the Opposition nor the ruling party can come out clean of this mess. Our forces in a press conference sagaciously did not give the number of casualties. The Opposition has done great disservice by seeking verification of casualty figures. The loss of a MiG-21 is a painful reminder of the inefficiency of our successive governments who failed to provide new combat planes to the IAF since the past 15 years. I am reminded of Rahat Indori's lines: '*Sarhad pe tanav hai, dekho chunav hai kya?*'

ARUN HASTIR, GURDASPUR

Check stray dogs

Refer to the editorial 'A dogged problem' (March 5); in our neighbourhood eight persons were recently hospitalised due to dog bites in a single day. Children are forced to stay home and are scared of going to the playground. Time and again, the problem was taken up with the authorities concerned, but there is no relief in sight. Students going to school on bicycles are easy target. No sterilisation programme has been carried out in recent months. Periodic checks of streets for stray dogs should be undertaken. A trauma centre should be set up in the government dispensary.

ANSH VASHISHT, ZIRAKPUR

Haven't got it right

The education system has been has changed many times, but still it is not according to our social needs. The reason is that the heads of educational committees are neither education expert nor know the ground realities. Art and psychology practical syllabus of Class XII is for 60 and 30 marks, respectively. Students have to make 70 sketches and lengthy projects of psychology. They also have to prepare four other subjects. Psychology needs computer prints, some in colour. All students don't have computers and printers. They have to go to the market and this entails expenses. Does it mean that poor students should not opt for these subjects? Social studies of Class X consists of history, geography, political science, economics and one other paper. The same is with science, where it is physics, chemistry, biology and another subject. Students have to go through these books at least once before exam. Is this possible for a 14-15 year old child? It also becomes difficult for teachers to set papers for such a lengthy syllabus.

SUKHWANT BHULLAR, CHANDIGARH

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**

After Balakot, LoC no longer sacrosanct

MAJ GEN ASHOK MEHTA (RETD)
FORMER GOC, IPKF, SRI LANKA

NOW that the clouds of war have lifted after Operation Balakot and de-escalation has commenced, the tactical and strategic actions bear scrutiny for drawing some lessons.

The February 26-27 air skirmish was the briefest in the history of India-Pakistan conflicts and among any inter-State conflicts. There have been crises — in 1984 and 1986 — about likely Indian attacks on Pakistan nuclear facilities; 1987 Operation Brasstacks; 1990 Kashmir standoff; 1993 Mumbai blasts; 1998 nuclear tests; 1999 Kargil conflict; 2001 Parliament attack; and 2008 Mumbai terror attacks. In each of these cases, US intervention was sharp and swift in preventing the crises from turning into a major conflict.

It was the first time one nuclear power conducted an air strike against another. This was the first conflict in which the US did not prevent one side (India) from militarising the crisis. Three days before the air strike, President Donald Trump had said: "India is planning something big…and it's a bad situation." The US, in a sense, let India release its pent-up anger and Pakistan be warned to act against terrorism emanating from its soil.

Although India's response was retribution for the Pulwama attack, it was the first time India targeted the source of terrorism and not just the launch pads, like in the 2016 surgical strikes. India carried out a classic counter-terrorism air strike against an elaborate training centre of the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) at Jaba, Balakot. It was described as a "preemptive, non-military action in self-defence based on actionable intelligence…" This was ludicrous use of military terminology to distinguish Pakistani terrorists (strategic assets) from their owners, the military. India made this distinction during the ground surgical strikes, too, emphasising that the targets struck were terrorist launch pads, not Pakistan military posts.

The contours of the aerial strike and Pakistani reprisals were narrated by the Foreign Secretary, the Air Force, the tri-service briefing and the Chief of Air Staff, in that order. India's retribution was moved one step up the escalation ladder to the air strike.

Surprise and deception were secured by a combination of steps. The Prime Minister repeatedly kept saying that retribution had been left to the Army; yet, no mobilisation of troops or curtailment of leave of the armed forces was ordered. The Prime Minister announced in his *Mann ki Baat* programme that "retributive action was accomplished within 100 hours of the Pulwama attack." The IAF, on the night of the attack, implemented deception measures like activating air fields deep in the south, using decoys, all to confuse the enemy that Bahawalpur, not Balakot, was the target. Pakistan's Defence Minister admitted that their air force could not react as it was 'very dark' and the Director General, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), noted that combat air patrols could not be in the air 24x7.

ALACRITY: Pakistan was stunningly prompt in releasing Wg Cdr Abhinandan Varthaman.

> Although India's response was retribution for the Pulwama attack, it was the first time the country targeted the source of terrorism and not just the launch pads, which was done during the 2016 surgical strikes.

To avenge the violation of Pakistan's sovereignty by India, the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) retaliated the very next day across the LoC in the Poonch sector. Their reaction was to resuscitate the image of the Pakistan military that had been tarnished by the Balakot raid, further burnishing their sense of humiliation inflicted in 1971. The PAF's intrusions resulted in dogfights, one between an F-16 and a MiG-21 Bison flown by Wg Cdr Abhinandan Varthaman, who brought down the F-16 but was hit himself by an AMRAAM missile, forcing him to eject and be captured.

The decision by Pakistan to release Abhinandan as a peace gesture was taken with stunning dispatch, making his 60-hour captivity the briefest in the history of captured pilots. Once again, Trump played a pivotal role when he said: "There will be decent news soon."

The conflict narrative transfixed on aerial combat and escalation swung dramatically towards the suspense-filled release of Abhinandan, becoming the turning point in hostilities; and for India, the inflection point: to escalate or exit with honour. Retribution had been achieved with total success, it was claimed. The decision not to escalate militarily but let other components of national power take over in keeping pressure on Pakistan was wise and prevailed. For the ruling party in India, the bigger battle was the upcoming elections. This distracted the government from turning the knife.

The signal to Pakistan is loud and clear: the LoC is no longer sacrosanct. A new red line has been defined. India will conduct counter-terrorism operations against terrorist bases on Pakistani soil if mass casualty attacks are carried out in India and are sourced from Pakistan. The cover of impunity has been lifted.

India's defence and national security policy is based on three pillars: non-use of force (only with UN Blue Helmets); no military alliances; and strategic restraint. The last has been jettisoned, replaced with 'strategic resolve'.

The euphoria and enthusiasm over the Balakot success has introduced into the India-Pakistan military balance some excitement with new metaphors like game-changer, paradigm shift, calling Pakistan's nuclear bluff, lowering the nuclear threshold, new normal, etc. We need not be flippant or hasty in arbitrating Pakistan's nuclear threshold. If AQ Khan is the father of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, Lt Gen SP Kidwai is the intellectual custodian of its nuclear policy. After spending decades in the nuclear establishment, he is currently the adviser to its Nuclear Command Authority. In 2003, he outlined Pakistan's four nuclear redlines: attrition to Pakistan's army, existential threat to Punjab, threat to the very survival of the State, and an economic blockade. Tactical nuclear weapons were designed to counter India's Cold Start doctrine to punish mass casualty terrorism. There is no Pakistani nuclear antidote to an Indian air strike!

Some questions/thoughts remain:

(a) The government must issue a detailed damage assessment, including an estimate of the Balakot body count. During the 2016 surgical strikes, no number was put out — only substantial casualties claimed.

(b) What was an antiquated MiG-21 doing in the battlefield? It reflects abject neglect of modernisation and depleting squadron strength of the IAF, even as the Prime Minister makes tall claims about enhancing military capacities.

(c) The counter-terrorism campaign inside Pakistan will have to be relentless and also comprehensive and calibrated in J&K.

(d) Why did India lose the perception battle? And will India have the will and capacity to do what Israel does against terrorism in its non-nuclear neighbourhood, 'keep mowing the grass'?

Men's frustration root cause of domestic violence

PREM CHOWDHRY
AUTHOR AND ACADEMIC, DELHI UNIVERSITY

> Two factors identified by women themselves in their individual and collective take on violence are alcoholism and unemployment of men. While there have been many legislative reforms to safeguard women's rights, these have remained largely ornamental, while the litigation space continues to be hostile to those who approach the courts for the protection of their rights.

VIOLENCE against women takes many forms. It takes place both in the private and public realms. It manifests itself in acts of rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, acid attack, domestic violence, marital rape, sex-selective abortion, voyeurism, stalking and 'honour killing'. Gender-based violence is an outcome of systemic discrimination and inequality between the sexes, and is a violation of fundamental rights of the victim.

I shall concentrate on spousal violence, which is widespread in our country. Official data continues to indicate that domestic violence is on the rise and so do the media reports of gruesome cases of intimate partner violence. According to the National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS) of 2005-06, 27 per cent of all married women have experienced physical, emotional and sexual violence. Activists claim that the percentage is actually much higher.

It is important to understand the cultural context of how marital violence is perceived by men and women and what is the level of its acceptance. For this, I shall rely upon my fieldwork done in my state, Haryana.

Culturally, beating women is very much part of the rural culture, accepted as a matter of course by men and women. To understand this, the ideology summed up in a popular proverb, common throughout northern India, is useful: *joru khasam ki ladai kya* (a quarrel between a married couple is of no consequence). This proverb shows the acceptance of *ladai* (quarrel), as a 'verbal duel', which is considered innocuous; but in reality, it often means infliction of physical violence on the woman. Rural society has always sanctioned wife-beating. "The man who beats his wife or the family that beats its *bahu* are all considered to be doing the right thing," pontificate the older generation of men in the villages. The general opinion voiced by a majority of the men regarding the infliction of violence on their wives ranged from total denial to prevarication. A few confessed to having used a 'couple of slaps' here and there 'to keep the women in line'. However, an underlying impression of both men and women was that physical violence has declined over the years.

UNFAIR: Gender-based violence is an outcome of systemic discrimination and inequality between the sexes.

Two factors which are identified and highlighted by women themselves in their individual and collective take on violence are: alcoholism and unemployment of men. Both accentuate men's frustration that is frequently taken out on women, especially their wives. The foremost was growing alcoholism. Women voiced a strong co-relation between the two. The existence of a vast network of *sharab ke theke* (licensed liquor shops) has become a continually growing problem in northern India. The ban on liquor in Bihar is a recent example of dealing with this problem. The women consider the spread of liquor and intoxicants as the cause of tension in homes, leading to shortage of money for family expenses, frequent quarrels, and extortion of money from women, leading to violence. Liquor is clearly behind the deteriorating quality of a woman's life and cuts across region, caste and class lines.

This increase in the consumption of liquor has been triggered by a cluster of inter-related causes, peculiar to different classes and even caste groups. Among these causes, the increased paying capacity of the consumers, particularly in the rural areas, has been a decisive factor both according to the academics and the rural perception. Interestingly, the two reasons advocated for the popularity of alcohol among the lower castes and classes, in direct opposition to higher castes and classes, is economic deprivation and low self-esteem. The rise in alcohol consumption has also been indirectly encouraged by the state with a major stake in its revenue — through its excise policy and licensing of an increasing number of retail shops.

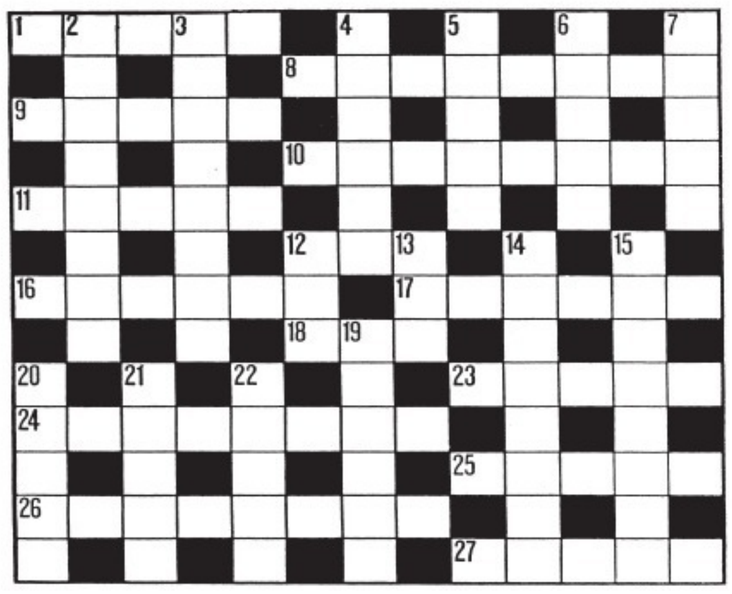
Apart from alcoholism, unemployment of men is primarily responsible for violence against women. The great increase in population and pressure on land due to limited expansion in commerce and industry and the overburdening of the agrarian sector has created severe unemployment. Rural unemployment is calculated to be almost twice of urban unemployment. Widespread unemployment and the consequent inability of a man to support his family are a major cause of frustration, lack of confidence and an onslaught on their masculinity. Together, these lead to domestic violence.

Among the unemployed, the plight of the educated male is particularly alarming. Those among the educated who are employed may well be having a job not commensurate with their educational status. This factor, according to women, causes more frustration than men can handle. Newspapers are full of reports about MA/PhD holders working as a peon or *chowkidar*. Unemployment is especially aggravated as the boys are not willing to settle down to an agricultural life in the village. There is a great scramble for any employment, high or low, whatever the social status. The jobs in their own villages are limited and very few can be absorbed in them. Village women say that even those boys who have studied only up to matriculation (Class X) and have qualified by *nakal* (copying or cheating) want white-collar jobs. Large-scale unemployment is leading to social disorder, lawlessness and violence in society — both public and private.

While there have been many legislative reforms to safeguard women's rights, the infrastructure to actualise the ambitious and far-reaching reforms are sadly lacking within our court spaces. Among such reforms was the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005), aimed at protecting women from physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and economic abuse and securing their rights of residence in their matrimonial home. However, it was hardly implemented.

According to Flavia Agnes, a women's rights lawyer and activist, "Despite legislation, the protection of women's legal rights in various courts continues to be mired in confusing legalities, expensive lawyers and tunnel vision in dealing with domestic violence." This has meant that reforms have remained largely ornamental, while the litigation space has continued to be hostile to women who approach the courts for the protection of their rights. This is an area that needs immediate attention.

QUICK CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1 A basis for soups (5)
8 Shredded cabbage salad (8)
9 Pry furtively (5)
10 Form of pasta (8)
11 Spacious (5)
12 Plant used in brewing (3)
16 To stew in closed pan (6)
17 Impervious to light (6)
18 Wet soft earth (3)
23 Point in development (5)
24 Crepes (8)
25 Pleasure trip (5)
26 A North African dish (8)
27 North African country (5)

DOWN
2 Type of Indian cooking (8)
3 Fried noodles dish (4,4)
4 Pulpy salad fruit (6)
5 Hickory nut (5)
6 Bear flowers (5)
7 Be in store for (5)
12 Edge (3)
13 Legume (3)
14 Seasoned smoked beef (8)
15 A French wine (8)
19 Advantageous (6)
20 An aromatic flavouring (5)
21 Declare invalid (5)
22 Highly decorated (5)

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

Across: 1 Side by side, 6 Spur, 10 Gusto, 11 Dishonour, 12 Premiere, 13 Felon, 15 Heinous, 17 Trumpet, 19 Magenta, 21 Seeming, 22 Storm, 24 Pacified, 27 Offensive, 28 Inept, 29 Norm, 30 Lederhosen.
Down: 1 Sage, 2 Deserving, 3 Bloom, 4 Sadness, 5 Descent, 7 Prowl, 8 Raring to go, 9 Coiffure, 14 Thumbs down, 16 Ornament, 18 Priceless, 20 Apprise, 21 Secrete, 23 Offer, 25 Faith, 26 Stun.

SU DO KU

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

V. EASY

CALENDAR

MARCH 9, 2019 SATURDAY

Vikrami Samvat	2075
Shaka Samvat	1940
Phalgun Shaka	18
Phalgun Parvishte	25
Hijari	1440

- Shukla Paksh Tithi 3, up to 3:03 am
- Shukla Yoga up to 4:38 pm
- Revti Nakshatra up to 1:18 am
- Moon enters Aries sign at 1:18 am
- Panchak ends 1:18 am.

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

FORECAST

SUNSET: SATURDAY 18:26 HRS
SUNRISE: SUNDAY 06:39 HRS

Sunny | Partly Cloudy | Cloudy | Rainy | Foggy

CITY	MAX	MIN
Chandigarh	25	11
New Delhi	26	11
PUNJAB		
Amritsar	24	10
Bathinda	26	11
Jalandhar	24	10
Ludhiana	25	10
HARYANA		
Bhiwani	27	12
Hisar	27	12
Sirsa	26	12
HIMACHAL PRADESH		
Dharamsala	16	05
Manali	11	–01
Shimla	15	05
JAMMU & KASHMIR		
Jammu	24	09
Leh	05	–06
Srinagar	15	01
UTTARAKHAND		
Dehradun	26	09
Mussoorie	13	04

TEMPERATURE IN °C

WHO

Jurgen Klopp, leading revival of Liverpool

Only one man stands between Manchester City and a second successive Premier League title – Jurgen Klopp. Unlike in 2017-18, when City won in a record-breaking fashion – most points (100), most goals scored (106) and most wins (32) – the 51-year-old Liverpool manager has ensured that Pep Guardiola's men will have to mine every last reserve to secure the trophy again. City may currently be the league's sole leader, but Liverpool remains within touching distance. With just two months left in the campaign, the stage is set for an absorbing and nail-biting dash to the finish line.

What's the secret of his success?
After Jose Mourinho, the former Real Madrid, Chelsea and Manchester United boss, Klopp has been Guardiola's Achilles heel. Their rivalry stretches back to 2013-14 in Germany when Klopp was managing Borussia Dortmund and Guardiola was in charge of Bayern Munich. Klopp's teams were pioneers of Gegenpressing, a technique which involved harrying the opposition immediately after losing the ball, and also specialised in rapid transitions from defence to offence. When Guardiola's possession-heavy football came in contact with Klopp's, it often proved a brittle art.

How has it been at Liverpool?
Klopp has certainly refashioned his ideals at the English club. It took two years and a bunch of carefully selected players to implement his vision, but the results, as seen from the 2017-18 season, have been staggering. The front three of Mohamed Salah, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane scored 91 of Liverpool's 135 goals, leaving everyone gasping for breath. Guardiola bore the brunt, losing thrice in a three-month window in early 2018, including 5-1 on aggregate in the UEFA Champions League quarter-final. Liverpool eventually lost in the final of the elite European tournament, but as a whole, the journey was a vindication of Klopp's methods and evidence enough to suggest that Liverpool would be a title-contender. In fact, in 16 matches, Klopp has defeated Guardiola seven times and has earned three draws. One may argue that two such games in a season do not by themselves decide the direction of a title race, but a clash of ideas rarely exists in isolation. The tactical cues that emerge, if picked up well, will surely lead to a more competitive league.

Have there been any challenges?
Amid the highs of last season, there were indications that Liverpool couldn't sustain its frenetic playing style at all times. While it did reach the Champions League final, the domestic campaign fizzled out. In 2018-19, Klopp has been mindful of the need to conserve his players' energies by not going full throttle in all matches. While this has certainly added some steeliness – Liverpool has lost just once in 29 league games and is well placed after the first leg of the Champions League round-of-16 tie against Bayern Munich – five draws in the last seven matches have raised questions. Through this period, Salah, Firmino and Mane have looked subdued, leading to suggestions that the side is over-dependent on the trio. And last October's 0-0 draw against City, in which Guardiola finally found a way to neutralise Klopp, wouldn't have gone unnoticed.

What next?
More endless scrutiny, for one. Liverpool is gunning for its first league title in 29 years and it is inevitable that every little step will be watched. Throughout his career, Klopp has revelled in the role of an underdog and it may work to the club's advantage that Liverpool is back in the second position chasing City. There are also rumours that Spanish giant Real Madrid, currently helmed by a caretaker coach, has an eye on Klopp. The German's head though is unlikely to turn.

N. SUDARSHAN

WHAT

The lowdown on the Official Secrets Act

WHAT DOES IT MEAN? An 'Official Secrets Act' is a generic term that is used to refer to a law – originally invented by the British, and then exported across the Commonwealth – that is designed to keep certain kinds of information confidential, including, but not always limited to, information involving the affairs of state, diplomacy, national security, espionage and other state secrets. Across multiple countries, the Official Secrets Acts follow a similar pattern: classifying certain categories of information as "official secrets," and then providing stiff penalties for any sharing, dissemination or publication of such information.

WHAT ARE ITS TRAITS? India's Official Secrets Act (OSA) dates back to 1923, unsurprisingly a creation of the colonial regime. The 1923 Act includes penalties for spying (which, in turn, includes even "approaching" or being "in the vicinity of" a prohibited place, publishing any "sketch" or "plan" that might be useful to the enemy, with a prejudicial purpose.) Additionally, however, it punishes the communication of any information obtained in contravention of the Act, which could prejudice the security of the state, or friendly relations with foreign states. Furthermore, it punished people who knowingly receive such information – a provision clearly designed to capture investigative journalism.

WHAT IS THE CRITICISM? The primary critique of the Act is that it flips the constitutive logic of a democratic republic, where the state is supposed to be transparent to its citizens. While it is nobody's case that all information ought to be made public – for example, troop movements in wartime or confidential trade negotiation positions obviously need to be secret – there should be a heavy presumption against secrecy. Under the OSA, however, the state is given wide powers to place information off-limits to citizens, simply by stipulating that certain documents are secret – and then draconian powers to punish them in case it is made public, regardless of the public interest involved.

This makes whistle-blowing and investigative journalism a perilous enterprise, no matter how critically important it might be to have the information public.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE RTI? The scope of the OSA has been somewhat diluted, thanks to the Right to Information Act. Section 22 of the RTI Act expressly says it overrides the OSA. In other words, it is not open to the government to deny access to a document demanded through an RTI question, on the basis that it has been marked secret under the OSA. Rather, the government will have to justify its decision to withhold information under the arguably narrower exception clauses of the RTI Act itself.

HOW OFTEN IS IT USED? The OSA is not used very often, but it is used enough times to keep it in the news, and to exercise a chilling effect (especially on investigative journalism). Recent, high-profile cases involving the OSA include that of the journalist Iftikhar Gilani (the case was withdrawn), the diplomat Madhuri Gupta (who was convicted of espionage charges), and the scientist Nambi Narayanan (who was charged, tried, and acquitted of espionage charges – and later directed to be paid compensation by the Supreme Court).

WHAT IS ITS FUTURE? As recently as 2006, the Home Ministry recommended substantial changes to the OSA, in line with the privacy regime established by the RTI. From time to time, there are calls to repeal the OSA and replace it with a National Security Act that is more consistent with the aspirations of an open, democratic republic. However, the OSA has proved resilient, and it would be reasonable to assume that we are stuck with it for at least the medium-term future.

GAUTAM BHATIA

WHY

is GSP vital to India-U.S. trade ties?

What is the programme?
■ The Generalized System of Preferences is the largest and oldest United States trade preference programme. The U.S. intended it to promote economic development by eliminating duties on some products it imports from the 120 countries designated as beneficiaries.

When was it introduced?
■ It was established by the Trade Act of 1974. According to the website of the U.S. Trade Representative, the GSP helps spur sustainable development in beneficiary countries by helping them increase and diversify their trade with the U.S. The U.S. also believes that moving GSP imports from the docks to U.S. consumers, farmers, and manufacturers supports tens of thousands of jobs in the U.S. The other benefit is that "GSP boosts American competitiveness by reducing the costs of imported inputs used by U.S. companies to manufacture goods in the United States." The Trade Representative says the GSP is important to U.S. small businesses, many of which rely on the programmes' duty savings to stay competitive.

Why is it important for India?
■ The Indian export industry may not feel the pinch of the GSP removal for India by the U.S. The loss for the industry amounts to about $190 million on exports of $5.6 billion falling under the GSP category. But specific sectors, such as gem and jewellery, leather and processed foods will lose the benefits of the programme. A producer may be able to bear 2-3% of the loss from the change, but not more. The loss, in export of some kinds of rice for example, may even exceed 10%. The landed price of goods from India has to be the same as it was before the GSP was removed. If not, consumers of those products in the U.S. would gravitate to producers that enjoy the GSP benefits and hence are able to offer lower prices. Obviously, it is difficult to get back a customer that a competitor takes away.

Why is India in the cross-hairs?
■ The U.S. conducts periodic reviews of the programme. The review for India, taken up last year, focussed on 'whether it is meeting the eligibility criterion that requires a GSP beneficiary country to assure the U.S. that it will provide equitable and reasonable access to its market.' The Trade Representative accepted two petitions asserting that India did not meet the criterion: one from the National Milk Producers Federation and the U.S. Dairy Export Council, and the other from the Advanced Medical Technology Association. India wants dairy products, which could form part of religious worship, certified that they were was only derived from animals that have not been fed food containing internal organs. Other exporters such as EU nations and New Zealand certify their products, but the U.S. has so far not done so. Second, India has recently placed a cap on the prices of medical devices, like stents, that impacts U.S. exports of such devices.

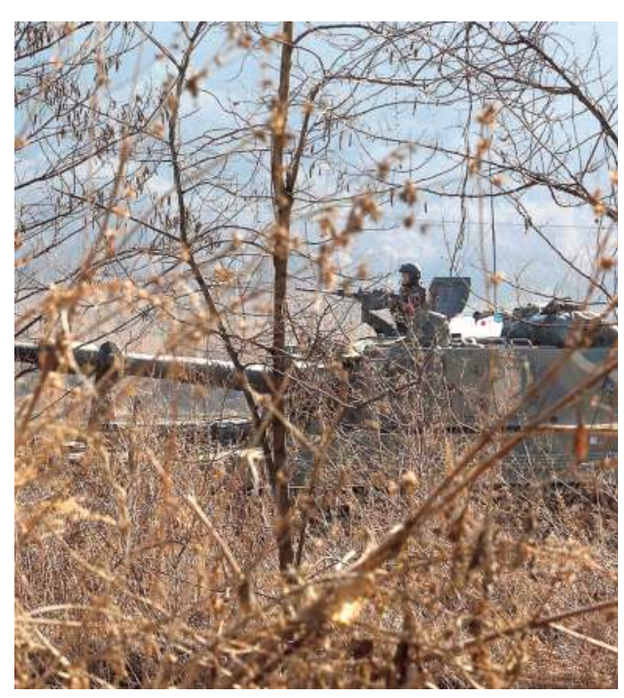
What can the Indian government do?
■ The government must offer fiscal help to the affected sectors. But the obvious question is: what can India do if it has to be compliant with World Trade Organisation rules that protect all its members equally from undue sops given to exporters? A wry answer is that if the U.S. is not playing by WTO rules, other countries too need to be able to protect their industries. But it is possible to offer some breather to producers suffering losses from the GSP removal, even while being WTO-compliant. The Centre could consider refund of taxes for goods not under GST. Use of electricity or petrol in the manufacture of such goods but for which an input credit is not available could qualify here. Helping such sectors would also protect jobs; especially when job creation is at a low.

K. BHARAT KUMAR

WHEN

6 March, 2019

Rising tensions: Two U.S. think tanks and South Korea's Yonhap News Agency have reported that work is under way to restore part of North Korea's Sohae Satellite Launching Station. Last June, North Korea began to dismantle a missile engine test stand at Sohae after the first summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and its leader Kim Jong-un. A second summit broke down last week in Hanoi over differences on how far North Korea was willing to limit its nuclear programme and the degree of U.S. willingness to ease sanctions. The structures had been rebuilt some time between February 16 and March 2, Reuters reported. Pictures show an image provided by Airbus Defence & Space and the think tank 38 North, clicked via satellite from CNES on March 6, of the Sohae station at Tongchang-ri, North Korea, and a South Korean soldier manning a K-9 self-propelled howitzer during a military exercise in Paju near the border with North Korea. ■ AP



WHERE

Protecting the Sundarban wetlands

On January 30, the Indian Sundarban was accorded the status of 'Wetland of International Importance' under the Ramsar Convention. The Sundarbans comprises hundreds of islands and a network of rivers, tributaries and creeks in the delta of the Ganga and the Brahmaputra at the mouth of the Bay of Bengal in India and Bangladesh. Located on the southwestern part of the delta, the Indian Sundarban constitutes over 60% of the country's total mangrove forest area. It is the 27th Ramsar Site in India, and with an area of 4,23,000 hectares is now the largest protected wetland in the country.

Why is this important?
The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, better known as the Ramsar Convention, is an international agreement promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands. It is the only global treaty to focus on a single ecosystem. The convention was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and came into force in 1975. Traditionally viewed as a wasteland or breeding ground of disease, wetlands actually provide freshwater and food, and serve as nature's shock absorber. Wetlands, critical for biodiversity, are disappearing rapidly, with recent estimates showing that 64% or more of the world's wetlands have vanished since 1900. Major changes in land use for agriculture and grazing, water diversion for dams and canals and infrastructure development are considered to be some of the main causes of loss and degradation of wetlands.

How did it qualify?
The Indian Sundarban met four of the nine criteria required for the status of 'Wetland of International Importance' – presence of rare species and threatened ecological communities, biological diversity, significant and representative fish and fish spawning ground and migration path. The Indian Sundarban, also a UNESCO world heritage site, is

home to the Royal Bengal Tiger. The Ramsar website points out that the Indian Sundarban is also home to a large number of "rare and globally threatened species, such as the critically endangered northern river terrapin (*Batagur baska*), the endangered Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*), and the vulnerable fishing cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*)." Two of the world's four horseshoe crab species, and eight of India's 12 species of kingfisher are also found here. Recent studies claim that the Indian Sundarban is home to 2,626 faunal species and 90% of the country's mangrove varieties.

Will the status help?
Environmentalists and forest officials say the Ramsar status will help to highlight conservation issues of the Sundarbans at the international level. The part of the Sundarban delta, which lies in Bangladesh, was accorded the status of a Ramsar site in 1992, and with Indian Sundarban getting it too, international cooperation between the two countries for the protection of this unique ecosystem will increase. This could lead to a better conservation strategy for flagship species such as the tiger and the northern river terrapin.

What are the threats?
While the Indian Sundarban is a biodiverse preserve, over four million people live on its northern and northwestern periphery, putting pressure on the ecosystem. Concerns have been raised about natural ecosystems being changed for cultivation of shrimp, crab, molluscs and fish.

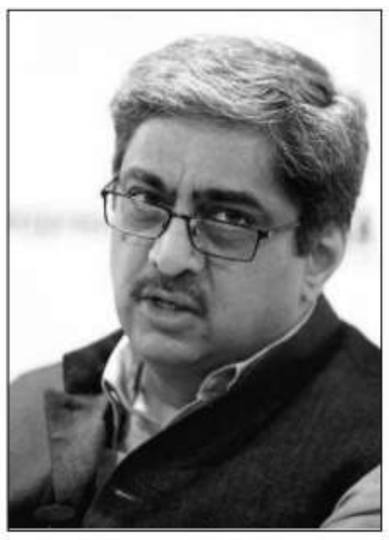
The Ramsar Information Sheet lists fishing and harvesting of aquatic resources as a "high impact" actual threat to the wetland. The other threats are from dredging, oil and gas drilling, logging and wood harvesting, hunting and collecting terrestrial animals. Salinity has been categorised as a medium and tourism as a low impact actual threat in the region. Experts believe that while the Ramsar status may bring in international recognition to the Indian Sundarban, the wetland, which along with anthropogenic pressures, is also vulnerable to climate change and requires better management and conservation practices.

SHIV SAHAY SINGH

"(Before surgical strikes) Then foreign secy said something was building up... He asked me to prepare... When strikes took place, we spent four days locked down in a safe place at the High Commission in Pak"

WHY GAUTAM BAMBAWALE

The terror attack in Pulwama that killed 40 CRPF men, followed by the IAF's aerial strikes on Balakot, have led to an increase in tension between India and Pakistan. A 1984-batch Indian Foreign Service officer, Gautam Bambawale was India's High Commissioner to Pakistan in 2016 and 2017. He was in office when India undertook surgical strikes following the terrorist attack in Uri, and when Kulbhushan Jadhav was captured by Pakistan. Bambawale was India's ambassador to China in 2018, and handled the Wuhan Summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping following the Doklam stand-off



"On cricket, my own gut feeling is that just because the emotions are high, doesn't mean we stop playing cricket with Pak in an international setting... It's quite silly to lose points when we know we can beat them"

'One surgical or aerial strike may not force Pak to stop aiding terror. But we have raised the costs'

Former ambassador to China and ex-high commissioner to Pakistan Gautam Bambawale says the message from the recent air strike on Balakot is that India can undertake such an exercise "successfully", insists there is "no deep-seated hatred" between Indians and Pakistanis, and explains why, on listing of Masood Azhar as a terrorist, India needs to be "transactional" with China

Former ambassador Gautam Bambawale with Senior Editor Shubhajit Roy in *The Indian Express* newsroom in Pune. *Arul Horizon*

SHUBHAJIT ROY: What does the decision to conduct air strikes on terrorist camps in Pakistan mean?

Pakistan has been following a policy of bleeding India by a thousand cuts. That policy is of aiding, abetting and sponsoring terrorism directed at India. We have had terrorist incidents for almost 35-40 years, not only in Jammu and Kashmir but all over India. This is a low-cost strategy for the Pakistanis.

With the (surgical strikes) for the first time in 2016, and now again in 2019, what we have indicated is that the people of India have had it up to their necks in suffering from terrorist activities. Also, we have indicated — and the government can take credit for the bold and brave decision — that if Pakistan will not control terrorists, then we will go and strike them inside Pakistan. That is what has changed. A lot of people are describing it as a new template that has been brought to the table. I agree with that assessment. It is no one's case that one surgical strike, or one aerial strike, would force Pakistan to stop aiding and abetting terrorism. But we have increased and raised the costs for them to do this.

SHUBHAJIT ROY: We did not incur any casualties in the air strikes, but in such situations, things can go wrong. Were we prepared for that?

There is no doubt that it was a risky operation. But a lot of people in India are now saying that look, if Pakistan is not going to stop aiding and abetting terrorism, then we must take our own steps. These people are asking questions of our government. I think this government has only answered those questions by undertaking the surgical strikes of 2016 and the aerial strikes of 2019. I am sure the people in the government would have considered all the action-reaction scenarios, and only after assessing them would have decided to go ahead with it.

SHUBHAJIT ROY: You were India's High Commissioner to Pakistan when the surgical strikes were carried out by ground troops in 2016. How did you engage with the Pakistanis at the time?

The situation then was slightly different from what it is now. When the surgical strikes took place, the Pakistanis decided to deny it. And then they were not forced to react to it either. Regarding the decision to carry out those strikes, there were a number of options on the table. I cannot reveal the details, but I am very confident that the same options, maybe a few more, were on the table this time as well.

Much before the surgical strikes took place, and may be even before the attack on Uri, I had a long chat with the then foreign secretary, S Jaishankar, during one of my visits to New Delhi in 2016. One of the things he told me was that there was something building up. He said he did not know what will happen or what options will the government choose, but said if some action was taken against Pakistan, one of his primary concerns was to ensure that Indians at the High Commission in Islamabad remained safe. He asked me to prepare for a situation wherein everyone working at the Indian High Commission could be locked down in a safe place. We did actually prepare for that, and when the surgical strikes took place, we spent four days locked down in a safe place within the Indian High Commission.

AMITABH SINHA: So the former foreign secretary mentioned that something was building up against Pakistan even before the Uri attack? Then, were the surgical strikes a strategic decision rather than a response to an attack on the Indian State?

No, I am not saying that. My limited point is that the foreign secretary had enough foresight to visualise that we may get into a situation where the safety of the people in the High Commission in Islamabad could be at stake. He said that once he did not have to worry about the safety of Indians in Islamabad, he would be free to consider all options. So it is not that we had already decided to carry out surgical strikes before Uri. No, not at all.

AMITABH SINHA: There has been a debate on whether the recent aerial strikes were effective. For argument's sake, if we concede that there were zero casualties, and that the strikes probably did not hit the intended targets, would you even then say that the strikes were significant for India, strategically and diplomatically?

Firstly, in such situations we are not looking at benefit or loss, or victory or defeat. We are not thinking in those terms at all. The fact on the ground is that there is a lot of terrorism emanating from Pakistan. And we want to do something to raise the costs, to dissuade the other country from exercising this kind of option. I also want to say that the military strikes did indeed happen. We can quibble over whether 25 terrorists were killed or 200. That is something that we do not know about. But I believe that the strikes took place and were successful. That is also the most important part. That is the message. The message was not that 200 people were killed. The message was that we can undertake such an exercise to attack terrorist bases and infrastructure. And I think that message has been sent not just to the world but even to Pakistan.

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS: India wants to isolate Pakistan, but there is a SAARC summit that is due, and it has to be held in Islamabad. Do you think it will happen?

The SAARC summit has been due for some time. Pakistan is the next host. But we are not sure when it will happen. There are at least a few of us in the region — India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Bhutan — four out of eight members, who believe that this is not the right time to hold the SAARC summit.

PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS: China has been restrained in its response to the aerial strikes by India. What do you make of it?

The situation is not easy for China. From their perspective, terrorism is an issue that they realise is a problem across the world, including in China. The Chinese position on terrorism is very clear — they oppose it in all its forms and manifestations. On the other hand, they have this very close, tight strategic, economic, military relationship with Pakistan. Whatever they said at the time could also be due to the fact that our Foreign Minister was scheduled to go to China (for the Russia-India-China meeting). They were a little worried that she may cancel if they push too much. But the kind of reaction that came from the Chinese, even from the RIC meeting, I would say, is a step forward. It is much better for India than it has been in the past.

On the specific issue of listing of Masood Azhar as a terrorist, I think we need to be transactional with China. If there is something that we can do for China — say at the UN, there is an important election where they want us to vote for them — we should ask for a quid pro quo. I say this because last year when the grey listing of Pakistan took place at the Financial Action Task Force meeting, we were able to do this kind of transactional bargain with the Chinese. I think we can do it again. The timing is right. There is enough momentum internationally to get him listed.

MANOJ MORE: What do you make of the hatred that is portrayed between India and Pakistan? What is it like on the ground? Should we be playing cricket with them?

I don't think there is a deep-seated hatred for Indians among Pakistanis. The problem is that this terrorism, which is aided, abetted, supported, financed, by Pakistan, is bleeding us. That is the main thing that people in India would want to be stopped. You can discuss all kinds of things — music, literature — with Pakistanis very easily, but the moment it comes to bilateral issues there is a difference of opinion. It is because there is too much emotion involved, and it goes back to the times of Partition.

On cricket, my own gut feeling is that just because the emotions are high, doesn't mean that we stop playing cricket with Pakistan in an international setting. There is the World Cup (later this year). If we don't play, we will lose points. I think it is quite silly to lose points when we know we can beat them.

MANOJ MORE: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said he had tried to speak to PM Modi. Do you think the Indian PM should talk to his counterpart in Pakistan?

Imran Khan is not the first PM to say he wants talks. There were many before him. For us, we have seen this happening before. The point is that if you want to have some sort of talks between India and Pakistan, I don't believe that the right way to do it is to start at the prime ministerial level. This is one of the reasons why we did not achieve success at the Agra talks in 2001. I would say that whenever we decide to talk to Pakistan, it should start at the lower levels. So you have to have preparatory talks at whatever level it is decided and then build up to a prime ministerial meeting.

Secondly, after the Pulwama attack, Imran Khan said 'give us proof and we will investigate'. Once again, this is an old record that has been played many times earlier. I want to go back to 2016. The moment the Pathankot attack took place, Nawaz Sharif said the same thing. At the time, we decided to believe them. We allowed their team, which included people from the military and the intelligence, to come to India, and the government faced a lot of flak for it. We gave them all the possible proof. It didn't go anywhere after that.

SHUBHAJIT ROY: Was the decision to allow a team of Pakistani investigators to access one of the most forward airbases a prudent move?

Sometimes you decide to place trust in these things. I think it was the first time in decades, if not ever, when we actually allowed a Pakistan investigation team to come. The idea was to share all the information that we have. Taking them to Pathankot was a decision at the highest levels of the government. We did not take them to sensitive parts of the base. We only allowed them access to areas that are relatively less sensitive.

"If you look at the entire episode (aerial strikes by India), the big takeaway is that the international community stood by India's right to self-defence. That is where we have won in this messaging war"

ANJALI MARAR: How do you see India's presence, and Pakistan's absence, at the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) this year?

The OIC has recognised the anomaly that one of the countries with the biggest Muslim population was not part of the OIC, and this is a recognition of the facts on the ground. At the same time, we should not think that suddenly the OIC has changed its position completely. This is a process. And it is a process that will unfold in the next 15-20 years. Our participation in the OIC is a turning point, an important inflection point in our relations with West Asia and Islamic countries.

AJAY KHAPE: Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman was released very soon, in about 48 hours...

According to the Geneva Convention, they would have had to release him at some point in time. I think the way it must have happened is that Prime Minister Imran Khan might have said that if we have to release him after a few days, why not give him up today and claim credit for it. I hope that is what has happened because it then means that he has been able to convince the military authorities in Pakistan to do this. That is relatively a good thing. I think it was a goodwill gesture, even if it came under international pressure.

AMITABH SINHA: Pakistan started the 'nuclear' talk on the first day after the strikes. They had a nuclear command meeting as well but probably decided not to go any further. So, their nuclear threshold is probably not as low as many in India thought?

They would have a threshold. I don't know what it is. Maybe people in government have a better idea. I don't think it is as easy to cross the nuclear threshold.

SHUBHAJIT ROY: How have we handled the case of Kulbhushan Jadhav, whom Pakistan has accused of being an Indian spy?

I want to make only two points. Firstly, it is incumbent on any government that has signed or is party to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations to give consular access, and till today, Pakistan has not given it to us. Our whole case at the International Court of Justice is this — that you have an international law that provides for consular access and these guys have not given it. The second point is that when a military court undertakes a hearing, we don't know what happens. We don't know whether there was anyone to defend him. So that sort of proceeding is bad in law, and hopefully will be turned down by any international court.

SUSHANT KULKARNI: There is also a perception battle being fought after the aerial strikes.

If you look at the entire episode, you will see the big takeaway is that the entire international community stood by India's right to self-defence. I think that is the big picture and that is where we have won in this messaging war.

SHUBHAJIT ROY: There have been three incidents of stand-off with China in recent years. How has the approach of India changed?

You have to factor in the fact that India and China not only do not have a common boundary but we don't even have a common line of control. When you add to that the fact that both sides have better technology, better roads, better communication... What is beginning to happen is that the militaries of India and China, which used to be fairly far apart, are now coming closer to each other. Both India and China are also conscious not to push the envelope.

SHUBHAJIT ROY: The informal summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and China's President Xi Jinping in Wuhan last year was dubbed as agenda-less...

We decided that after the confrontation at Doklam, it was important to keep talking to each other. Both countries were able to talk to each other through diplomatic channels. And we agreed to have an informal summit between the leaders. The two leaders spent about eight to 10 hours together. In a formal setting, meetings usually don't last for more than an hour or so. They were able to cover a lot of topics... It helped clear the air, clear the misunderstandings. It was not an agenda-less meeting. Certain topics were agreed for talks. They covered that and much more.

Informal summits are probably a new diplomatic template that has been introduced. Later this year, when the elections are over, I think the Chinese President will visit India for an informal summit.

ACROSS THE AISLE

P CHIDAMBARAM

The anti-national newspaper!

THE RAFALE controversy will not go away! If it had been pushed to the background because of the Pulwama terrorist attack and the retaliatory strike by the Indian Air Force, Prime Minister Modi brought it back centre stage by his provocative remark, 'If we had the Rafale aircraft....'

To his misfortune, within two days of his remark, *The Hindu* published another investigative article on the Rafale deal. The article punctured the conclusion of the Comptroller & Auditor General (CAG) that the NDA deal was cheaper than the UPA deal by 2.86 per cent. (The government's claim that the price it had negotiated was 9-20 per cent cheaper had been rejected in the CAG's report.)

WHICH DEAL WAS CHEAPER?

The issue is quite simple. Under the UPA deal, Dassault was required to give a bank guarantee and a performance guarantee. Under the NDA deal, that requirement was waived. While providing a guarantee the bank will charge the customer, in this case Dassault. That is the 'cost' of the guarantee — something that every businessman is familiar with. In the Rafale deal, since a sum of approximately Rs 60,000 crore was involved, the guarantee charges would have been stiff.

If one deal was loaded with guarantee charges and the other deal was not loaded with guarantee charges, common sense will tell us that, before the two prices are compared, the guarantee charges in the first deal should be taken out. CAG got the numbers. He calculated the charges in two parts:

Bank Guarantee charges	€ AAB1 million
Performance Guarantee & Warranty charges	€ AAB2 million
Total	**€ AAB3 million**

The CAG used alphanumerics because he had promised the government to 'redact' the price information! He did the government a huge favour. However, the CAG was forced to conclude as follows:

"Therefore, the total saving of AAB3 million € accruing to the vendor by not having to pay these Bank Charges should have been passed on to Ministry. Ministry has agreed to the Audit calculations on Bank Guarantees but contended that this was a saving to the Ministry because the Bank guarantee charges were not to be paid. However Audit noted that this was actually a saving for M/s DA when compared to its previous offer of 2007."

CAG FAILED THE NATION

The guarantee charges remained hidden from the public and a meaningful comparison could not be made about the prices of the two deals. *The Hindu* story has ferreted out the information from the report of the Indian Negotiating Team (INT). The charges were € 574 million. If this amount is taken out of the UPA deal and the two deals are compared, the NDA deal is more expensive by € 246.11 million. At the current exchange rate of Rs 80, the NDA deal is more expensive by Rs 1,968 crore. On this count alone, each of the 36 aircraft will be more expensive by Rs 54.66 crore.

It is a mystery why the Prime Minister's Office held parallel negotiations undermining the efforts of the INT. It is a mystery why the three anti-corruption clauses were deleted. It is a mystery why the payment security system — sovereign guarantee, bank guarantee and escrow account — was jettisoned. These could not have been done out of 'love and affection' for Dassault. The facts point to an oblique purpose. The CAG had a duty to probe these mysterious aspects and bring out the truth. He failed the country.

The Hindu is bringing out the hidden aspects of the deal one by one. And what is the government's response? The government is accusing the newspaper of using 'stolen documents' and threatening to slap criminal charges! The Attorney General of India was fielded by the government to hold out these threats!

FAMOUS STOLEN PAPERS

In 2012-14, the Government of India obtained the names of account holders in Swiss banks that had been hacked and passed on to France and Germany. The Income Tax department issued notices, raised tax demands and launched prosecutions. Was the I-T department acting on the basis of 'stolen documents'? Similarly, in 2016, 11.5 million documents were leaked from the computers of a law firm (stolen by someone?) to a German newspaper, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, which shared them with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. The I-T department had no qualms about releasing the names of account holders who were Indians or NRIs and issuing notices to them.

The famous Pentagon Papers were actually a secret report commissioned by the US Defense Secretary on the Vietnam war. It was leaked in 1971. *The Washington Post* was preparing to publish them. The US government sued the newspapers. The US Supreme Court by a vote of 6-3 allowed *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* to publish the documents without the risk of censorship or punishment (*403 U.S. 713*). Justices Black, Douglas, Brennan Jr., Stewart, White and Marshall put freedom of speech above vague concerns of national security and held that spread of information was critical to keep the democratic process intact. No one even mentioned 'stolen documents'!

History is repeating itself, this time in India. Mr Modi and his ministers will brand *The Hindu* as anti-national or worse. Regardless of the invectives, readers will continue to read the newspaper. The Rafale aircraft will arrive. There will be an inquiry. The truth will be out. The life of the country will go on.

Website: pchidambaram.in
@Pchidambaram_IN

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FIFTH COLUMN

TAVLEEN SINGH

A suicidal Opposition?

NARENDRA MODI'S decision to order the Air Force to attack jihadist camps in Pakistan has had the unintended consequence of throwing our Opposition leaders into a frenzy of confusion and self-loathing. India has never before responded militarily to a jihadist attack, so initial shock and confusion can be forgiven. For this to turn into self-loathing cannot. The Prime Minister is not wrong when he says that their hatred of him is so deep that they have transferred this hatred to India and our Armed Forces as well. To prove that Modi is a liar they started singing the praises of Imran Khan in concert.

This cue was picked up by their supporters on social media and in important western newspapers. This extraordinary, unexpected praise for the Pakistani Prime Minister caused people in the Islamic Republic to announce plans to nominate him for the Nobel Peace Prize. Imran Khan was embarrassed enough for him to say modestly that he was unworthy of such an honour and that it should go to someone who could bring peace to Kashmir. This did not deter India's opposition leaders. They continued their campaign to prove that he was a statesman and Modi a warmonger.

In shrill tones they denounced Modi and his ministers for lying about the number of dead jihadists in the Balakot camp. When I tweeted about the absurdity of Indian political leaders believing the Prime Minister of an enemy country over our own, my timeline was flooded with tweets saying that Modi had 'lied for four years' so nobody except a '*bhaktan* (devotee)' like me believed him any more. And, why is it so easy to believe Imran Khan? He is the face of a military government that has lied for decades about promoting jihadist attacks on Indian soil. It has become a new strategy in an old war. Pervez Musharraf is one of my least favourite people but it pleased me to hear him say that Jaish-e-Mohammad was very much a Pakistani jihadist outfit that was created by the army but must now be stopped because it had tried to assassinate him twice.

Returning now to how our opposition leaders have behaved in a time of national crisis. I would like to state clearly that in my view, their behaviour was disgraceful. Rahul Gandhi as the man who hopes to replace Modi as prime minister later this year behaved with an irresponsibility and petulance that should seriously worry the Congress party. His first response to the air strike was to applaud the bravery of the Indian Air Force. Not one word about the Prime Minister's courage to make a decision that no prime minister has been able to make in the past 30 years despite terrible jihadist violence on Indian soil. Does the Congress president believe that the Air Force crossed into Pakistan without the Prime Minister's permission?

Other opposition leaders like Mamata Banerjee did not cover themselves with glory either. In a series of shrill, hysterical speeches she screeched about how she supported India and supported the Armed Forces but she would never support 'Modi-*babu*.' Has she not noticed that he is still India's Prime Minister and that whatever action was taken in response to Pulwama could not have been taken without his consent?

By the end of last week our opposition leaders had done so much damage to India's image that a Pakistani friend asked me if it was possible that the Pulwama suicide bomber had done what he did at the behest of Modi. "After all he has an election coming…won't this really help him?" I tried to explain that in a real democracy like India it is simply not possible for a political leader to kill 40 of his own soldiers and expect this to remain a secret. But, despite my attempts to convince him otherwise, he said more than once that our own political leaders and journalists were saying that this is what happened.

The media is entitled to express different points of view. But, for senior Indian political leaders to start sowing horrible doubts about the nature of the Indian State should disqualify them from being in public life. There have been times of crisis before when Congress prime ministers have been at the helm and, if my memory serves me correctly, I cannot remember anyone questioning their character, their patriotism or their intentions. In their pathological hatred of Modi, the men and women who lead the coalition that hopes to defeat him could have harmed themselves more than they have him.

With just weeks left for the election we still do not know what the coalition of opposition parties stands for politically or economically. They have wasted so much time attacking Modi that they have come up with neither policies nor strategies that go beyond asserting that Modi has to go. And, then what?

Follow Tavleen Singh on Twitter
@tavleen_singh

INSIDE TRACK

COOMI KAPOOR

TIMELY COVER-UP

By the time clear satellite images were made available to the public, the Pakistanis had smartly finished reconstructing the roof over the bombed seminary at Balakot and attempted to cover up the destruction, officials say. Satellite photos could not be taken on the night of the aerial strikes because of the darkness. The next day the cloud cover prevented a satellite image being shot. On the third day, the Indian authorities managed to get a satellite picture revealing that the building had been damaged, particularly the roof, but the image was hazy. Instead of releasing this photograph immediately, it was simply put out on Twitter in the hope that a better shot would be available later. When commercial satellite photographs were finally taken more than a week later, the site did not look as ravaged as the first satellite image, thanks to Pakistan's swift restoration efforts, officials believe. But even in the later photos the blackened areas to the north of the building indicated significant damage.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

Many wonder how the number of Pakistani casualties at Balakot was estimated at 250. The figure was first put out on Twitter and Facebook by those who had reportedly been fed by Indian Army intelligence sources in Kashmir. It was picked up by two TV channels. Adding to the confusion was Pakistan's initial claim that two Indian pilots and two aircraft were downed. Since India had only one missing pilot and aircraft, several Internet sites put out the theory that one pilot was actually a Pakistani who had been lynched by his own countrymen in PoK, assuming he was Indian. But the name of the dead pilot, supposedly the son of a former Pakistani Air Marshal, turned out to be fake.

DIVIDED WE FALL

After Balakot, there have been renewed efforts to avoid divisions in the Opposition ranks. Mamata Banerjee, Sharad Pawar, the trusted US-based family friend of the Gandhis, Sam Pitroda, Muslim leaders from Uttar Pradesh and others have all voiced their concern. The problematic states where opposition parties are likely to cut into each other's vote share and help the BJP are: Delhi, Haryana and UP. In Delhi and Haryana, the local Congress leaders are against an alliance with AAP. In UP, the Congress is still hoping for a last-minute compromise with the BSP-SP alliance, which is feeling the heat because the Congress has emerged as a third force. Several BSP and SP potential Lok Sabha candidates, who lost the nomination because the partner was allotted the constituency, have joined the Congress in the hope of a ticket. The defectors to the Congress include former SP MP Rakesh Sachan from Fatehpur Sikri, former BSP MP from Sitapur Kaisar Jahan, and former BSP MP Kunwar Chand Vakil, who hopes to get the Congress ticket from Agra. The hurdle in the effort to persuade the SP and BSP to allot more seats to the Congress in UP is Mayawati's demand for seats in several other states as compensation.

SLOW START

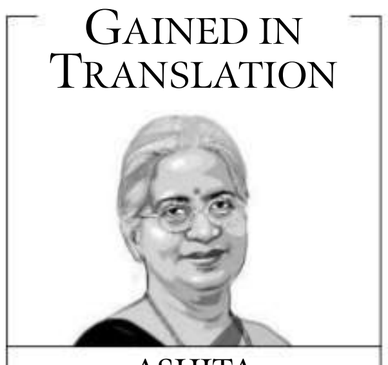
Rahul Gandhi is annoyed that the BJP's publicity campaign has already got off the ground while the Congress has yet to finalise a firm for its advertising. The BJP has gone for the same well-known publicity and advertising firms as it had done in 2014, and its campaign slogan '*Namumkin ab Mumkin Hai* (the impossible is now possible)' appears in a slate of recent government ads. The delay is reportedly because two factions, one led by Anand Sharma, who heads the Congress's publicity committee for the Lok Sabha elections, and the other by Jairam Ramesh, who is the coordinator of the party's core group, are working at cross-purposes. One side has even accused the other of inviting firms for presentation of their powerpoint proposals for shortlisting without calling all the committee members. Another grouse is that a little-known firm has been shortlisted.

SONS RISE

The Congress is yet to announce nominations for Lok Sabha elections in Madhya Pradesh, but the scions of three political dynasties have been given the go-ahead to start campaigning from their respective family seats. MP Chief Minister Kamal Nath's son Nakul, who till now has stayed in the background, hopes to contest from Chhindwara, the parliamentary seat which his father won nine times. Arjun Singh's son Ajay Singh may have lost the election last time but is all set to contest from Satna. Arun Yadav, former PCC chief and the son of former minister Subhash Yadav, will stand from Khandwa.

Guru and me

GAINED IN TRANSLATION



ASHITA
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THERE WAS a time, 35 to 40 years ago, when there was an unspoken consensus in society that a woman who had not gotten married by the age of 30 would stay a spinster all her life. I doubt if this perception has changed even today. A woman aged over 30 is considered a decaying vegetable, unattractive like the dry desert, a burden that no intelligent young man would want to bear.

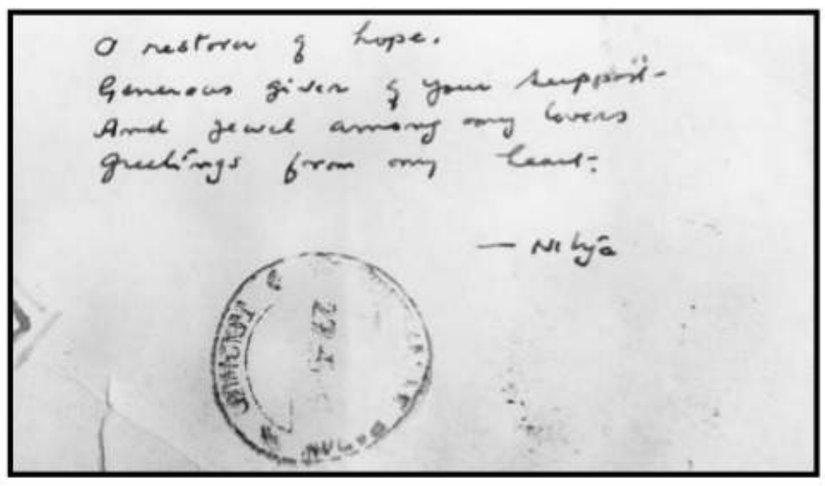
After an overprotected childhood and a stormy youth, I had remained unmarried at 27. My younger sister had got married at an age which was deemed appropriate. All this was a topic of discussion in the neighbourhood. People were discussing that I may not be a woman, or perhaps that I was a transgender, and that a moustache may be growing above my upper lip.

I had been forced to take a degree in English literature, though my preference was Economics, because it was thought that girls with a degree in English were preferred for marriage by the uneducated boys working in the Gulf. Marriage proposals from people as varied as a Class VIII dropout who had joined the Army to Class X-pass stenographers came for me, a postgraduate and university topper. There were some relatives who advised me to join an ashram and resolve the conundrum!

Though it was easy to run away to the ashram, I did not have any spiritual inclination. If there was a god, he was there somewhere. I never felt he had any interest in me. Nor I in him. It was a time I believed that Marxism was the loftiest dream humanity had seen. I was a committed atheist.

At that time, at 27, I got married. A year later, a child was born to me. By 32, Guru arrived in my life. There was a particular reason for it. The daughter of a distant relative had committed suicide at 19. I had struggled to console the parents, who were distraught, and was wondering who to turn to for advice.

I thought of all the literary figures. None of them, I felt, had the self-awareness to handle this. Then, one day, I saw my daughter kiss the photograph of a bearded man on the open pages of *Mathrubhumi Weekly*.



O restorer of hope.
Generous giver of your support-
And jewel among my lovers
greetings from my heart:
— Nitya

The letter that the writer received from Guru Nitya

Smiling, I asked her: "Who is it baby?". She answered: "Swami".

Curious, I took the magazine. I didn't think he was much of a *sanyasi*. The article was about home. I started reading it and got hooked. Not bad, this *sansyasi*, I thought. He had opened the doors to a vast area of knowledge of which I, who ran a household, was unaware. I decided I would ask him about my predicament. The editor of *Grihalakshmi* (a Malayalam women's magazine), P B Lalkar, got me his address. That's when I became aware that he was a *sanyasi* and was staying at an ashram in Ooty.

Lalkar assured me that he would reply if I wrote. But a grave fear enveloped me. I feared that my life would never be the same hereafter and thought someone was pushing me down a cliff. I strained for about four to five days and wrote to him, telling him I faced no problems in life, and in a suitably vague tone asked if Guru did respond to such persons. I got a response in clear, legible handwriting. What was surprising is that I recognised that it was not Guru's handwriting. So I wrote back: "Received your letter. It felt as if someone has extended a rose to me after taking away its smell. When Guru writes to me, I want it to be in your handwriting."

I received a reply even for that. That's when I realised that Guru was in his 60s and dictated his responses to children in his ashram. I sought his advice on my relative's concern. If their daughter died at 19, tell them to conduct the wedding of 19 girls, was his advice. There was no tinge of sympathy in his reply. What a stone-hearted man, I thought.

I squabbled with him for nearly a month, telling him we are ordinary people and that we feel distraught when someone dear to us dies. His response was that it was stupid to grieve for more than a month when someone dies. What I remember is that I didn't write to him thereafter.

Then, one day, I received a letter, the gist of which was that he was visiting Thiruvananthapuram for a lecture and would visit me. I panicked. After a time of youth, when I sowed the wind to reap a whirlwind, I was living within the happy confines of marriage with a little pearl. I did not want anyone to breach that space. Besides, I had no idea how to talk to a *sanyasi*. And, he was the head of a gurukul. He will come accompanied by cars, with many disciples and admirers — how shall I receive them? This left me confused.

So I immediately wrote back. "You don't have to come. It is not important to meet me. If you still wish, please do not come accompanied by many cars or admirers. I don't like all that," I wrote in my letter.

He replied. "I am old. So, I need at least one person to help me." Peter Oppenheimer accompanied him.

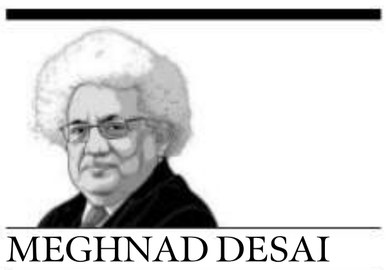
Not knowing what to tell him, I stayed mum. He had a glass of water and bid me goodbye. After returning to Ooty, a letter came in my address. This is that letter:

"O restorer of hope; Generous giver of your support — And jewel among my lovers; Greetings from my heart" — Nitya.

On reading it, I felt it was a letter to Muni Narayana Prasad (a *sanyasi* disciple of Guru). I felt that he, in his old age, had got the address wrong and posted it to me instead. Surprisingly, the greetings he sent me in the letter he wrote with his own hand just before his samadhi were the same — except that the letters were a little wobbly.

The writer is a celebrated Malayalam short-story writer. 'Guru' is the late seer and scholar Nitya Chaitanya Yati.
Translated by Amrith Lal

OUT OF MY MIND



MEGHNAD DESAI

All socialists now

ANY DAY now, the Election Commission will start the process for the general election of 2019. All the political parties which register to contest will assert an untruth. Under the Representation of the People Act, as amended under Rajiv Gandhi's prime-ministership, all parties contesting the election have to declare that they adhere to the principles of socialism.

How bizarre is that! All parties, bar none. It is one thing for the Leninist parties CPI, CPM, CPI (M-L) and even Forward Bloc to say they are socialist. But beyond that, how many can truthfully assert that they are socialist? Is the BJP a socialist party? During early days, the Jana Sangh used to assert their belief in Gandhian Socialism. But now they follow Deendayal Upadhyaya, who consciously searched for a path rejecting socialism and capitalism. The Congress used to be a socialist party. But as of December 2017, it is a Hindu nationalist party (Shaivite tendency). It could say it is a liberal Hindu nationalist party or even that it is a liberal Hindu socialist party. And why not? There are Christian Socialists and Zionism originally was a socialist movement. Anyone can call themselves socialist.

Even the casteist parties of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar who follow Ram Manohar Lohia may call themselves *samajwadi*, but they show no special commitment to socialism. Casteism and socialism do not go together. George Fernandes, who died recently, had his Samta Party and he was probably the last of the remnants of the Congress Socialist Party which became Praja Socialist Party and then split many ways and is now defunct.

The assertion that India is a secular socialist democratic republic was foisted upon the Preamble to the Constitution when India was oppressed under Indira Gandhi's undemocratic Emergency. Secularism is in the text of the Constitution. The Constituent Assembly had seen no need to put it in the Preamble. Socialism was never officially adopted in the Constitution, nor by the Congress which only resolved to work towards a 'Socialist Pattern of Society' at the Avadi session of AICC. To declare India to be socialist was grossly unconstitutional. This was compounded by Rajiv Gandhi in amending the Representation of the People Act and adding the requirement that all parties declare their belief in socialism. It was a massive misuse of his majority. Luckily after that the Congress has never won a majority.

The fact remains that the electoral procedure is built on a tissue of false assertions by all but a small number of Leftist political parties. Hypocrisy is a common coin of politics but there ought to be a limit. In a country where people rush to file a PIL for the most trivial of causes, no one has as yet challenged this set of untruths. It is like a collective conspiracy. We all know that no one means it when they say they adhere to socialism and no one cares that they are lying. *Satyameva Jayate* may be the national mantra but not in election procedures.

The most offensive part of this practice is that it is a violation of the Fundamental Right of Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Speech. Why should an Indian citizen not assert that she does not believe in socialism and wants to start a party which explicitly says so? Is India a democracy or not?

Opinion

SUNDAY, MARCH 10, 2019

ACROSS THE AISLE

P Chidambaram

The anti-national newspaper!

THE RAFALE CONTROVERSY will not go away! If it had been pushed to the background because of the Pulwama terrorist attack and the retaliatory strike by the Indian Air Force, Prime Minister Modi brought it back centre stage by his provocative remark, 'If we had the Rafale aircraft....'

To his misfortune, within two days of his remark, *The Hindu* published another investigative article on the Rafale deal. The article punctured the conclusion of the Comptroller & Auditor General (CAG) that the NDA deal was cheaper than the UPA deal by 2.86%. (The government's claim that the price it had negotiated was 9-20% cheaper had been rejected in the CAG's report.)

Which deal was cheaper?

The issue is quite simple. Under the UPA deal, Dassault was required to give a bank guarantee and a performance guarantee. Under the NDA deal, that requirement was waived. While providing a guarantee the bank will charge the customer, in this case Dassault. That is the 'cost' of the guarantee — something that every businessman is familiar with. In the Rafale deal, since a sum of approximately ₹60,000 crore was involved, the guarantee charges would have been stiff.

If one deal was loaded with guarantee charges and the other deal was not loaded with guarantee charges, common sense will tell us that, before the two prices are compared, the guarantee charges in the first deal should be taken out. CAG got the numbers. He calculated the charges in two parts:

Bank Guarantee charges	€ AAB1 m
Performance Guarantee & Warranty charges	€ AAB2 m
Total	**€ AAB3 m**

The CAG used alphanumerics because he had promised the government to 'redact' the price information! He did the government a huge favour.

However, the CAG was forced to conclude as follows:

"Therefore, the total saving of AAB3 million € accruing to the vendor by not having to pay these Bank Charges should have been passed on to Ministry. Ministry has agreed to the Audit calculations on Bank Guarantees but contended that this was a saving to the Ministry because the Bank guarantee charges were not to be paid. However Audit noted that this was actually a saving for M/s DA when compared to its previous offer of 2007."

CAG Failed the Nation

The guarantee charges remained hidden from the public and a meaningful comparison could not be made about the prices of the two deals. *The Hindu* story has ferreted out the information from the report of the Indian Negotiating Team (INT). The charges were €574 million. If this amount is taken out of the UPA deal and the two deals are compared, the NDA deal is more expensive by €246.11 million. At the current exchange rate of ₹80, the NDA deal is more expensive by ₹1,968 crore. On this count alone, each of the 36 aircraft will be more expensive by ₹54.66 crore.

Comptroller and Auditor General of India Rajiv Mehrishi PTI

It is a mystery why the Prime Minister's Office held parallel negotiations undermining the efforts of the INT. It is a mystery why the three anti-corruption clauses were deleted. It is a mystery why the payment security system — sovereign guarantee, bank guarantee and escrow account — was jettisoned. These could not have been done out of 'love and affection' for Dassault. The facts point to an oblique purpose. The CAG had a duty to probe these mysterious aspects and bring out the truth. He failed the country.

The Hindu is bringing out the hidden aspects of the deal one by one. And what is the government's response? The government is accusing the newspaper of using 'stolen documents' and threatening to slap criminal charges! The Attorney General of India was fielded by the government to hold out these threats!

Famous Stolen Papers

In 2012-14, the Government of India obtained the names of account holders in Swiss banks that had been hacked and passed on to France and Germany. The Income Tax department issued notices, raised tax demands and launched prosecutions. Was the I-T department acting on the basis of 'stolen documents'? Similarly, in 2016, 11.5 million documents were leaked from the computers of a law firm (stolen by someone?) to a German newspaper, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, which shared them with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. The I-T department had no qualms about releasing the names of account holders who were Indians or NRIs and issuing notices to them.

The famous Pentagon Papers were actually a secret report commissioned by the US Defense Secretary on the Vietnam war. It was leaked in 1971.

The Washington Post was preparing to publish them. The US government sued the newspapers. The US Supreme Court by a vote of 6-3 allowed *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* to publish the documents without the risk of censorship or punishment (403 U.S. 713). Justices Black, Douglas, Brennan Jr, Stewart, White and Marshall put freedom of speech above vague concerns of national security and held that spread of information was critical to keep the democratic process intact. No one even mentioned 'stolen documents'!

History is repeating itself, this time in India. Mr Modi and his ministers will brand *The Hindu* as anti-national or worse. Regardless of the invectives, readers will continue to read the newspaper. The Rafale aircraft will arrive. There will be an inquiry. The truth will be out. The life of the country will go on.

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INSIDE TRACK

COOMI KAPOOR

Timely cover-up

By the time clear satellite images were made available to the public, the Pakistanis had smartly finished reconstructing the roof over the bombed seminary at Balakot and attempted to cover up the destruction, officials say. Satellite photos could not be taken on the night of the aerial strikes because of the darkness. The next day the cloud cover prevented a satellite image being shot. On the third day, the Indian authorities managed to get a satellite picture revealing that the building had been damaged, particularly the roof, but the image was hazy. Instead of releasing this photograph immediately, it was simply put out on Twitter in the hope that a better shot would be available later. When commercial satellite photographs were finally taken more than a week later, the site did not look as ravaged as the first satellite image, thanks to Pakistan's swift restoration efforts, officials believe. But even in the later photos the blackened areas to the north of the building indicated significant damage.

Number crunching

Many wonder how the number of Pakistani casualties at Balakot was estimated at 250. The figure was first put out on Twitter and Facebook by those who had reportedly been fed by Indian Army intelligence sources in Kashmir. It was picked up by two TV channels. Adding to the confusion was Pakistan's initial claim that two Indian pilots and two aircraft were downed. Since India had only one missing pilot and aircraft, several Internet sites put out the theory that one pilot was actually a Pakistani who had been lynched by his own countrymen in PoK, assuming he was Indian. But the name of the dead pilot, supposedly the son of a former Pakistani Air Marshal, turned out to be fake.

Divided we fall

After Balakot, there have been renewed efforts to avoid divisions in the Opposition ranks. Mamata Banerjee, Sharad Pawar, the trusted US-based family friend of the Gandhis, Sam Pitroda, Muslim leaders from Uttar Pradesh and others have all voiced their concern. The problematic states where opposition parties are likely to cut into each other's vote share and help the BJP are: Delhi, Haryana and UP. In Delhi and Haryana, the local Congress leaders are against an alliance with AAP. In UP, the Congress is still hoping for a last-minute compromise with the BSP-SP alliance, which is feeling the heat because the Congress has emerged as a third force. Several BSP and SP potential Lok Sabha candidates, who lost the nomination because the partner was allotted the constituency, have joined the Congress in the hope of a ticket. The defectors to the Congress include former SP MP Rakesh Sachan from Fatehpur Sikri, former BSP MP from Sitapur Kaisar Jahan, and former BSP MP Kunwar Chand Vakil, who hopes to get the Congress ticket from Agra. The hurdle in the effort to persuade the SP and BSP to allot more seats to the Congress in UP is Mayawati's demand for seats in several other states as compensation.

Slow start

Rahul Gandhi is annoyed that the BJP's publicity campaign has already got off the ground while the Congress has yet to finalise a firm for its advertising. The BJP has gone for the same well-known publicity and advertising firms as it had done in 2014, and its campaign slogan '*Namumkin ab Mumkin Hai* (the impossible is now possible)' appears in a slate of recent government ads. The delay is reportedly because two factions, one led by Anand Sharma, who heads the Congress's publicity committee for the Lok Sabha elections, and the other by Jairam Ramesh, who is the coordinator of the party's core group, are working at cross-purposes. One side has even accused the other of inviting firms for presentation of their powerpoint proposals for shortlisting without calling all the committee members. Another grouse is that a little-known firm has been shortlisted.

Sons rise

The Congress is yet to announce nominations for Lok Sabha elections in Madhya Pradesh, but the scions of three political dynasties have been given the go-ahead to start campaigning from their respective family seats. MP chief minister Kamal Nath's son Nakul, who till now has stayed in the background, hopes to contest from Chhindwara, the parliamentary seat which his father won nine times. Arjun Singh's son Ajay Singh may have lost the election last time but is all set to contest from Satna. Arun Yadav, former PCC chief and the son of former minister Subhash Yadav, will stand from Khandwa.

On the clock

Golfers, stop thinking, and start playing

OVER THE TOP

Meraj Shah

ONE OF THE most singular rounds of golf I've had in the past few years was at the Blackstone course—the top-rated championship layout at the Mission Hills Resort in Haikou. Located on the idyllic island of Hainan in South China sea, and constructed on a bed of volcanic rock, this golf course is the pick of the lot amongst the 10 courses at this resort, and used to be the venue for a much publicised exhibition match-up between Rory Mc Ilroy and Tiger Woods, which is what I'd gone to witness on this particular occasion.

After the event was over (the details of which I won't get into here, but interested readers can look up that column in the archives of this column online), I inquired if it would be possible to get an interview with the CEO of Mission Hills. Dr Ken Chu conveyed that he would be happy to tee it up with me for nine holes the next morning as long as 'I didn't mind wrapping up in under an hour.'

I was a bit nonplussed, but assumed that the busy man probably used some kind of special high-speed cart to get around, and agreed. The purpose was the interview, and I'd got that, or so I thought.

To cut a long story short, the next morning, Dr Chu—who at the time looked more like an elite athlete than a corporate bigwig—hit his ball off the first tee and, pleasantries done, proceeded to sprint down the fairway at full pep. Given the fact that there was a gallery looking on, I did what seemed to be expected of me: sprint behind him, as if my life depended on it while the carts followed with the golf bags. And so it went: Chu would spend literally seconds on the golf ball, hit his shot and run off, with me following close behind. Eventually though, I held up the white flag and chose to retire to the cart. Needless to say, there was no interview. And that—six holes in 30 minutes—was my introduction to Speed Golf.

This quirky variant of the game has been around for a long time—speed golf tournaments are held across the world—but it is widely regarded by most weekend golfers as an anomaly. Most players, when I recount this experience, are bemused and tend to dismiss it as a mutation of their favourite pastime. "Just run if you want to run, why play golf like that?" chips in Parakram Rautela, a fellow hack and playing partner. Now Rautela, like a number of other players, is very deliberate about his golf game. A man of process, as it were: with an unchanging pre-shot routine. He lines up to the target, shuffles the hips, checks the clubface alignment, takes three looks to the target and then pulls the trigger—a joy to watch, really. Inexplicably, when he's around, or on the green, some gremlins creep into Rautela's mind, and freeze him over the golf ball.

Speed Golf, that combines running and golf, is becoming popular the world over

Time stands still in these moments, and eventually Rautela's playing partners start shooting furtive glances towards the group behind them, which is waiting back in the fairway. A few holes of this, and patience starts running thin. Now, Rautela manages to hit some spectacular chips and hole a fair number of these putts, which makes it hard to fault him for his interminable routine, but it's a fine line. Thankfully, the man is working on it.

Slow play has emerged as the biggest challenge in pro and amateur golf alike. It affects the players because rounds take longer to finish; it affects television viewership—only serious aficionados sit through hours of coverage. In my mind, it also affects the game's growth—it's hard to attract young people who find the sport too slow and boring.

But forget all that. I'm the first to admit that I'd continue to take my time if it really helped my game. None of these arguments are compelling enough reasons to speed up your play; here's one that works for me, and I'd just like to put it out there for readers to consider.

One of the biggest obstacles in becoming better at golf is the stationary ball. Unlike any other sport, the fact that the ball isn't moving means you're not moving into position to hit it. Try picking up, say, a racquet (any sport will do) and visualise hitting a shot to the other side of the court. Ideally a top spin, but it doesn't matter as long as you're hitting a definite shot to a definite point on the other side of the court. Your body moves naturally into the position it needs to for you to hit that particular shot. Your hands do what's required to execute that shot. You don't 'think' about what your body is doing and you certainly have no time to keep track of minute movements.

I know it sounds simplistic, but it is, in fact, quite hard. Simply because trusting your body to that degree is difficult when you've trained yourself to think about your golf swing.

Speed golf is a great way to break out of that mould. You don't have to run like Dr Chu, but try giving yourself, say, only five seconds to see the shot and hit it. That's not enough time to focus on the minutiae. All you'll end up doing is allowing the body and natural sporting instincts to take over. Focus comes naturally when you know you have just a few seconds to hit a shot. Time is of the essence.

A golfer, Meraj Shah also writes about the game

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Idea Exchange

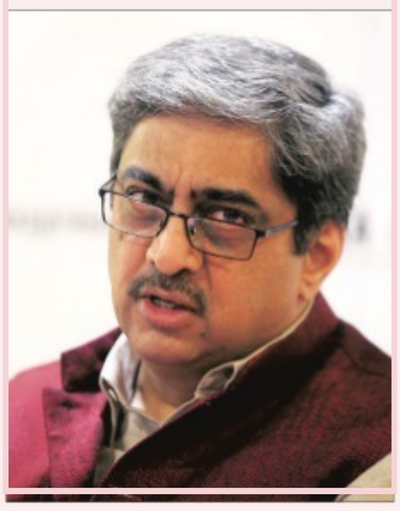
SUNDAY, MARCH 10, 2019

"(Before surgical strikes) Then foreign secy said something was building up... He asked me to prepare... When strikes took place, we spent four days locked down in a safe place at the High Commission in Pak"

WHY GAUTAM BAMBAWALE

The terror attack in Pulwama that killed 40 CRPF men, followed by the IAF's aerial strikes on Balakot, have led to an increase in tension between India and Pakistan. A 1984-batch Indian Foreign Service officer, Gautam Bambawale was India's High Commissioner to Pakistan in 2016 and 2017. He was in office when India undertook surgical strikes following the terrorist attack in Uri, and when Kulbhushan Jadhav was captured by Pakistan. Bambawale was India's ambassador to China in 2018, and handled the Wuhan Summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping following the Doklam stand-off

"On cricket, my own gut feeling is that just because the emotions are high, doesn't mean we stop playing cricket with Pak in an international setting... It's quite silly to lose points when we know we can beat them"



"One surgical or aerial strike may not force Pak to stop aiding terror. But we have raised the costs"

Former ambassador to China and ex-high commissioner to Pakistan Gautam Bambawale says the message from the recent air strike on Balakot is that India can undertake such an exercise 'successfully', insists there is 'no deep-seated hatred' between Indians and Pakistanis, and explains why, on listing of Masood Azhar as a terrorist, India needs to be 'transactional' with China

Former ambassador Gautam Bambawale with Senior Editor Shubhajit Roy in *The Indian Express* newsroom in Pune ARUL HORIZON

SHUBHAJIT ROY: What does the decision to conduct air strikes on terrorist camps in Pakistan mean?

Pakistan has been following a policy of bleeding India by a thousand cuts. That policy is of aiding, abetting and sponsoring terrorism directed at India. We have had terrorist incidents for almost 35-40 years, not only in Jammu and Kashmir but all over India. This is a low-cost strategy for the Pakistanis.

With the (surgical strikes) for the first time in 2016, and now again in 2019, what we have indicated is that the people of India have had it up to their necks in suffering from terrorist activities. Also, we have indicated — and the government can take credit for the bold and brave decision — that if Pakistan will not control terrorists, then we will go and strike them inside Pakistan. That is what has changed. A lot of people are describing it as a new template that has been brought to the table. I agree with that assessment. It is no one's case that one surgical strike, or one aerial strike, would force Pakistan to stop aiding and abetting terrorism. But we have increased and raised the costs for them to do this.

SHUBHAJIT ROY: We did not incur any casualties in the air strikes, but in such situations, things can go wrong. Were we prepared for that?

There is no doubt that it was a risky operation. But a lot of people in India are now saying that look, if Pakistan is not going to stop aiding and abetting terrorism, then we must take our own steps. These people are asking questions of our government. I think this government has only answered those questions by undertaking the surgical strikes of 2016 and the aerial strikes of 2019. I am sure the people in the government would have considered all the action-reaction scenarios, and only after assessing them would have decided to go ahead with it.

SHUBHAJIT ROY: You were India's High Commissioner to Pakistan when the surgical strikes were carried out by ground troops in 2016. How did you engage with the Pakistanis at the time?

The situation then was slightly different from what it is now. When the surgical strikes took place, the Pakistanis decided to deny it. And then they were not forced to react to it either. Regarding the decision to carry out those strikes, there were a number of options on the table. I cannot reveal the details, but I am very confident that the same options, maybe a few more, were on the table this time as well.

Much before the surgical strikes took place, and may be even before the attack on Uri, I had a long chat with the then foreign secretary, S Jaishankar, during one of my visits to New Delhi in 2016. One of the things he told me was that there was something building up. He said he did not know what will happen or what options will the government choose, but said if some action was taken against Pakistan, one of his primary concerns was to ensure that Indians at the High Commission in Islamabad remained safe. He asked me to prepare for a situation wherein everyone working at the Indian High Commission could be locked down in a safe place. We did actually prepare for that, and when the surgical strikes took place, we spent four days locked down in a safe place within the Indian High Commission.

AMITABH SINHA: So the former foreign secretary mentioned that something was building up against Pakistan even before the Uri attack? Then, were the surgical strikes a strategic decision rather than a response to an attack on the Indian State?

No, I am not saying that. My limited point is that the foreign secretary had enough foresight to visualise that we may get into a situation where the safety of the people in the High Commission in Islamabad could be at stake. He said that once he did not have to worry about the safety of Indians in Islamabad, he would be free to consider all options. So it is not that we had already decided to carry out surgical strikes before Uri. No, not at all.

AMITABH SINHA: There has been a debate on whether the recent aerial strikes were effective. For argument's sake, if we concede that there were zero casualties, and that the strikes probably did not hit the intended targets, would you even then say that the strikes were significant for India, strategically and diplomatically?

Firstly, in such situations we are not looking at benefit or loss, or victory or defeat. We are not thinking in those terms at all. The fact on the ground is that there is a lot of terrorism emanating from Pakistan. And we want to do something to raise the costs, to dissuade the other country from exercising this kind of option. I also want to say that the military strikes did indeed happen. We can quibble over whether 25 terrorists were killed or 200. That is something that we do not know about. But I believe that the strikes took place and were successful. That is also the most important part. That is the message. The message was not that 200 people were killed. The message was that we can undertake such an exercise to attack terrorist bases and infrastructure. And I think that message has been sent not just to the world but even to Pakistan.

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS: India wants to isolate Pakistan, but there is a SAARC summit that is due, and it has to be held in Islamabad. Do you think it will happen?

The SAARC summit has been due for some time. Pakistan is the next host. But we are not sure when it will happen. There are at least a few of us in the region — India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Bhutan — four out of eight members, who believe that this is not the right time to hold the SAARC summit.

PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS: China has been restrained in its response to the aerial strikes by India. What do you make of it?

The situation is not easy for China. From their perspective, terrorism is an issue that they realise is a problem across the world, including in China. The Chinese position on terrorism is very clear — they oppose it in all its forms and manifestations. On the other hand, they have this very close, tight strategic, economic, military relationship with Pakistan. Whatever they said at the time could also be due to the fact that our Foreign Minister was scheduled to go to China (for the Russia-India-China meeting). They were a little worried that she may cancel if they push too much. But the kind of reaction that came from the Chinese, even from the RIC meeting, I would say, is a step forward. It is much better for India than it has been in the past.

On the specific issue of listing of Masood Azhar as a terrorist, I think we need to be transactional with China. If there is something that we can do for China — say at the UN, there is an important election where they want us to vote for them — we should ask for a quid pro quo. I say this because last year when the grey listing of Pakistan took place at the Financial Action Task Force meeting, we were able to do this kind of transactional bargain with the Chinese. I think we can do it again. The timing is right. There is enough momentum internationally to get him listed.

MANOJ MORE: What do you make of the hatred that is portrayed between India and Pakistan? What is it like on the ground? Should we be playing cricket with them?

I don't think there is a deep-seated hatred for Indians among Pakistanis. The problem is that this terrorism, which is aided, abetted, supported, financed, by Pakistan, is bleeding us. That is the main thing that people in India would want to be stopped. You can discuss all kinds of things — music, literature — with Pakistanis very easily, but the moment it comes to bilateral issues there is a difference of opinion. It is because there is too much emotion involved, and it goes back to the times of Partition.

On cricket, my own gut feeling is that just because the emotions are high, doesn't mean that we stop playing cricket with Pakistan in an international setting. There is the World Cup (later this year). If we don't play, we will lose points. I think it is quite silly to lose points when we know we can beat them.

MANOJ MORE: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said he had tried to speak to PM Modi. Do you think the Indian PM should talk to his counterpart in Pakistan?

"If you look at the entire episode (aerial strikes by India), the big takeaway is that the international community stood by India's right to self-defence. That is where we have won in this messaging war"

Imran Khan is not the first PM to say he wants talks. There were many before him. For us, we have seen this happening before. The point is that if you want to have some sort of talks between India and Pakistan, I don't believe that the right way to do it is to start at the prime ministerial level. This is one of the reasons why we did not achieve success at the Agra talks in 2001. I would say that whenever we decide to talk to Pakistan, it should start at the lower levels. So you have to have preparatory talks at whatever level it is decided and then build up to a prime ministerial meeting.

Secondly, after the Pulwama attack, Imran Khan said 'give us proof and we will investigate'. Once again, this is an old record that has been played many times earlier. I want to go back to 2016. The moment the Pathankot attack took place, Nawaz Sharif said the same thing. At the time, we decided to believe them. We allowed their team, which included people from the military and the intelligence, to come to India, and the government faced a lot of flak for it. We gave them all the possible proof. It didn't go anywhere after that.

SHUBHAJIT ROY: Was the decision to allow a team of Pakistani investigators to access one of the most forward airbases a prudent move?

Sometimes you decide to place trust in these things. I think it was the first time in decades, if not ever, when we actually allowed a Pakistan investigation team to come. The idea was to share all the information that we have. Taking them to Pathankot was a decision at the highest levels of the government. We did not take them to sensitive parts of the base. We only allowed them access to areas that are relatively less sensitive.

ANJALI MARAR: How do you see India's presence, and Pakistan's absence, at the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) this year?

The OIC has recognised the anomaly that one of the countries with the biggest Muslim population was not part of the OIC, and this is a recognition of the facts on the ground. At the same time, we should not think that suddenly the OIC has changed its position completely. This is a process. And it is a process that will unfold in the next 15-20 years. Our participation in the OIC is a turning point, an important inflection point in our relations with West Asia and Islamic countries.

AJAY KHAPE: Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman was released very soon, in about 48 hours...

According to the Geneva Convention, they would have had to release him at some point in time. I think the way it must have happened is that Prime Minister Imran Khan might have said that if we have to release him after a few days, why not give him up today and claim credit for it. I hope that is what has happened because it then means that he has been able to convince the military authorities in Pakistan to do this. That is relatively a good thing. I think it was a goodwill gesture, even if it came under international pressure.

AMITABH SINHA: Pakistan started the 'nuclear' talk on the first day after the strikes. They had a nuclear command meeting as well but probably decided not to go any further. So, their nuclear threshold is probably not as low as many in India thought?

They would have a threshold. I don't know what it is. Maybe people in government have a better idea. I don't think it is as easy to cross the nuclear threshold.

SHUBHAJIT ROY: How have we handled the case of Kulbhushan Jadhav, whom Pakistan has accused of being an Indian spy?

I want to make only two points. Firstly, it is incumbent on any government that has signed or is party to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations to give consular access, and till today, Pakistan has not given it to us. Our whole case at the International Court of Justice is this — that you have an international law that provides for consular access and these guys have not given it. The second point is that when a military court undertakes a hearing, we don't know what happens. We don't know whether there was anyone to defend him. So that sort of proceeding is bad in law, and hopefully will be turned down by any international court.

SUSHANT KULKARNI: There is also a perception battle being fought after the aerial strikes.

If you look at the entire episode, you will see the big takeaway is that the entire international community stood by India's right to self-defence. I think that is the big picture and that is where we have won in this messaging war.

SHUBHAJIT ROY: There have been three incidents of stand-off with China in recent years. How has the approach of India changed?

You have to factor in the fact that India and China not only do not have a common boundary but we don't even have a common line of control. When you add to that the fact that both sides have better technology, better roads, better communication... What is beginning to happen is that the militaries of India and China, which used to be fairly far apart, are now coming closer to each other. Both India and China are also conscious not to push the envelope.

SHUBHAJIT ROY: The informal summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and China's President Xi Jinping in Wuhan last year was dubbed as agenda-less...

We decided that after the confrontation at Doklam, it was important to keep talking to each other. Both countries were able to talk to each other through diplomatic channels. And we agreed to have an informal summit between the leaders. The two leaders spent about eight to 10 hours together. In a formal setting, meetings usually don't last for more than an hour or so. They were able to cover a lot of topics... It helped clear the air, clear the misunderstandings. It was not an agenda-less meeting. Certain topics were agreed for talks. They covered that and much more.

Informal summits are probably a new diplomatic template that has been introduced. Later this year, when the elections are over, I think the Chinese President will visit India for an informal summit.

An artistic anarchy for politics of peace

A unique protest raises questions about our times through plays, poetry, art and conversations, writes **Amrita Singh**

*"Agar ab bhi nahi bologe, toh kab bologe (*If you don't speak up now, when will you speak up)?"*

These were the first few words I heard as I entered 15 August Park at the Red Fort in New Delhi. Before I could stop and take a moment to reflect on what I had heard, I was in the midst of artistic anarchy, with poetry being recited close to where I stood, hip-hop playing on the other end of the park, a man walking around with a sack covering everything but his legs, and a lot of people from diverse backgrounds hopping from one spot to the other to engage with different kinds of art — from short films to art installations — in every nook and cranny.

I was here to witness "Artists Unite! for Democracy against Hate", a unique two-day event held last week. Contrary to the way it was organised, replete with food stalls and performances by the likes of singers like Shubha Mudgal, it was not merely a cultural gathering but a protest by artistes who feel the right to life, the right to love and food choices, cultural expression, language and histories are under assault by a politics of hate in India.

Saba Dewan, the documentary filmmaker who spearheaded the "Not In My Name" campaign at Jantar Mantar in Delhi two years ago against lynching of Muslims and Dalits, was one of the core organisers of Artists Unite in Delhi. Just like the idea behind Not In My Name resonated with many in different cities across the country, Artists Unite, too, made its way to cities like Mumbai, Bengaluru and Chandigarh. While Mumbai witnessed a parade from Dadar to the Carter Road sea face with performers who belong to different art disciplines, artists in Chennai organised a film festival at the Panuval bookstore.

The uniqueness of this protest, organised like a cultural gathering, lies in the fact that there is no singular body responsible for organising it. In fact, the reins are in the hands of artists from different cities who wish to use their art as a language to reach out to people and spread the message of peace.

According to Dewan, the idea to organise Artists Unite gained momentum in September last year. It all started with a declaration, which served as "a call for a national convention of artists to weigh in with a collective voice, and with creative energy that makes arts and literature a site of resistance to the hate politics that is sweeping the country". To date, more than 750 signatories have endorsed this declaration. Among them are actor Naseeruddin Shah, writer Arundhati Roy, Bharatanatyam exponent Navtej Singh Johar and Carnatic music vocalist T M Krishna.

The declaration mentions how new cultural narratives, driven by the ideology of hate, revenge, aggression and violence, have taken shape in the form of lynchings, murderous attacks on writers and artistes, disruption of cultural events and the re-writing of history, all of which have made headlines in the last five years. Whether it was the murder of journalist Gauri Lankesh in 2017 or *Eidgah ke Jinnat*, a play on stone-pelting in Kashmir, being cancelled in Jaipur a few weeks ago as protesters stormed Jawahar Kala Kendra, the protest was aimed at drawing attention to issues and events that have in some way or the other marred India's cultural, ethnic and religious diversity.

The protest, a peaceful gathering of artistes and non-artists, comprised many stages, or *manch*, which were named Ekta (Unity) Manch, Lok (People) Manch and Zindabad (Long live) Manch. These stages in fact were areas in the park that could be accessed without any barriers. There was also a Tasveer (Films) Ghar, Azad (Free) Manch and Khula Manch, or open mic. These had the artistes either dancing, singing, displaying their creations, playing chess, acting or simply moving around. Khula Manch was for people attending the protest, not necessarily artistes, to voice their opinions.

The uniqueness of this protest, organised like a cultural gathering, lies in the fact that there is no singular body responsible for organising it. The reins are in the hands of artists from different cities who wish to use art as a language to reach out to people and spread the message of peace

At Lok Manch, Third Space Collective, a group of theatre practitioners from Delhi, put up a performance with seven actors enacting the role of bystanders at the student protests that broke out at Ramjas College, Delhi University, in February 2017. Devoid of dialogue, the performance relied on descriptive narration and acting to take the audience back to the scene of the clash between students from the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and those who were protesting the violent manner in which the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)-linked organisation had disrupted a programme at Ramjas College held the previous day. The brutal beating of the students by the police, stone pelting, acid attacks and sexual harassment, among other atrocities, made their way into the narration, making each audience member a bystander to the violence as well.

"We need to speak to people who don't belong to these arts," says Neel Sengupta, a member of Third Space Collective. "Our actors for this performance are those who have just finished college and were witness to these student protests," he adds. By playing with form in theatre, using Hindi or non-verbal methods of communication and experimenting with socio-political content, the collective plans to reach out to the masses to begin conversations about the challenges of our times.

❶ **Inder Salim, a poet from Kashmir, appeals for peace**

❷ **Third Space Collective puts up a performance about the student protests that broke out at Ramjas College, Delhi University, in February 2017**

❸ **A protester performs his poetry at Kula Manch**

Aishwarya Srivastava, a young poet, recited her poem titled "I Am Not a Kashmiri and I Am Sorry". Lines like "forced to choose between hunger or grief" dealt with compassionate employment given to next-of-kin of civilians killed in militancy related incidents, while "if free is something your really were" pointed towards the many curfews and disruption of daily lives of those in the Valley of conflict.

A *nukkad natak* (street play) organised by students of Kirori Mal College, University of Delhi, drew a large crowd as it raised questions about the disdain of the powers that be towards critical thinking and dissenting opinions. The dialogue "*Sawaal karne waale yahaan Naxal kehlata* (One who questions is deemed a Naxal)," received roaring applause from the crowd gathered around the performers.

Similarly, a tent called the "Memorial of Mourning" played graphic scenes from movies like *Fandry* (2013), a Marathi film about a young Dalit boy, while the track "Azadi" from *Gully Boy* played in the background.

Madhavi Kukreja, a women's rights activist who has been organising the Sanatkada Lucknow Festival for the past 10 years, was one of the many known figures who attended the protest. "The idea is to appeal to people through such cultural events so that they can connect with art and the artistes and experience the politics of love and diversity."

With 20,000 people turning up on the second and last day of the protest, and with no entry charges, Artists Unite managed to bring people of different classes, religions, castes and communities together to experience unity and love.

Choosing Red Fort as the venue was a conscious decision, explains Dewan. "Why should such protests take place only in South Delhi or Central Delhi? More importantly, Red Fort holds historical significance as the first Independence Day was celebrated here. Performing and displaying their work here is extremely emotional for all these artistes," she adds.

Aparajita Jain, director at Nature Morte Gallery in Delhi, argues that art has broken beyond attracting merely a niche crowd due to growth in contemporary art forms like street art, community-led art projects and the emergence of public art spaces like The Sculpture Park in Jaipur, which is accessible to all.

"Events such as this [Artists Unite!] showcase the diversity and plurality that is at the heart of contemporary art in India, and bring out concerns regarding social justice, equality, and inclusive growth at a public platform, towards which we are all driven but perhaps fail to collectively address. These events allow us to come together, and cross our differences through art."

IMO

A Rafale fighter jet

CONTROVERSY OVER RAFALE DOCUMENTS

Nirmala Sitharaman@nsitharaman
1.Learned AG KK Venugopal told @PTI_News the Rafale documents were not stolen from the Defence Ministry & what he meant in his submission before the Supreme Court was that petitioners in the application used "photocopies of the original" papers, deemed secret by the government.

Randeep Singh Surjewala@rssurjewala
Art of serving hundred lies to hide one truth!
Yesterday in Supreme Court–
Rafale files have been stolen.
Today –Photocopies of Rafale files have been stolen. Modi ji, What's the 'duplicity' for tomorrow?

Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan@DrTamilisaiBJP
MK Stalin asking how Modi will protect country if he can't protect Rafale docus' is condemnable.Modi has prooven as a timely decision making PM by his surgical strikes on terrorists.Responsible leaders should have condemned black sheeps near corridors of power stealing documents

Barkha Dutt@BDUTT
By saying #Rafale documents 'stolen' from defence ministry the Attorney General has just officially validated the reporting of @nramind.

Jyotiraditya Scindia@JM_Scindia
Going back and forth on their stand is this govt's second nature. One thing's clear: the @BJP4India is putting up the worst to cover up its misdoings, and the best to prove that it is a "suit boot ki sarkar".

Manuraj S@manuraj1983
Intelligence failure in the lead up to Pathankot and Pulwama+Contradictory statements on casualities after Balakot+Major gaps in explaining procurement process in Rafale+Now, Ministry reports theft of confidential documents; National security fail!

DONALD TRUMP'S TIM APPLE GAFFE

Sanjay Jha@JhaSanjay
Tim Apple. Should we have a name change here too; #NarendraRafale?

Anderson Cooper@AC360
.@andersoncooper on Pres. Trump's 'Tim Apple' gaffe: Give the President a break. He has a lot to deal with and Cook is a tough name to remember. It's a tough tongue twister like all one-syllable names are. #TheRidiculist

ATTACK ON KASHMIRI VENDORS IN LUCKNOW

Rachit Seth@rachitseth
Kashmiri vendors beaten in Lucknow. Nobody from any state should be attacked.
1 person thrashed in Muzaffarnagar because he was critiquing the Modi Govt on Local TV.
Both these incidents are telling what kind of society we have become under the Mob & Lynch Raj of BJP!

Omar Abdullah@OmarAbdullah
Nothing will do more damage to the idea of India in J&K than videos like these. Keep thrashing Kashmiris like this on the streets at the hands of RSS/Bajrang Dal goons & then try to sell the idea of "atoot ang", it simply wont fly.

Shah Faesal@shahfaesal
SSP @ipsnaithani is my batchmate and I am very happy that he has cracked whip on the goons who thrashed Kashmiri street-vendor in Lucknow.Welldone cop.

Kylie Jenner is the future of shopping

The social media phenomenon that she represents is here to stay

ANDREA FELSTED
9 March

Kylie Jenner's debut on the Bloomberg Billionaires Index at the ripe old age of 21 should strike fear into the hearts of mainstream consumer companies everywhere.

The young member of the Kardashian-Jenner clan (a brood made famous by reality TV) has joined the tycoon club after signing an exclusive partnership for her cosmetics company with Ulta Beauty Inc, a chain of US beauty stores. The deal embodies the trends —ultra-celebrity branding, Instagram and smartphone shopping — that are reshaping the retail landscape in everything from liquid foundation to food.

The giant corporates that still dominate the consumer industry have little choice but to try to keep up, not just with the Kardashians but the millions of "Konsumers" they have spawned.

Women have always looked to well-known personalities for inspiration. But Jenner takes the cult of celebrity endorsement to a new level. Not content to merely stick her name on something from LVMH SE or Kering SA and take a percentage, she kept more of the branding value for herself by setting up her own company. And why not? Jenner belongs to arguably the best-known family in the world (after the Windsors). The Kardashians are an industry in their own right, a powerful machine that pumps out influence over much of what we buy, whether that's leggings or lipstick.

Like her half-sister, Kim Kardashian West, Jenner is a hugely powerful presence on social media. But by founding Kylie Cosmetics back in 2015, she has managed to take that in an even more lucrative direction. With 128 million Instagram followers, she can communicate directly with her fans, who then become customers.

With 128 million Instagram followers, Jenner (*pictured*) can communicate directly with her fans, who then become customers

The assumptions used to calculate Jenner's wealth are still open to interpretation, as Kylie Cosmetics outsources its manufacturing, packaging and sales to other companies according to Bloomberg News. The terms on those deals aren't public. But she has shown that with the right name and face you can cut out the L'Oreals and Procter & Gambles and just sell straight to the market.

While Ulta's bricks-and-mortar stores open up a new channel, before now she has sold to her millions of followers over the internet, most likely via their phones. *Forbes* magazine, which first reported Jenner's billionaire status, said Kylie Cosmetics had sales of $360 million last year. So how can mainstream brand-owners make sure they don't lose market share to future "super-influencers." First off, they can try the traditional route of just signing them up to front their brands. But even this can be fraught with peril. L'Oreal, a competent operator on social media, parted company with transgender model Munroe Bergdorf in 2017 after claims she posted racist comments online. Bergdorf has 119,000 Instagram followers, so that was a lot of potentially upset customers once the relationship didn't work out.

Other consumer groups have gone further. LVMH has teamed up with pop star Rihanna (68.4 million Instagram followers) to create Fenty Beauty, another makeup line. Fenty generated €500 million ($561 million) of sales in 2018, according to the French luxury giant. Rihanna's cut of the profit is undisclosed, but this looks like a smart way for the industry to keep pace with the social media revolution in shopping.

Still, not all tie-ups are successful. Estee Lauder ended its collaboration with Kendall Jenner (Kylie's sister, 105 million Instagram followers) after just 18 months because the Estee Edit, as it was known, fell short of expectations. Executives described it as "not authentic." But perhaps the mistake was not plastering Kendall's name all over the range, as Kylie has with her products.

Another option is buying celebrity brands outright. At some point "celebpreneurs" like Jenner will want to cash in via an exit. The purchasing company can then combine the draw of a famous name with its powerful distribution network, thereby turbo-charging sales. It's an expensive choice, though. Diageo paid as much as $1 billion in 2017 for George Clooney's tequila brand.

Any buyer of a celebrity-backed company is also betting on their popularity lasting. In a world where fortunes can turn on a tweet, that's a big risk.

There's always the safer option of buying non-celebrity brands that serve similar consumer categories. For example, L'Oreal, Estee Lauder and Unilever have been snapping up niche cosmetics, skincare and fragrance businesses for the past few years. Companies could also do better at product innovation, though that's never easy when they're as big as they are.

The public's fickleness means Jenner's star will fade eventually, but the social media phenomenon that she represents is surely here to stay – especially given that the big consumer brands are deeply unimpressed with the returns they get from advertising through Google and Facebook. What can compete with a superstar sharing their intimate thoughts about products with millions of shoppers?

BLOOMBERG