

# When a director senses smoke

Act, talk, share, counsel, but don't sit around and keep thinking



## THE WISE LEADER

R GOPALAKRISHNAN

On January 20, 2019, *Los Angeles Times* carried a report about the allegedly toxic leadership style and adverse impact on colleagues of an important public figure, the chancellor of the University of California. I don't know the person or the facts, but the report was an investigative response after sensing smoke. There is great awareness about toxic leaders, and the

possibility of creating autocratic CEOs nowadays. When sensed, boards can no more turn a blind eye. They have to respond with action just as they would if they sensed a burning smell in their residential building.

The board member of a reputed Trust recently asked, "We hear about domination by our CEO, who happens to be delivering. Even if slightly questioned, he becomes defensive and touchy, giving the impression of his way or the highway. As a board member, what should I do?". He could sense smoke but could not see any fire.

The short answer is sniff deeply, keep sniffing, be concerned, act, and don't look helpless. The outside perception of a CEO is often better than the internal perception, which serves as a prodromal signal. Experience has taught me that the leadership behaviour of a leader offers clues, better than the classical rational man theories. There are four symptoms that strongly suggest that a leader may be heading into toxicity.

First, a huge concentration of power. People in the organisation demonstrate a fear of speaking up. Such a leader is often surrounded by a tale-bearing coterie. Think of the hush-hush behaviour these days among senior Delhi officers, or managers in some promoter-dominated companies. This is a worry signal.

Second, the leader is considered to do no wrong, he or she is deified. There is heavy image promotion by corporate communications. Think of Mallya, Kapoor and Singh brothers. Think of the blusteringly ridiculous claims of Patanjali Ayurved and Ramdev.

Third, when the leader constantly refers to a hidden threat, a competitive and devious industrialist. Managers are expected to stop questioning things, and just close ranks against this enemy. Think of Swiss bank account-holding promoters, who paint every MNC as a profit-seeking, forex-repatriating devil.

Fourth and last, there is visible degradation of long-standing attributes that the organisation has been known for. It

could be leverage on the balance sheet, Rambo pledging of stocks, decline in product quality rankings, employee attrition and frequent departure of senior managers. There is a general air of hubris.

Beware of CEOs, who drop names, seek visibility, behave arrogantly, and talk smoothly. When the company does well, they imply that it is their vision and strategy. When the company runs into problems, they blame demonisation, Brexit, China, and what have you.

My naval friend says that he judges the stability and balance of a ship by the wake of the ship—the symmetrical patterns remaining in the water after the ship has sailed through. If the CEO leaves a poor wake on his people, a director must do something, that is for sure. But what?

Albert Hirschman, a political economist and intellectual, wrote a book (*Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, 1970) about the two ways of reacting: Quitting (exit) or speaking up (voice). Institutional loyalty influences the manner of exit — low loyalty results in a quiet exit, high loyalty leads to a visible exit. An unemotional relationship with the institution will almost always lead to a quiet exit.

Former White House Counsel, John Dean wrote recently about his 1973 tes-

timony to Congress in the matter of the criminal conduct of President Richard Nixon (*New York Times*, March 1, 2019). It was only after John Dean's testimony that the secret recordings emerged, leading to the exit of Nixon. The contemporary White House counsel, Michael Cohen, has testified about Trump in terms similar to the testimony about Nixon — smoke was sensed and the fire is being verified.

Quiet exits should cause discomfit. Mint reported (December 19, 2018) that 743 independent directors had vacated their position before the end of their tenure on listed company boards, but 561 did so without adequate reasons. However, the law requires a reason; a common bluster is about personal reasons and preoccupation. There are exceptions, for example, a couple of directors of YES Bank and JM Financial Asset Reconstruction Company stated that there was inadequate governance while stepping down.

You may well have a dangerous situation. Act, talk, share, counsel, but don't sit around and keep thinking.

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## CHINESE WHISPERS

### Saving refreshment charges

The Delhi unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party is set to inaugurate its new "war room" for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. However, the day the *bhoomi poojan* was scheduled, journalists were told that the event had been postponed till April and the war room — in its Delhi state office on Pandit Pant Marg — would be inaugurated during *Navaratri* as it was more auspicious. Insiders, however, said the party had chosen the first date, assuming that the Delhi polls would be held in the first or the second phase. But when the Election Commission announced that Delhi would, in fact, vote on May 12, the sixth phase, it changed its mind to avoid having its supporters lingering for a month or so. "This way we avoid paying the refreshment bills for supporters from all seven constituencies for an extra month," said an insider. Also, some workers felt the new work culture in the party left little scope for a "war room".

### Jumping from pole to pole

Congress Spokesperson Tom Vadakkan on Thursday joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Maharashtra Congress Legislative Party leader Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil could follow his son to the BJP in the coming days, sources said. However, former Uttarakhand chief minister B C Khanduri's son Manish is mulling joining the Congress. While Khanduri junior has refused to comment on the matter, Congress sources say he is set to join their party on Saturday at a public rally in Uttarakhand, to be addressed by Congress President Rahul Gandhi. While Vadakkan is seeking the BJP's Lok Sabha ticket in one of his home state Kerala's 21 constituencies, Khanduri junior could be the Congress candidate from the Pauri Garhwal seat.

### Priyanka: Will she, won't she?



The latest headache for the Congress party is finalising its general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's travel plans in Uttar Pradesh. On Thursday, the party let it be known that Priyanka could travel by boat in the Ganga from Allahabad to Varanasi next Monday. However, by evening Congress party sources said her programme had been postponed to a later date. This isn't the first time that her itinerary in Uttar Pradesh has been changed. The Congress hopes Priyanka's boat ride would bring into focus the problems with the government's 'Namami Gange' campaign. In Varanasi, Priyanka was to visit the Dashashwamedh Ghat and Kashi Vishwanath temple, and pay a visit to the family of a CRPF personnel killed in the Pulwama terror attack.

# Making sense of Indo-Pak conflict

If the media, in both countries, wishes to play a socially responsible role, then it must proceed with caution



SANJIT DHAMA

The recent India-Pakistan conflict provides rich data on individual human behaviour that makes perfect sense within behavioural economics. Behavioural economics studies individual behaviour using an eclectic mix of economics, psychology, sociology, neuroscience, and other behavioural sciences, within a mathematically rigorous framework.

The public in both countries has access to almost identical information through electronic and print media. Yet, purely by an accident of birth that determines one's citizenship, most of 1.3 billion Indians and 0.2 billion Pakistanis choose to believe in mutually incompatible narratives of events. For instance, whether an F-16 was shot down, the number terrorists killed, and the number of Indian aircraft lost. Why do such mutually inconsistent beliefs persist and why does each side appear to completely discount the beliefs of the other? While the Pakistani narrative is silent about the role played by it in cross-border terrorism, the Indian narrative is silent about the role that it played in alienating a large chunk of

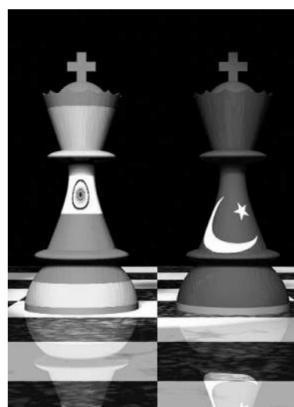
the Kashmiri population. Each side is persuaded in the objective and moral correctness of its own view.

Theories of financial markets assume that individuals quickly update their beliefs in an identical manner when they observe common public information (for instance, dividends or earnings announcements) and immediately learn from each other's beliefs and actions. Behavioural economics shows that this assumption is as incorrect in finance, as it is in many other contexts.

Below I draw on my 2016 book (*Foundations of Behavioral Economic Analysis*) in offering some insights into these questions.

Henri Tajfel was a Polish Jew studying chemistry at the Sorbonne in France at the time of World War II in which he lost his entire family in concentration camps. He switched to social psychology to discover the nature of human prejudice. His work gave rise to the social identity theory. The main insight is that humans classify others into ingroups and outgroups and favour ingroups over outgroups. Examples include attempts by corporate entities to inculcate a corporation-specific culture and armed forces that try to inculcate a military identity relative to a civilian identity. On the negative side, social identity gives rise to social discrimination, prejudices, and the need for affirmative action.

Experiments in behavioural economics show that minimal group iden-



tities, in which individuals are classified into blue and red groups, is sufficient to elicit ingroup favouritism. Social identity becomes highly salient at times where one perceives that the ingroup is engaged in conflict with an outgroup. Propaganda has been historically used to prime social identity and to paint the ingroup position as a just cause, while characterising the outgroup position as unjust, untrustworthy, and malicious.

Once suitably primed, otherwise peaceful individuals view any ingroup member killed in a military conflict as a martyr and celebrate the valour of their forces in killing the enemy, yet in each case a human life is lost. Indeed,

many humans engage in this behaviour automatically, without engaging in conscious deliberation, which suggests that social identity has evolutionary origins. While most humans find it comforting to associate with the ingroup narrative, some do challenge it, which typically invites a hostile reaction, particularly in times of heightened social identities. Joseph Goebbels, the German Reich minister of propaganda in World War II, understood this very well.

The media, in both countries, has played its role in sharpening social identities on the just cause/malicious intent divide. If it has a good understanding of this mechanism, and if it wishes to play a socially responsible role, then it must proceed with great caution.

So why is it difficult to alter one's prior beliefs and mental models about the world, given that they might have arisen from social identity or other considerations in the first place? This bit of the puzzle is solved by invoking a very robust feature of human behaviour—confirmation bias. I use the following definition from p. 1391 of my book which deserves to be read in full: "...there is considerable evidence that people tend to interpret subsequent evidence so as to maintain their initial beliefs. The biased assimilation processes underlying this effect may include a propensity to remember the strengths of confirming evidence but the weaknesses of disconfirming evidence, to judge confirming evidence as relevant and reliable but disconfirming evidence as irrelevant and unreliable, and to accept confirming evidence at face value while scrutinizing discon-

firming evidence hypercritically. With confirming evidence, we suspect that both lay and professional scientists rapidly reduce the complexity of the information and remember only a few well-chosen supportive impressions. With disconfirming evidence, they continue to reflect upon any information that suggests less damaging 'alternative interpretations'. Indeed, they may even come to regard the ambiguities and conceptual flaws in the data opposing their hypotheses as somehow suggestive of the fundamental correctness of those hypotheses. Thus, completely inconsistent or even random data — when "processed" in a suitably biased fashion — can maintain or even reinforce one's preconceptions."

Social identity first locks down our beliefs into country-specific narratives and then confirmation bias simply confirms our initially held beliefs and models, independent of the strength and the quality of the evidence that we observe. The result is separate, parallel, incompatible narratives.

Behavioural economics sometimes finds it useful to draw a distinction between System 1 (quick, reactive, impulsive, automatic part of the brain associated with the limbic system) and System 2 (slow, deliberative, conscious, long-term decision-making part of the brain associated with the prefrontal cortex). One of the great personal challenges for all humans is to ensure that when the occasion demands, we use System 2 to rein in System 1, which is responsible for the confirmation bias and for automatic conformity with social identity. This can be terribly difficult, but it is also an opportunity to demonstrate human character of a high order, which has also been observed in this conflict. Herein lies real hope.

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## INSIGHT

# A silent political killer

Unemployment can become big and yet remain undetected. Its impact can be a critical vote swing



YOGENDRA YADAV

Is unemployment going to be the silent political killer in this election? This must be our first question, as we limp back from heightened national security anxiety towards other regular concerns. Every available evidence points to this possibility. But as of now, it is just a possibility.

Let us begin with objective data. *The State of Working India*, a report on jobs and joblessness released in November 2018 by Centre for Sustainable Employment at the Azim Premji University pretty much summarised the existing knowledge on this subject. We are shifting from a chronic but invisible and politically manageable problem of under-employment to an acute, felt and potentially explosive problem of open unemployment. The report estimated open unemployment to be upward of 5 per cent, but well over 15 per cent among the youth and the educated. This pure form of unemployment is in addition to precarious and underpaid employment, besides of course the old-style under-employment.

Since then, two more pieces of evidence have been made available in the public domain. The National Sample

Survey Organisation's (NSSO) Periodic Labour Force Survey report got leaked and showed that in 2018, unemployment was at 6.1 per cent, the highest ever recorded since the organisation started measuring it in 1972. The report also confirmed that the situation had got much worse under the Modi regime. It indicated that the figure may have been much worse post-demonetisation and that women workers were the worst victims of joblessness. The latest report of reliable household surveys by the Centre for the Monitoring of Indian Economy (CMIE) estimates the unemployment rate to be 6.9 per cent. CMIE estimates that as many as 11 million jobs were lost between December 2017 and December 2018.

These reliable data figures can be supplemented by umpteen ground reports and sectoral estimates. The All India Manufacturers' Organisation (AIMO) has confirmed the loss of jobs. Reports of obscenely large number of applicants for a few public sector jobs appear regularly. The question is: Do people sense and feel this crisis of joblessness?

Every single public opinion poll over the last two years has discovered unemployment under the Modi regime to be the top issue that the people are concerned about. The credible CSDS Mood of the Nation survey found in May 2018 that 26 per cent of the respondents spontaneously mentioned lack of jobs as the biggest problem in the country. This is nearly double of what comparable surveys by CSDS recorded earlier: Just 8 per cent in 2014, 13 per cent in 2009 and 12 per cent in 1996. Even post Balakot, a telephonic national representative survey carried out by *India Today* found as many as 36 per



cent respondents mentioned joblessness as the issue that would determine their vote, compared to 23 per cent who mentioned terrorism and 22 per cent who mentioned farm crisis. So, joblessness is an issue, not just for economists, but also for the people.

Let us finally turn to Union minister Arun Jaitley's question: If unemployment is so acute, why are the people not taking it to the streets? The simple answer is: They are. Scan the news carefully and you would find every day some protest or the other on an issue related to jobs. In the last one month, there was a protest in Patna by students of Magadh University against a delay in their exam results, by engineers in Pune against being debarred from applying for the category of junior engineer, by candidates selected for UP Police but being denied an opportunity to join. Besides, how do you read massive agitations by Patidars in Gujarat, Marathas in Maharashtra, Kapus in Andhra and Jats in Haryana if not as movements triggered by job crisis? And there were smaller, but no less significant, national level protests organised under banners such as Young India Adhikar March and Yuva Halla Bol.

Yet, unemployment does not enjoy as much visibility as farm distress nor

does it generate partisan political battles as Rafale or other allegations of corruption do. Its victims experience it as a personal failure or misfortune, not as systemic injustice. They prefer private solutions over collective redress. Joblessness spawns myriad reactions and protests. But it does not lend itself to nationwide mobilisation of its victims. There is no ready platform where to-be-unemployed students, unemployed aspirants for jobs, poorly employed contract workers and employable youth can come together. There is as yet no clear positive agenda that most groups and organisations protesting against joblessness subscribe to. That is why unemployment is at once the most salient and the most silent political issue.

But in its silence lies the danger. Quietly, this issue can become big and yet remain undetected. It would just take one event, one imaginative leader or one catchy promise to catapult this issue to the centre-stage. Its impact could catch the ruling party off-guard and lead to critical swing of votes and massive swing in political fortunes. That is what they call a silent killer.

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## LETTERS

### Good intervention

This refers to "RBI puts auditors of banks on notice" (March 14). The decision of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to hold structured quarterly meetings with the auditors of banks is welcome. These meetings will not only enable the supervisory authorities to indirectly oversee the work of the external auditors but give the latter an opportunity to discuss the lending practices of banks, implementation of asset classification norms, provisioning, non-performing assets, suspicious transactions, frauds etc. The auditors meet the audit committees of the banks when their quarterly results are declared. They do share their concerns about the aforesaid issues but I can say with my experience as a director on the board of a public sector bank that quite often the members of these committees tend to either ignore them or little follow up is done. The structured quarterly meetings with the supervisory authorities in the central bank will enable the latter to pick up the danger signals/look at issues of concern in a timely manner. I feel the entire auditing processes especially the internal audit — concurrent, revenue etc — needs to be streamlined. The internal audit departments need to be properly staffed with good officers and audit reports put up to the audit committees and boards of banks need to be carefully looked at and areas of concern timely addressed. Strong internal audit systems and processes provide a powerful tool to the board, external auditors and regulators to sight the areas of concern and provide timely remedies. Banks that give a short shift to their auditing systems

always pay a heavy price for it.

Arun Pasricha New Delhi

### Lessons in philanthropy

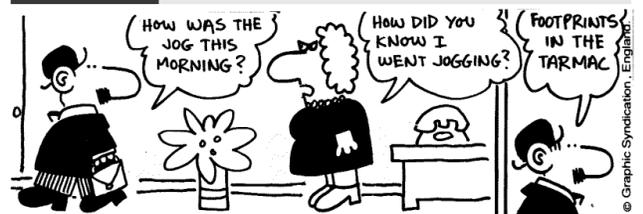
This refers to "Premji rises philanthropic contribution to \$21 billion" (March 14). Azim Premji's philanthropy stand out among similar initiatives by rich individuals across the world in several aspects. As his wealth grew, Premji didn't wait for it to grow to a target figure or himself to cross the ripe retirement age or for any wrath of nature to befall him to lead philanthropic activities from the front. The focus on improving literacy and stress on promoting higher education are other features that distinguishes his social responsibility initiatives.

There are lessons to learn from the Tatas and Premji for those in charge of governance and policy formulation in India. Perhaps India can learn more about wealth and human resources management from them than from Harvard-returned economists. If the political leadership is able to improve public trust in wealth management by government/s, just as Premji is diverting a portion of his assets for creation of income for social benefits, religious bodies and individuals will invest their assets.

M G Warrior Mumbai

Letters can be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to: The Editor, Business Standard, Nehru House, 4 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110 002. Fax: (011) 23720201. E-mail: letters@bsmail.in. All letters must have a postal address and telephone number.

## HAMBONE



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## Bulls take charge

But India is among the most expensive markets in the world

The legendary investor and Columbia Business School Professor, Benjamin Graham, personified investor sentiment as “Mr Market”, a manic-depressive whose moods swing between gloom and euphoria. One of those euphoric upswings has occurred as a broad majority of Indian stocks have surged. The ongoing bull run is driven by sentiment rather than hard data. Since the Pulwama terror attack on February 14, the Nifty is up by 5.5 per cent and the Nifty Midcap 150 Index is up 7.7 per cent, while the Nifty Smallcap 250 Index is up 12.9 per cent. Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have led the charge, buying ₹256 billion of equity in the past four weeks. Domestic institutions and retail investors have also been bullish and are putting money into stocks. Many of the bulls are anticipating the return of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to power, given the rise in nationalist sentiment triggered by the Pulwama attack and its aftermath. This may be premature as there are over two months to go before the shape of the next government is known, but opinion polls do indicate that the BJP has been gaining voter-approval.

Economic data doesn't support the uptick in sentiment. The Q3 results were poor. A *Business Standard* study of 2,338 companies showed that net profits were down 28 per cent, year-on-year for Q3, 2018-19, versus the same quarter of 2017-18. The high-speed data, like falling vehicle sales, indicates further slowdowns in January and February. This is reinforced by a low Index of Industrial Production for January and falling inflation primarily caused by low food prices, which usually translate into low rural demand. Moreover, the poor macroeconomic data out of the United States, China and the European Union seems to justify a consensus opinion that global growth will slow in 2019. However, FPIs are enthused by recent policy reviews and statements from the European Central Bank and the US Federal Reserve, indicating that monetary policy will continue to be dovish. The Fed is likely to pause its rate hikes; the EU is unlikely to raise its negative policy interest rate; and the Bank of Japan is continuing with negative policy rates and a quantitative easing programme. There are widespread expectations that the RBI's rate cut at its last monetary policy review in February may be followed by more loosening and another rate cut in April, given a low-inflation, low-growth scenario. The prospect of easy money has driven risk capital into equities and, notably, into emerging market equity in the hope of higher returns. Indeed, every major stock market in the world is up in calendar 2019, and many have logged double-digit gains. India is the laggard in this respect.

Graham also pointed out that “in the short run, the market is a voting machine but in the long run, the market is a weighing machine”. This is apt, considering that prices today reflect the sentiment of investors, who are betting on a hoped-for electoral outcome. But in the long run, prices weigh and discount earnings. And, by any valuation standard, India is among the most expensive markets in the world, with the Nifty running at a price-earnings multiple of 26, and the midcaps and smallcaps valuations going much higher. Investors would be well-advised to exercise some caution, with the market valuations running far ahead of growth prospects.

## The philanthropy mirage

Mr Premji's bequest conceals a dismaying picture

Wipro founder Azim Premji's \$21-billion bequest to his education-oriented trust has certainly raised the bar as far as Indian philanthropy is concerned. The latest bequest, in the form of donated earnings from 34 per cent of shares in Wipro, India's fourth-largest software services firm, represents the fourth transfer of wealth by Mr Premji — after 2001, 2010 and 2013. With this, the reclusive billionaire, who has consistently stayed in the upper reaches of India's rich lists, has committed 67 per cent of Wipro's shares to his charitable foundation (out of 74.3 per cent that family-controlled entities own). It also places Mr Premji among the world's top philanthropists and leagues ahead of a rarefied group of Indians who have chosen to donate their wealth — Shiv Nadar, Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, the Nilekanis, to name a few.

Indeed, consultant Bain and Company's latest Indian Philanthropy Report shows that Mr Premji's donations — and this predates his latest bequest — only serves to underline the poor record among rich individuals in charitable donations. The study shows that ultra-high net worth individuals (UHNI, defined as contributing ₹10 crore or more) account for 55 per cent of individual philanthropist funding — but, astonishingly, Mr Premji's donations account for 80 per cent of that amount. If that contribution were excluded, the segment has actually seen a 4 per cent drop between FY14 and FY18. This, the report points out, is particularly problematic, given that UHNIs have grown at a rate of 12 per cent in the past five years and are expected to double in both volume and wealth by 2022.

The report has made an impassioned case for more domestic private sector funding to help achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, suggesting that economic growth alone cannot improve India's human development indicators — indeed, India's Human Development Index and Sustainable Development Goals rankings have barely moved in the past four years. Improving these metrics via private agency remains a rising challenge with both the current and former governments crimping overseas funds flows by cancelling the foreign contribution permission for thousands of NGOs.

The corporate social responsibility (CSR) mandate, introduced by the United Progressive Alliance and notified in 2014, requires corporations above a certain profit and turnover threshold to set aside 2 per cent of their profits for designated CSR mandates. The pay-or-explain mandate has proven problematic for various reasons. The Bain study shows that 15 per cent of CSR funds remain unspent, and several assessments of CSR programmes suggest that they suffer from poor implementation as a result of a proforma approach to the issue. There are also tax issues. CSR spending is not tax-deductible, a fact that tends to encourage corporations to sign cheques for tax-deductible charities, including the Prime Minister's Relief Fund, defeating the purpose of the mandate. As for individual philanthropy, the stellar record of US and European billionaires, from the Rockefellers onwards, has a prosaic explanation. The wealthy in these jurisdictions sequester large portions of their wealth for philanthropy during their lifetime to avoid steep death duties. India does not have death duties, though charitable trusts do enjoy tax breaks. Even so, for India Inc, Mr Premji's bequests are a hard act to follow.

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA



## Why Balakot should be kept out of elections

If it brings electoral success, it will encourage further adventurism and divert attention from issues of substance

It will be bizarre and disappointing if the election ahead is swung on the basis of events on the Pakistan front, especially the Balakot attack.

Not disappointing because a particular party will win or lose, because that is not my concern. It doesn't really make that much of a difference to the grand scheme of things what party runs the Centre in India. It is true that there are a few things the current government has deliberately introduced that have harmed us that could have been avoided. But a foreigner looking at us from the outside would not notice that much has been done in the last five years that is in some way totally new. So that is not the subject here.

So why do I say it would be bizarre and disappointing?

Firstly, it would be encouraging a line of response that will not solve our problems. Pakistan has made investments over a period of 40 years in terror and jihadi groups. It will need a substantial and comprehensive response that must in the first instance recognise that Pakistan has a strategy. It may be a terrible strategy, which it is, and it is something that will damage Pakistan as much if not more than it does India, but it is still a strategy. And that strategy cannot be undone by a random

swat every time there is an attack that inflames the media here.

Have a look at what people who were in the position to study and craft India's response are saying. Shyam Saran, who served as chairman of the National Security Advisory Board and foreign secretary, says: “Has (Balakot) changed the strategic calculus of Pakistan? I don't think so.” (*The Hindu*, March 6). He adds that “what is happening on India television these days is reprehensible.”

Writing in the *Indian Express* (“There is no silver bullet solution to Pak-sponsored terror”, March 7), former high commissioner to Pakistan Sharat Sabharwal said that the strike was a tactic and not a strategy. Indeed, “the strike may end up demonstrating the limitations of using military power” to end terror. He said that the broad consensus on foreign policy that has long prevailed in India across governments is now “seriously frayed.”

At a media conclave on March 2, former National Security Advisor Shiv Shankar Menon said that “unless we have clarity on what we want to do, we can't decide the options and not much will change.” He said India should focus on engaging more with Pakistan's politicians, civil society



AAKAR PATEL

## In a tangle of his own making

It's an extraordinary fall for a man listed by *Forbes* magazine in 2008 as the world's sixth wealthiest person, with a net worth of \$45 billion. Just over a decade later, Anil Ambani's fortunes have dipped to \$1.7 billion, placing him at 1,349<sup>th</sup> in the same list. His elder brother, Mukesh, is ranked 13<sup>th</sup>. Ironically, the steep decline in wealth is the least of Anil's concerns at this point of time, as he has to rustle up ₹550 crore in the next four days to pay off Ericsson, if he has to escape a prison sentence.

It is rare for a prominent industrialist (let alone an Ambani) to be summoned to court in India. And even rarer for him to have been found in contempt. Mr Ambani has been subjected to both. And, the Supreme Court's observations against the Reliance group was damning: The order talked about the group's “cavalier” approach and “deliberate misstatements”. “This is not a case of accidental or unintentional disobedience,” the apex court said, as Mr Ambani listened with rapt attention. His advisers should have been attentive to the judiciary in the past, and should have cared more for prudent financial management.

It is unlikely that Mr Ambani would fail to pay Ericsson within the SC-stipulated deadline, even though other lenders are not playing ball and more companies have queued up before the SC under the contempt jurisdiction to claim their dues from Reliance Communications (RCom) and its directors. The company has already deposited ₹131 crore with the court registry. But it would be a nerve-wracking week for sure, as the lenders are still refusing to oblige Mr Ambani on his request that they release

the income tax refunds that RCom has received. The lenders have said RCom has no right to have its dues paid by the ₹260 crore “public money” held in the trust and retention account.

What is surprising, however, is that Mr Ambani has allowed the crisis to reach a flashpoint. After all, the problem with Ericsson has been brewing over the last 18 months and there was ample time to resolve the matter. The Swedish company claimed it had halved its unpaid dues demand from the original ₹1,150 crore, but the Anil Ambani firm simply refused to pay even after the SC granted a three-month extension for repayment. That led the SC to come down hard on Mr Ambani. No one seems to know the rationale for this audacious violation of the apex court's order.

If the lenders manage to stick to their stand of not transferring the IT refunds, Mr Ambani would have few options left. He did draw up a detailed plan to monetise his real estate assets, but it's still in

limbo. Even if the deals go through, it will take time, and that's precisely what Mr Ambani doesn't have. He has put on the block his 43 per cent stake in Reliance Nippon Asset Management Company, but the Japanese partner is yet to respond. The one deal that could have bailed him out is the sale of spectrum assets to Reliance Jio. That hope has also been snuffed out, with his elder brother refusing to bear guarantee for RCom's past debts. In retrospect, it was perhaps a bit much to expect RJio to give that kind of undertaking solely on the ground of brotherly love.

There are other uncertainties, too. Mr Ambani's

and business community, which it was not doing. There is nobody of significance who has said or written since Balakot that it constitutes part of a well-thought-out strategy or that it will be reflected in continuity. It is dangerous ad-hocism. If it brings electoral success, it will encourage further adventurism.

Secondly, and just as important a reason why Balakot influencing or swinging the election will be disappointing is that it will validate the dreadful and damaging actions in the Kashmir Valley that this government has pursued. I say actions and not policy because there is no real policy. The Centre has decided democracy does not work there, and direct rule is better. The hard approach has been questioned often by the armed forces which have said that there is no military solution to separatism. We need to engage the people in Kashmir. This government has no wish to do so.

The result has been bad for everyone including the military. Fatalities in Kashmir have risen every single year from 189 in 2014 to 451 last year. It is only March and the number is already 105 this year. Armed forces fatalities in Kashmir have gone from 47 in 2014 to 95 last year. Who is winning and what are we achieving? These questions are not being asked and will continue to be set aside if Balakot is seen as a silver bullet to terrorism in Kashmir.

The third and perhaps the most important reason is that such things will take away from issues of substance. I do not mean to say that terrorism is insignificant, it's not, but it is not at all as big an issue of concern as Central governance on matters like health, education and the economy.

There is scarcely a mention of these things as the government does a victory lap over Balakot. Health and education budgets have remained flat, adjusted for inflation, tending towards negative in the last five years. All told, we now spend around ₹4 trillion on security, including the armed forces and the paramilitaries.

This sum is not even discussed, leave alone questioned. We are not a democracy where things like health care are a priority (quite unlike other democracies like the United Kingdom or the United States, where state spending on health is possibly the most important political issue). I have not even spoken about things like the future of the Right to Information, Right to Food or MNREGA or any number of things which are under threat or being undone because of unrelenting focus on terrorism and the military.

The avoiding and ignoring of these in the election, all of which is deliberate unfortunately, will hurt us as a nation and as a people. If success in the election is attributed to the strike in Balakot, the conditions above will become further ossified, which will, as I said, be bizarre and disappointing.

office has announced that an “in-principle standstill understanding” had been reached with creditors, under which he would sell his 31.6 per cent direct stake in Reliance Power to fund loan repayments. In return for this commitment, the lenders would not sell any pledged shares until the end of September. But it now transpires that not all lenders are on board on this.

While the final act is still to unfold, the point is that Mr Ambani is a victim of a prolonged state of denial about the group's precarious financial position, resulting from seeking super-fast growth through high debt and expensive acquisitions. The group has been struggling with a mountain of debt for long, but his close group of advisers simply refused to see it, and took a shoot-the-messenger approach every time the media raised the issue of an increasing RCom debt (over ₹45,000 crore in March 2017) and dipping inability to service that debt.

To be fair, Mr Ambani has exited several businesses — media & entertainment (of course after bleeding heavily), cement, roads and power transmission assets — to pare down the group's debt. But by the time he got off the high horse, it was already too late. The first sign of a real big trouble came in November 2017 when Reliance Infrastructure failed to pay the coupon on its 2020 dollar bonds even after the expiry of the grace period. It was a telling coincidence that in the same month, the elder brother's Reliance Industries sold dollar bonds at the cheapest rate ever by a non-financial Indian issuer.

In an interview a year ago, Mr Ambani was frank enough to talk about the “torture, trauma, mental agony and stress” he went through, but said he was “tempered like steel” and was confident of coming out of the rough patch. His well-wishers would wait for him to walk the talk — finally, and fast.

## Spicy bard



### BOOK REVIEW

UTTARAN DAS GUPTA

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the only one among his 40-odd plays in which William Shakespeare mentions India. Titania, the queen of fairies, recalls frolicking with a friend in the Indian air, and makes her son — “A lovely boy, stolen from an Indian king” — the object of all her attention, and thus a cause of jealousy for her husband, Oberon.

But the Bard has been a constant obsession for Indian writers, artists, dramatists, and later, filmmakers. The influence of Shakespeare on Indian cinema has been so vast and has been written about so much that one would pick up

the book under review with some scepticism. Why another one on this subject?

Professor Harris, a Shakespeare scholar and cinema enthusiast, strikes a fresh note early in his book by claiming that the Bard is not an alien, colonial literary influence in India, but “a collaborative and irreducibly plural partner. In this book, he is the twin of traditional Indian storyteller.” This is not a remarkably original point — undergraduate English students routinely learn that the way plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries were staged in the 16th and 17th centuries had many similarities with the collaborative culture in contemporary film industries.

The original point that Professor Harris makes, however, is claiming that the Indian artistic and social ethos is essentially defined by the *masala* or mixture — and this is also essentially Shakespearean theatre.

This book, however, is not only a comparative study of Shakespearean

theatre and Indian cinema, but also a political statement. Professor Harris detects that the essential *masala* of Indian society and cinema is on the retreat, and an aggressive obsession with purity, often defined through Hindutva, is on the rise.

To illustrate his point, he cites the example of two Aamir Khan-starring blockbusters *Lagaan* (2001) and *Dangal* (2016). Professor Harris argues that while the former was about a team game (cricket) and represented hybrid Indian society, the latter is about the aspirations of one man in an individual sport (wrestling). For him, this represents a sea change in Indian society.

The writer can hardly resist a jibe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi: “This (*Dangal*) is not *Lagaan*'s inclusive vision... Instead it is a cinematic counterpart to a more recent dream of India, in which a charismatic strongman with a *chhappan*-inch (56-inch) chest demands and wins the unquestioning compliance with those he rules.”

He argues that the *masala* in films like *Lagaan* are not merely entertainment, but also “a utopian political vision” — one that Professor Harris finds appeal-

ing in the current political moment. This is an attractive argument; unfortunately, it is incorrect.

While films about individual sports — *Mary Kom* (2014), *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* (2013) — have become more common, those about team sports are made in equal number (*Gold*, *Selection Day* on Netflix). Also, this is less an influence of Mr Modi and more of India's improved performances in sports such as wrestling, track events, boxing, badminton, etc. In 2001, when *Lagaan* was released, the only sport in which India performed well internationally was cricket.

A reader might also be put off by Professor Harris's description of cinema audiences who visit Select Citywalk in Saket, Delhi: “Wealthy and mostly Punjabi, carrying bags laden with goods.” Professor Harris is trying to make a point about how audiences in multiplexes have become more homogenous compared to the one with which he had watched *Lagaan* at Chanakya. He, however, ends up revealing a regionalist and classist attitude. If you don't like it, why do you go there, Professor Harris?

He also makes an inscrutable point: “[Shakespeare's] father, John

Shakespeare, was a committed Roman Catholic at a time when Protestantism was the official state religion.” It is impossible to believe that Professor Harris is unaware of the lively critical debate on the subject. The jury is still out on John Shakespeare's religion. One wonders why Professor Harris makes no mention of it.

Despite these points of disagreement, however, the book is a delight to read. Even if one doesn't agree with some of the arguments or analysis in the book, one is unlikely to not enjoy lines such as these: “I didn't care much for Hrithik Roshan's *masala* blockbuster *Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai* (2000) ... If only it had been called *Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai*, I might have given it a second look.” Just before making this statement Professor Harris has been discussing the importance of onions (*pyaaz*) in making *masala*.

His research, spanning from his specialisation, Shakespeare — he has been a member of the Shakespeare Society of India — to contemporary theatre and literature, cuisine, linguistics, and Bollywood history is breath-taking. He takes a cue from Uttar Pradesh Chief

Minister Adityanath's anti-Romeo squad to launch into meditations not only on *Romeo and Juliet*, but also on the control of human bodies, especially female. He watches Gulzar's *Angoor* (1982) — a self-conscious adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors* — and launches into a discussion of Partition angst. I was sceptical about this analysis till he produced a direct quote from Gulzar to substantiate it.

But the most delightful part of the book, at least for me, is Professor Harris's own travels with Shakespeare, from a university production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Auckland in which he acted to directing *The Taming of the Shrew*, in which he cast men and women in opposite gender characters, to teaching Shakespeare at Ashoka University.

The “firangi” of the subtitle is not only Shakespeare who has by now become completely Indian, but also Professor Harris himself, who has been seduced by the country he chose to live in.

**MASALA SHAKESPEARE: How a Firangi Writer Became Indian**  
Jonathan Gil Harris

Aleph, Pages: 282; Price: ₹25



PORTRAIT: SHYAM KUMAR PRASAD

● FOOD CAFE:  
AR VENKATACHALAPATHY

# Decoding the Tamil psyche

The Tamil historian and writer shares with Sushila Ravindranath that the Tamil Nadu developmental model has succeeded because there is widespread education network, serious attempts at sensitisation and importance is given to quality healthcare

**A**R VENKATACHALAPATHY, professor at the Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS), Chennai, has done extensive work on Tamil Nadu's Dravidian movement. He has a PhD in history from the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, and has taught at the University of Chicago and the National University of Singapore; he has also held fellowships in Paris, Cambridge and Harvard. His research, among other things, focuses on the early history of nationalism, the social history of the Dravidian movement, caste politics, politics of language, and literary cultures.

Venkatachalapathy is a recipient of the VKRV Rao Prize (in 2007), and has published more than 30 books on a variety of subjects. His latest, 'Tamil Characters: Personalities, Politics, Culture', is an attempt to deconstruct Tamil Nadu to the rest of the country. "Tamil Nadu poses a challenge to common sense. Its politics and culture continue to confuse outside observers. The state has been ruled for half a century by two regional parties. Its politics has been marked by language pride, non-Brahmin movement, caste-based reservation, regionalism, welfare populism, and cinema. Despite all the negatives, Tamil Nadu is one of the most developed states in the country, scoring high on all human development indicators," he says in his preface.

The Mandal reform left Tamil Nadu unscathed, as reservations had been successfully implemented far ahead of other states, opening up education and jobs to a new generation. How did all this happen? We meet at Mathsya, a popular restaurant situated close to MIDS, to discuss these issues and decode the Tamil psyche.

The pure vegetarian restaurant has a nice old-world ambience, with large windows. Venkatachalapathy knows what he wants. He likes the Udupi special platter. I want the famous Karnataka oil-free *neer dosa* and the equally famous *bisi bele huli anna* dripping with *ghee* and full of cashew nuts.

We ask for cold tender coconut water; Chennai's brief spell with good weather is over. "There are many historical reasons for Tamil Nadu being what it is. Calcutta had a head start over Madras at the time of Independence. But it paid the price of cultural and intellectual leadership by the *bhadralok* (gentlefolk) who were just emotional. Bombay, on the other hand, was primarily a business centre with Gujarati and Parsi capital, and capital coming from other places. There was nothing of great intellectual impact happening there. Tamil Nadu, in terms of trade and commerce, was seen as a laggard," he says.

He adds what went unnoticed was that Madras produced well-educated, non-flamboyant intellectuals with razor sharp legal minds who played a major role in the mainstream. "People were also setting up industries and trading businesses. However, post-Independence, the Tamil Brahmins who held powerful positions in Delhi did nothing to promote Tamil Nadu. They constantly projected the culture and politics of the state in negative terms. They could not come to terms with the Dravidian parties. I was constantly writing rejoinders to their

columns in the 1990s." Tamils have always managed to maintain their distinctiveness. Venkatachalapathy says the social profile of Tamil intellectuals and intelligentsia differs from other states. "Take JNU, for example. Almost every surname of students, who come from all parts of the country, will carry their caste identity without them even being conscious of it. The entire Bengali renaissance happened because of *bhadralok*. In Kerala, in spite of the upper caste Nair dominance declining, 90% of the intellectuals are Nairs. If a state has two dominant castes, they flourish at the expense of other castes, as is the case in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Tamil Nadu's intellectual class is much wider because of the Dravidian movement."

Our food arrives. The special platter has a variety of *dosas*, *vadas* and *rice* in small portions. Although my *bisi bele* is aromatic and tastes as it should, I wish I had ordered the platter.

"There has always been a conception of Tamil country from the ancient times, and an idea of how it is bounded. There has been a very long continuity of Tamil culture, going back to the Chola period, which was maintained by subsequent dynasties as well. The south of India, especially Tamil Nadu, has always demanded a separate history," he says.

As I start eating the oil-free *neer dosa*, I ask Venkatachalapathy about the long-lasting influence of EV Ramasamy Naicker, known as Periyar (sage), who changed the cultural and intellectual

**Rapid change, especially after the 1990s, brought about economic mobility among the lower castes in Tamil Nadu. The dominant castes started seeing them as upstarts. The religious cultural jingoism in Tamil Nadu is a product of affluence**

landscape of Tamil Nadu. "Only Brahmin Nadu has seen a full-blow non-Brahmin, Dravidian movement. The state was dominated by a minuscule community. Its caste system is marked by the absence of intermediary Kshatriya and Vaishya *varnas*. The Brahmins controlled ritually and enjoyed prosperity historically. Lands were endowed to them from the Chola times at the cost of other castes, in some cases," he replies, adding, "Periyar was a man of ideas. He questioned all religions, particularly the dominant role of Hinduism. Indian intellectuals were largely Brahmins, and Periyar loathed them. He appealed to the common man suffering from oppression by the upper castes. He was a man way ahead of his times. His questioning of patriarchal norms regarding marriage, chastity and motherhood was breathtaking."

As we polish off our food, we order coffee, which is always good in a Udipi restaurant. I then ask Venkatachalapathy how Periyar continues to remain an icon and a major influence till today, although the Dravidian parties broke away from him?

He replies: "Periyar brought about social transformation. Not a day went by when he did not address a public meeting. People became aspirational, thanks to him. Congress chief minister K Kamaraj, who did not come from an upper caste, set Tamil Nadu's development agenda of building roads, rural electrification and a nascent stage of noon meal scheme in motion. CN Annadurai, the founder of the DMK and the first non-Congress chief minister of the state, also worked on people's aspirations. When M Karunanidhi became the chief minister, he nationalised private transport companies. This resulted in every village being connected."

He adds that the Tamil Nadu model is a combination of many things. "There is widespread education network, serious attempts at sensitisation and, most importantly, importance is given to quality healthcare. There are 18,000 pharmacies in Tamil Nadu as compared to 1,000 in Bihar."

Tamil Nadu has always had relative communal harmony. However, there has been increasing caste violence and violence against women in recent times in the state, which is seen as progressive. "Rapid changes after the 1990s have brought about economic mobility among the lower castes. The dominant castes see them as upstarts. The religious jingoism in Tamil Nadu is a product of affluence," says Venkatachalapathy.

There is much more to discuss. We have run out of time. We agree to meet again after he completes his definitive biography on Periyar.

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# Energise SMBs to fuel employment

AJAY KELA

The author is president & CEO, Wadhvani Foundation

SMBs in India can be the answer to manage the troublesome increase in unemployment and underemployment

**S**MALL AND MEDIUM BUSINESSES (SMBs) are critical to every economy. In developing nations, with few conglomerates, SMBs can be the lifeblood of the economy and employment. India, with its 63.4 million non-agricultural SMBs, is no exception. Here, SMBs—more accurately, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)—employ over 111 million people and contribute nearly 29% to India's GDP. It's the 111 million they employ that is intriguing and a matter of great interest to the country, given youth unemployment stands at 16%, the highest in the last 20 years, and where wages are dangerously depressed, primarily due to underemployment. Globally, SMBs account for close to 70% of all new jobs created, annually. Can SMBs in India be the answer to managing the troublesome increase in unemployment and underemployment?

Let's examine the traditional strengths of SMBs. They are largely founded on personal conviction; they are mostly established on personal savings or small borrowings from family and friends; they have suppliers and distributors based on trust and strong personal relationships; their manufacturing and service lines are reasonably well tested; they have an intimate knowledge of their markets and their customers; they are frugal; and because they are small operations, they tend to have larger retention of employees. In most instances, they have mature businesses that already comply with regulatory norms—and if they don't, it is often easy to bring them in line with compliance.

Examining their challenges, SMBs fail to scale and achieve their true potential for a number of reasons. SMBs are unable to find new suppliers and distributors in newer market and who they can trust. They are not certain if their brand will be trusted outside their areas of operation. They cannot find sales leads easily. They cannot scale their manufacturing, procurement and marketing because of limited funding. And they are unable to find investors because they don't have formal and well-documented practices.

This is an irony. Investors are hungry to put their money down in tried-and-tested products and services, where the entrepreneur is passionate and takes complete ownership, has a proven record, has existing customers and a clearly visible potential for growth. SMBs tick all these boxes, but investors aren't lining up. What can prompt investor interest and energise these businesses?

Now, let's dream a bit. Suppose we could identify all SMBs with a turnover in the range of Rs 5 to Rs 50 crore and put in place people, processes and policies that would help them scale 2X to 10X. The solution is starting at us, but our fixed perceptions of reality tend to obscure it. What SMBs need is the equivalent of a low-cost KPMG, PwC or a Bain & Company—a professional services company that can study markets, identify opportunities, conduct discovery with SMBs, suggest new business models and transformation plans, help in execution of initiative including going digital so that they can serve customers and markets that were previously unreachable, manage mergers and acquisitions, and offer tax, private equity and financial services advice.

Our ideal high-quality business analyst would provide services tailored for SMBs. These would include digital knowledge sessions, business and technical training, staffing solutions, on-demand mobile connects to curated mentors, sector-specific experts, paid and *pro bono* ex-consultants from major analyst firms, professors, marketing experts, curated service providers, partners and distributors, regulatory professionals, risk officers, etc, all at a fraction of the cost of the Big-5 and at a global level to serve the globalised market.

This could be made possible by leveraging technology, crowd-sourcing consultant and experts networks, and having all of this anchored by an apex organisation with a finely-honed understanding of entrepreneurs and their ecosystems. Of special advantage would be an on-demand digital platform managed by the apex organisation that connects SMBs and their ecosystem players across the globe. Once connected, they could work collaboratively to find new markets, better suppliers, share business practices and adjust capacity and pricing to their advantage.

Essentially, the model suggested here mimics big-league business by addressing customer, cash and capacity in a structured and professional manner, leveraging technology solutions and global networks. If all goes well, this could turn out to be the ideal solution to India's and other emerging economies' unemployment problem.

**What SMBs need is the equivalent of a low-cost KPMG or PwC—a services company that can study markets, suggest business models, and offer tax and financial services advice**

**O**N JUNE 23, 2016, the UK held a historic referendum. With a thin margin, the 'Brexit' camp that wanted to leave the EU won. This was an unexpected result and took even the most seasoned political pundits by surprise. The campaign was a fiercely fought one. Those who wanted to 'leave' raised issues of the UK's eroding sovereignty and how, as a member state, she was getting a raw deal. Additional thorny issues of jobs being taken by foreigners were raised. In retrospect, many of the claims made by the campaigners to leave the EU have turned out to be blatant lies. For instance, the data relied on upon by the 'leave' campaign in terms of the National Health Service gaining additional millions of pounds per week was not supported by any credible research. Further, in a speech made by the current PM in 2014, she had claimed that an illegal immigrant could not be deported because of his 'pet cat'. This was again a fabricated claim to discredit the Human Rights Act of 1998 (which incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights into the UK law).

The aftermath of Brexit has been equally messy. The first political casualty was the then PM David Cameron. Rather ironically, he was the one who had sug-

# Brexit: The Great British disaster

The next few days are extremely crucial for both the UK and the EU

VISHAVJEET CHAUDHARY

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gested a referendum in 2013 as part of his election campaign! This was followed by a premature general election where the governing Conservative party remained the single largest but lost majority in 2017. Many politicians who were at the forefront of the 'leave' campaign have gone into oblivion. Boris Johnson, for example. Political turmoil, though, is far from over. Last month, the Parliament rejected a deal that the PM had negotiated with the EU. The very next day, she faced a no-confidence vote, which she survived. The deal, nonetheless, is far from settled.

What perhaps complicates the situation further are calls for a second referendum; the argument being the first one was wrought with lies, deceit and misinformation—the second one needs to be clearer. This is an undesirable situation for any democracy—the people have spoken and their will, according to most, should be respected.

An analysis of the Brexit vote presents a curious result. In London, the 'remain' campaign had a clear majority. This was reversed in the Midlands. Scotland also voted to remain. Data suggests that



among people aged 18-24, more than 70% voted to stay. In fact, a majority voters younger than 44 voted to stay, and a majority of above 44 voted to leave. This glaring national discrepancy shows the country's mood—irrevocably divided by region and age.

The UK's future, in the short as well as in the long run, is disturbingly uncertain. It is unclear what Brexit will mean for free movement between the EU, free trade and economic ties. London's strongest industries—finance and related services—are also under pressure. HSBC has

moved substantial operations to across the channel in France. Many others are expected to follow. The role of EU Directives and Regulations is unclear. Will the Human Rights Act be scrapped? When the Act came into force, the then government had famously described it as 'Bringing Rights Home.' The status of these rights at home is now uncertain. Negotiations to leave have reopened—and only time will tell what deal is agreeable to both the EU and the UK.

In a deeply divided world, post the wars, the EU was seen as a hopeful align-

ment of nations to further economic, strategic and political alliance in the 1960s. The core values of the EU were 'to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its citizens' and 'to offer freedom, security and justice without internal borders'. The 1970s saw the downfall of the last dictatorship in Europe and ushered in a new form of politics. The merger of appreciation. The 1980s culminated with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the 1990s saw frontiers being brought down in the EU. The past two decades have been challenging amidst economic hardships and new threats the developed world faces. Brexit has triggered demands for similar referendums in other European countries as well.

The coming few days for the UK and the EU are extremely crucial. Divisive, populist moves are threatening the fabric of the society. The EU, which at one point was one the strongest alignment of nations, is bearing the brunt. The deal is a testing time and will have an impact on the EU. For countries like India, Brexit means better ties with the UK. Whilst it isolates the UK from the EU, it simultaneously opens it up for business to the rest of the world, including Africa. As things stand, though, it can only be described as a 'great British disaster'.

# Opinion

FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 2019

## A GUARDED APPROACH

Arun Jaitley, Union finance minister

It is a diplomatic issue, and India will take a decision after a careful thought. We're not a small player on the global stage, but foreign policy issues are tackled in a measured way, not in a knee-jerk manner



## INDO-US TRADE TENSIONS

INDIA HAS TO END THE CAT-AND-MOUSE PLAY AND FOCUS ON NURTURING ITS LONG-TERM STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US

# Can't look for US support and fight a trade war with it

**W**E WERE HOPING against all hope. The message was loud and clear but we were turning a

deaf ear to it. After months of simmering tensions between India and the US on the trade front, the US has just announced its decision to withdraw trade concessions under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP). India was slammed for being a "a very high-tariff nation" denying the US "equitable and reasonable access to the markets of India". At the heart of the dispute lies the soaring trade deficit in the US and key sectors like medical devices, agriculture and dairy products which were identified as trade barriers. What added fuel to the fire was India's recently announced changes to its e-commerce rules that are perceived to be detrimental to American giants such as Walmart and Amazon.

This tit-for-tat action has clearly spelt out two things. Firstly, the world will not take India's rising protectionism lying down. If India closes its markets, it will also find doors closed to its exports. Second, the US is using GSP to leverage tariff reforms across sectors. The larger questions are: who will blink first and who has got the stomach to suffer the setback?

It is a no-brainer that withdrawal of India's GSP status is a cause for concern on the economic and trade front. India has been the largest beneficiary of the program and the US remains India's top export destination. Given the forthcoming elections, the government has cleverly tried to downplay the impact and stated that the decision would not have a "significant impact" on exports as the "economic value of GSP benefits are very moderate". They say the impact of removing GSP concessions on Indian products is minuscule, amounting to only \$190 million in tariffs on a total



**GOPAL JAIN**

Senior advocate of the Supreme Court of India

export amount under GSP of \$5.6 billion to the US. The withdrawal of trade concessions, though, is a cause for concern. The government may respond mildly to the move, but it knows the impact is much larger.

India is one of the few countries that has a trade surplus with the US. Although the products impacted by the withdrawal of tariff concessions may be limited in number, the risk of losing competitive advantage and integration with global markets are wider. Further, smaller, labour-intensive industries that benefit from duty-free entry into the US market will be hit most as the same will significantly hit employment.

In an attempt to reduce trade barriers set by India, the US has overlooked the GSP benefits that were accruing to them such as global competitiveness, import diversification and lower manufacturing costs. Since most of the 3,500 Indian products imported by the US under the GSP are raw materials, intermediaries or semi-manufactured goods, US industries could maintain their domestic and export competitiveness. Thus, arguably, benefits to US companies and consumers offset the relatively small concessions to India under the GSP regime.

India was touted to gain from the

US-China trade war. The financial markets were doing well, partly because of India becoming a prospect for trade vis-à-vis China. However, the non-GSP status for India does not promise sustained growth. So who could be the real winner? China, which maintains a trade surplus with both India and the US, could benefit from new opportunities. Exports to the US could potentially be replaced by Chinese ones as several products such as bulk industry bags, plastics, etc, will become less competitive against Chinese products without GSP benefits.

The GSP annulment kicks in within 60 days and, meanwhile, India has several options that it can explore. It can drag the US to the WTO like it has done

in the past with the EU in 2002, the case in which it came out victorious. It can also go down the tit-for-tat route by imposing retaliatory tariffs to US tariffs on steel and aluminium imports which it has deferred multiple times. The retaliatory approach, although tempting, can have a cascading effect on other aspects of the India-US relationship and tarnish India's global image as a leading investment destination.

If we look at GSP withdrawal from a bird's eye view, the economic impact may be inconsequential. However, strategic relationships are larger than

nitpicking isolated transactions. It is about valuing relationships and creating long-term stability, trust and credibility. India's firm stance is that GSP withdrawal is unjustified as, historically, GSP has been a non-reciprocal preferential treatment and linking it with market access and tariff is against the basic tenets of GSP. Although the argument is irrefutable, why are we missing the larger picture? Diplomacy as a "package deal" must be seen in a broader scheme of things, fostering mutual agendas and benefits. Although the margin of profit through GSP may be small, and could possibly be ironed out in the future, the move comes at a sensitive time when India relied upon the US to put international pressure on Pakistan and the Modi government is trying to assert its foreign policy prowess and military strength. India has made a quantum leap in the "trading across border" parameter of the Ease of Doing Business rankings released by World Bank, however, its protectionist measures on e-commerce rules and data localisation norms played a big role in the US's 'provocation for inaction'. This provocation for inaction is not a novel concept. Courts, such as the National Green Tribunal, have been imposing serious consequences on the government for inaction through bans, penalties, etc, for eons.

India needs to stand true to its policy of a liberalised economy and participate in global trade. It needs to be cognisant of the fact that the current scenario affects not only trade in specific sectors but also diplomatic relations. Trade wars with major economies like the US does not augur well with India's attempts to project itself as a leading investment destination. It is time to end the cat-and-mouse play and focus on nurturing our long-term strategic relationship with the US.

## BSNL-MTNL losses will be far more than even Air India

New 4G spectrum will cost them ₹20,000 cr and, with even Airtel/Vodafone-Idea bleeding, their losses will only mount

**A**T A TIME when, like Kingfisher Airlines, even Jet Airways looks like it could shut down—and when even IndiGo is cancelling so many flights—many point out that Air India continues to fly without as many problems; the argument is made in the context of the demand for shutting down chronic loss-making PSUs such as Air India or MTNL and BSNL that don't even have enough money to pay salaries. Seductive as the argument is, it is totally misleading since, if Kingfisher—or Jet Airways—had the hapless taxpayer to make good all its losses, year after year, it too would be flying today. Put another way, if the poor taxpayer wasn't there to ensure that all of Air India's debts were repaid, top executives of the airline would also, like Vijay Mallya, be seeking refuge in the UK or, like Naresh Goyal, be grounding planes and looking for a white knight to take over the airline.

While the government has just released ₹171 crore to allow MTNL to pay salaries for February, and will probably do the same for BSNL should it fail to drum up the necessary resources, prime minister Narendra Modi—and whoever the next prime minister is—needs to think hard about whether the two PSU telcos should be shut down since, while they are not pillaried like Air India is, their loss levels are much greater and the likely trajectory is likely to be even higher. For FY19, for instance, their combined loss could be around ₹11,500 crore; while BSNL's losses are likely to be around ₹8,000 crore, MTNL lost ₹2,634 crore in the first nine months of FY19 as compared to ₹2,970 crore in all of FY18.

Noris there any real plan to turn around the PSUs that continue to lose market share quite regularly. BSNL's market share in the mobile segment, for instance, has fallen from 13.3% to 9.7% between 2008 and today, and for MTNL, the fall is from 1.2% to 0.3% over the same period. Indeed, while BSNL was once seen as the only telco willing to go to rural areas, most private sector telcos have a far higher share of this market. The collapse in revenues has meant that while its wage bill equals 99% of its turnover in the case of MTNL, it is around 55% in the case of BSNL; most private telco salary bills are 4-5% of turnover. And unlike Air India whose big capex days are over—the government's main expenditure is in funding annual losses—the government needs to fund a generous VRS for both PSUs that could run into ₹6,000-7,000 crore; if both telcos want 4G spectrum, this will cost another ₹20,000 crore or so for just 5 MHz while most private telcos have several times this amount; and renewing its existing 3G spectrum that will soon expire will cost MTNL around ₹9,500 crore. Also, leading telcos like RJio and Bharti Airtel spend around ₹20,000-25,000 crore in annual capex.

Even after all this is given, and there is no guarantee that it can be given by a cash-strapped government, it is not clear that this is enough to ensure the two telcos will turn around. Both Bharti Airtel and Vodafone-Idea are well-run companies and have a lot more 4G spectrum than either of the two PSUs—assuming they both buy 5 MHz each of this—but thanks to the hyper-competition unleashed by RJio, their losses were ₹2,000 crore and ₹10,000 crore in Q2 and Q3 of FY19; in which case, even if the government gives the two PSUs what they want, their losses will increase dramatically. Indeed, it is to fund this cash-burn that Bharti Airtel is raising ₹32,000 crore and Vodafone-Idea ₹25,000 crore. While Air India's attractiveness to a buyer, should there be one, is in its ready-made network across the country as well as globally, replicating the BSNL/MTNL network is not difficult as other telcos are, in any case, creating fresh capacity and can take on their subscribers quite easily. In which case, while selling either won't be easy, Modi needs to decide if he wants to throw so much good money down the drain.

## Maharashtra's water-wars

The state must discourage sugarcane farming, fix water usage

**W**HILE INTER-STATE water wars are fairly common, intra-state ones were almost unheard of until two regions of Maharashtra locked horns in the Supreme Court in November last year. Cane farmers and the sugar industries along upstream Godavari in western Maharashtra have challenged the Bombay High Court's September 2016 order that held that the river's water must be used equitably as envisioned by laws on regulating water resources and irrigation enacted by the state government. Farmers from the Marathwada region that lies downstream of the river have countered this, saying if upstream reaches didn't release enough water to the Jayakwadi dam, the lifeline of the downstream areas, the water rights of the people of Marathwada would have been violated. This water-war, as *Down to Earth* (DTE) reports, has poor water resource management, wasteful water use perpetuated by a strong sugar lobby in the state, graft, climate change and ill-conceived policy at its core.

How disastrous Maharashtra's moves on water have been are evident from the fact that while the state suffered a 27% deficiency in rainfall in 2015 as compared to 9% in 2018, the number of drought-hit villages has risen, from 15,747 to 20,000. The amount of water stored also fell dramatically, from 63% to 10% in the case of medium and minor irrigation projects and from 38.5% to 16% for major irrigation projects. While long dry spells and a few days of incessant downpour during the monsoons instead of more evenly distributed rainfall—this is increasingly becoming common, thanks to climate change—is a factor, a hasty, ill-conceived shift to a disaggregated storage, watershed management and groundwater recharge scheme, the Jal Shivar Abhiyan (JSA), experts have argued, is also responsible. Ironically, the scheme's adoption happened against the backdrop of the state investing ₹70,000 crore in irrigation projects between 1999-2009 that increased the state's irrigation potential by a mere 0.1%. Experts say the stream-deepening and widening model of the JSA has resulted in aquifers getting exposed and drying up. When, in 2017, the state government announced incentives under JSA for farm ponds, farmers started hoarding groundwater in ponds even though these ponds were meant to store rainwater. Indeed, the alarm on the state's falling groundwater levels had been sounded long ago, but little has been done to curb it. While there were 40 borewells per square km in 1960, the figure stood close to 200 in 2018.

The water-guzzler sugarcane is exacerbating the state's water woes—it is cultivated in just 4% of the cultivable land in Maharashtra (though the area under sugarcane is seeing rapid increase every year), but consumes 70% of its irrigation water. The sugar lobby in the state has ensured that this grab continues. Indeed, of the 53 thousand million cubic feet (TMC) of Godavari water allocated to the Jayakwadi dam, 27 TMC is used up by the upstream sugarcane areas given the government is dragging its feet in forming water-use associations in the downstream areas. To address Maharashtra's water-woes—and now, water-wars—the government must take legacy issues head-on. From discouraging sugarcane farming to fixing water storage and management, tackling drought in the state will need a multi-pronged approach.

## Time Travel

Having been demonstrated in a controlled environment, time travel will have to wait before it is possible in nature

**E**VEN THE SLIGHTEST possibility of time travel exerts such fascination among scientists, sci-fi enthusiasts and even the common person, intriguing many a dream, that many physicists continue to study not only whether it may be possible but also how one might do it. An international team of scientists led by researchers at the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology might be closer to this aspiration of travelling back in time by demonstrating the possibility of time reversal in a development that contradicts the basic laws of physics, *Newsweek* reported. In physics, systems travelling forward in time evolve from a simple state to a more complicated one—known as the thermodynamic arrow of time. It is like the evolving of complex multiple cell organisms (humans) from unicellular ones that has transpired over millions of years. If time were reversed for a human though, they would, theoretically, become younger.

The study by the Russian scientists and team, published in the journal *Scientific Reports*, involved transforming a 'qubit' (like bits of data, a 'qubit' is the basic unit of quantum information) from a more complicated state to a simpler one, changing the quantum state back in time, against the thermodynamic arrow of time principle. Time travel and time machine aficionados, however, must wait before their dreams are realised. The programme was successful when utilised with a two qubit quantum computer around 85% of the time. But when a third qubit was introduced, more errors occurred and the success rate fell to around 50%. Therefore, developing a system that can reverse time on a large scale is not going to happen any time soon because the findings from the experiment indicate that time reversal in nature is unlikely because it is too complex. Nevertheless, seeing how science has evolved over the years, with a prime example being that of the evolution of quantum physics, we should not put it past scientists to eventually come out with an apparatus that can reverse time.

## Brexit's poison will last for years

Almost 70% of the slowdown in UK investment might be down to Brexit. Whatever path is taken, businesses are going to be left in the fog

**FERDINANDO GIUGLIANO**

Bloomberg

**NOT SINCE THE 'Great Smog'** of 1952 has London been shrouded in such dismal gloom. British politics are in disarray, as lawmakers can't agree when and under what conditions they'd like to leave the EU. The "deal" Theresa May has been negotiating for two years has been rejected by the House of Commons not once, but twice. Most politicians favour a negotiated Brexit, allowing for a transition period, but Brussels is unwilling to go further than what it offered May.

A delay to the March 29th departure date looks inevitable as the options of a second referendum or general election become ever more tempting. And yet, the risk of a disorderly Brexit remains (even after Members of Parliament voted against that possibility on Wednesday night), as the chief EU negotiator Michel Barnier has warned.

Whatever the political outcome, there are no good options for the UK economy. Were Brexit to occur without a deal, it would plunge Britain into chaos and send ripples across the world's financial markets. But even in the more likely outcome of an orderly departure—perhaps after a postponement—the uncertainty that has held back British output in recent months would simply continue. Businesses probably won't get the answers they crave for several years yet.

There is mounting evidence that the country's economy has slowed since the Brexit vote. National income rebounded somewhat in January, but this followed a string of weak data toward the end of last year. Growth was a poor 0.2% in the three months to January, according to the Office for National Statistics. The composite purchasing managers' index, a measure of economic activity, points to growth of 0.1% in the first quarter of 2019. The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), Britain's fiscal watchdog, predicts that the economy will expand by 1.2% this year, down from a 1.6% forecast five months ago.

One negative force is the decline in investment. Jonathan Haskel, the newest member of the Bank of Eng-

land's Monetary Policy Committee, said in a speech this week that post-referendum business investment had fallen relative to its historic trend and compared to the other G-7 economies. Had it grown at the same pace as the median G-7 country (excluding the UK), it would have risen 2.9%. Instead, it fell 0.4%. This suggests Brexit accounts for nearly 70% of the investment slowdown.

Anecdotal evidence backs this up, showing the impact on people's livelihoods. Nissan Motor Co Ltd. is shifting the production of some cars—the X-Trail sport utility vehicle and two Infiniti models—away from Sunderland in northern England. Honda Motor Co Ltd. is to close down its flagship UK plant in Swindon. While the companies insist these decisions aren't purely down to Brexit, it is ludicrous to think that Britain's attempt to leave not just the EU, but also the single market, isn't affecting foreign investors. One hope is that this is temporary. Once Britain actually leaves, so the optimists' tale goes, business will know what to expect and will resume buying equipment and machinery. Indeed, the OBR has lifted its forecasts for economic growth in the next two years, assuming a deal is done. The economy is now expected to expand by 1.4% in 2020 and 1.6% the year after. That optimism is misplaced. There are three scenarios for companies in the UK, and none look pretty.

First is a catastrophic exit, whereby Britain leaves the EU without a withdrawal agreement. From pharmaceuticals to aviation, it is hard to think of a sector that would not suffer. Companies may need to spend to deal with the disruptions, but this will pale by comparison with the reduction in domestic and foreign demand. The Bank of England may relax monetary policy to deal with the slump, but a collapse in sterling and supply constraints could cause inflation to spike, which would require a monetary tightening. How do you square that circle?

The Bank has also asked lenders to triple their holdings of liquid assets,

according to the *Financial Times*, but weaker banks would still be vulnerable. In a no-deal Brexit, a credit crunch would be a near certainty.

The second scenario is an orderly exit, with some form of withdrawal agreement. Yet this won't answer the fundamental question about the future EU relationship. With the dominant Conservative and Labour parties riven by in-fighting, who knows what they want Brexit to be like? And, anyway, which party will be in power? How much will the EU concede? And what will Britain's trade deals with the rest of the world look like?

Even if Britain asks for more time to make up its mind, that won't clarify anything for British business. The same could be said for a second referendum—the third scenario—which might take a year to arrange and could end up with the same result or inflict even greater political division on the country.

Haskel found that investment in intellectual property products has held up reasonably well since the vote, probably because they suffer less risk of holdups at the border. But a stricter immigration policy post-Brexit, as favoured by May and Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, would probably force companies in these sectors overseas too. Similarly, many finance firms have set up shop in other EU countries now, and they may start competing with those still located in the UK. Divestment away from Britain may have only just started.

The Brexit referendum was meant to settle the issue of Britain's relationship with the EU for a generation. But for companies investing in the UK, all it has done is open up an era of uncertainty that contrasts vividly with Britain's hard-won reputation for boring predictability. The 'Great Smog' of London killed thousands, but waned in less than a week. It will take years for the poison of Brexit to clear.

*This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Designating Azhar as a terrorist

The decision of China to put the brakes once again on the efforts to designate Masood Azhar as a global terrorist by the United Nations (UN) is unfortunate. It was widely expected that China would join others to label Masood Azhar a global terrorist given the strong condemnation from the international community over the Pulwama terror strike for which Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) had claimed responsibility. While the UN had already designated JeM as a global terrorist organisation, the efforts of its member countries to designate its founder Masood Azhar as a global terrorist had not yielded the desired results with the continuous blocking from China. It should be noted here that China, too, faces the threat of terrorism from its Xinjiang province. Terrorism is a global phenomenon and afflicts almost every major country across the globe. Supporting Pakistan which nurtures, supports and harbours terror elements for its strategic purposes does not befit the status of China as a global super power — M Jeyaram, Madurai

### Record high bazaar

Capital markets continue to hover near the higher-end of the range and exhibit resilience as IIP and inflation numbers, uncertainty clouding Brexit and a pre-poll phase in the economy are being closely eyed. Targetted job growth and implementation of the development-oriented vision, backed by public welfare schemes, is the need of the hour. Friendly trade policies and advancement in niche technologies are much-needed to sustain the healthy growth rate in the longer-run. Enforcing regulations in letter-and-spirit can enhance transparency, improve disclosures, curb sectoral volatility and promote business ethics. Over the next few quarters, market movement is expected to be governed by lead indicators, recommendations by CRAs and geopolitical stability — Girish Lalwani, Delhi

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

# A vote on national security

Parties must make it a poll issue. Questioning armed forces or government is not unpatriotic



SHYAM SARAN

## AFTER CHINA'S VETO

India hasn't scored a diplomatic victory on Masood Azhar. But there are other ways to keep up pressure on Pakistan

THE TECHNICAL HOLD by China on a proposal to list Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar under United Nations Security Council resolution 1267 was not entirely unexpected. The proposal, first moved by France, found as many as 13 co-sponsors in the Security Council. Aside from the US and UK among the P-5, all 10 non-permanent members joined the proposal as co-sponsors as India dilled world capitals for support. Going by Beijing's muted reaction to the "counter-terrorist" air-strike by India in Balakot inside Pakistan, Delhi nursed a small hope that China might finally be ready to co-operate in Masood's designation by the Da'esh and Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee of the Security Council. In a last minute bid to persuade China against blocking the proposal, the US put out a statement saying that failure to designate Masood would go against the "shared goal" of regional stability and peace. The Chinese statement that a solution "acceptable to all" had to be found was a definite indication that Beijing was not on board. This is the fourth time China has used the "technical hold" to block Azhar's listing. Clearly, this act of kindness to Azhar by Beijing, despite its own oft-stated position against terrorism, means that it believes its own interests are better served by staying out of an international alliance against Pakistan.

This episode is not the end of the matter for India. The listing definitely would have been a diplomatic victory, but the unsuccessful effort does not mean that Masood Azhar is not a terrorist in the eyes of the world. In fact, just the opposite, as seen from the number of countries that supported the proposal. Each of those non-permanent members is a representative of its region in the Security Council. No one doubts that the JeM is headquartered in Pakistan, and that Azhar is based there too. India has succeeded in making clear both the JeM's role in the February 14 Kashmir bombing, and its own intention of not holding back on exercising a military option against terrorist groups based inside Pakistan.

The proposal, too, will remain under active consideration of the Security Council for the next 12 months. But while India should keep up efforts for Azhar's listing, it would be unwise to invest too much diplomatic capital on this alone. For one, it runs the risk of reducing India's multifaceted relationship with China to one issue, which is hardly the way in which two civilisational powers should be doing business. For another, the benefits of listing are hardly clear — especially India-focussed terrorists based in Pakistan — going by how Hafiz Saeed, leader of Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jamaat-ud-Dawa, has flourished in the 10 years since he was put on the list. It would be better, instead, to keep up diplomatic pressure on Pakistan to give up its "strategic assets" in a range of other ways, including through the Financial Action Task Force.

## GAME OVER

A shooter game is raising parental hackles. But that's no reason for Rajkot police to play nanny

THE RAJKOT POLICE are going where no one in khaki has gone before. They are now battling the ostensible epidemic of virtual violence unleashed by the award-winning video game PUBG, or Player Unknown Battleground. They didn't go online to do it, and contented themselves with creeping up on young men playing the game in public places and booking them. They marvel at the concentration of the players, who generally did not detect them approaching until it was too late. Their depth of focus seems to provide yet more evidence of the threat that the game presents to society, and apparently vindicates the notification that the Rajkot police commissioner issued against PUBG a few days ago, banning it from his turf.

But PUBG is not substantially different from other shooter games, a category that's been popular with online gamers for over three decades. Early cult titles include Muse Software's Castle Wolfenstein (1981) and id Software's Doom (1993) and Quake (1996). The player forages through a landscape for weapons and other assets which he or she turns on other players. Teamwork is generally available, but the free-for-all format has always been popular. Real-world penalties in these games include a reduction in social life and the wrath of the player's families, but the attentions of the police are generally not anticipated. The game has about 400 million active players, who are just waking up to the news that 10 of their peers in India are in trouble with the law, for disobeying a local notification banning the game.

Parents are worried about PUBG (one even complained to the prime minister), though it is no more violent than a lot of music and programming that children are exposed to. There is, of course, some evidence correlating excessive screen time with learning impairment and behavioural issues in children, but no conclusive data on adults. On the contrary, it is sometimes argued that violent content online has therapeutic value, sublimating the urge to commit violence in real life. Besides, the Constitution assures citizens the right to communicate with others, even through a video game. The nanny state has no business trying to attenuate this right through a notification. If it fears that violent games have social consequences, it should initiate a social advocacy programme against their use. But hauling young people off to a police station for playing a video game does severe violence to their privacy and freedoms.

## NO TAMPERING

MCC proposal to standardise the ball is misguided. Joy of Test cricket lies in teams competing across varied conditions

AN EFFORT to standardise conditions for the world Test championship, the MCC's world cricket committee has suggested that all Tests be played with the same ball. The MCC doesn't have power to enforce the rule but considering its heavyweight panel, chaired by former England captain Mike Gatting, it's likely that the international cricket council might yield to the proposal.

The reason behind the proposal is providing a "level-playing field" and a "good balance between bat and ball". It isn't clear how this move will achieve that. Let's assume that the ICC goes with the Kookaburra ball — one among the three balls currently in use. The Kookaburra ball, used in Australia and South Africa among other countries, isn't a good fit in Indian conditions. If you believe Wasim Akram, it isn't a good fit for subcontinental conditions as it nullifies reverse swing, and since its seam gets flattened it isn't good for spin bowling on these pitches either. A Dukes ball, which abets swing movement in England, might not be so good for Australian conditions. Likewise, the SG ball might not be great for Australian conditions.

The real test and joy of Test cricket lies in the fact that teams compete across conditions (which include pitch, ball, crowds, weather) to prove their real worth. Why would anyone want to standardise that? Would the MCC go on to prescribe similar pitches also? If anything, to level the playing field, the MCC and ICC should think of a more radical move: Make the captains choose their own preferred ball in any condition. In a world loaded against the bowlers, let the fielding team decide their weapon of choice at toss and let the batsmen earn their runs and reputation. If a bowling team that has skillful reverse swingers feels that a Dukes ball might be more in tune with their plans and wants to take the risk on that ball in a country where it's generally not used, let them take that punt. It will lead to more interesting decisions.

IN THE WAKE of Pulwama and Balakot, national security may become the key issue in the forthcoming general elections. A focus on national security is assumed to bring advantage to the ruling BJP as it could sweep aside the Opposition's efforts to leverage the failures of the government on generating employment and relieving farm distress. It would be most timely if national security indeed became a serious election issue, not in terms of scoring political points, but in drawing attention to persistent infirmities in our governance systems, the failure to address serious gaps identified by expert committees such as the Kargil Review Committee (2000) and the Naresh Chandra Task Force on National Security (2012) and the blatant lack of accountability apparent in avoiding public reckoning in subsequent serious security lapses evident in the Pathankot, Uri and now the Pulwama incidents.

Let each political party in the fray have the courage to acknowledge India's national security challenge in its various dimensions and include in their respective manifestos what practical steps they are committed to undertaking to make our country safe from external and domestic threats.

One must expose our hostile neighbour's responsibility for threats to our national security. But it is as important to turn the spotlight on our own failings which allow our adversaries to exploit them repeatedly. The surgical strikes in 2016 and now the air attacks on Balakot are significant actions in raising the costs for Pakistan pursuing cross-border terror against India. But let us not over-interpret their impact. Any triumphalism which deflects attention from what needs to be done to strengthen our national security structures and processes, must be avoided. No government, no political leader, no institution of the state should claim immunity from scrutiny or questioning, especially in a democracy. As we go into the elections, political parties need to engage in a substantive debate on national security issues, share with the public what they believe are the serious gaps which must be addressed and what each intends to do to overcome them. What are the critical issues on which political parties should seek the people's mandate?

Recognising that national security has become a major public preoccupation, each party should include in its manifesto what it believes should be the national security

Recognising that national security has become a major public preoccupation, each party should include in its manifesto what it believes should be the national security doctrine for a plural and democratic country like India. It should be a doctrine based not on creating fear but clearly spelling out the real trade-off between security and the space to enjoy democratic values and fundamental rights of citizens enshrined in the Constitution. A national security doctrine will make sense only if it is placed in the framework of India's Constitution and conveys a sense of where India wishes to be as a country and society in 10, 20 or 30 years.

doctrines for a plural and democratic country like India. It should be a doctrine based not on creating fear but clearly spelling out the real trade-off between security and the space to enjoy democratic values and fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution. A national security doctrine will make sense only if it is placed in the framework of India's Constitution and conveys a sense of where India wishes to be as a country and society in 10, 20 or 30 years. We should not end up as a state where security compulsions become a veto over decisions of democratically elected governments, nor should an elected government use the national security argument to abridge the rights of citizens and resist their right to hold government accountable.

More specifically, political parties should commit to updating the reports of the Kargil Review Committee and the Naresh Chandra Task Force on National Security, make public their outcome and promote an open debate as a prelude to implementing key recommendations. These two reports not only contain a diagnosis of our national security challenge but valuable recommendations to address it. They emphasise the need to draw lessons from past successes and failures and avoid ad hoc responses.

There are some indispensable elements for a robust national security system. One relates to police reform. Any security system is as good and efficient as its junior-most foot-soldier. The best superstructure is like a house built on sand unless it is supported by highly trained and motivated personnel at the lowest rungs of hierarchy. In India, law and order is a state subject. The recruitment of police personnel at these levels is often subject to political patronage and corrupt practices. They lack basic training. Some, being virtually illiterate, are not even trainable. Their conditions of work and living are pathetic. They are easily corrupted. Most state governments are guilty of allowing large vacancies in their police forces.

India has one of the lowest police to population ratios at 125 per 1,00,000. At the ground level, there is virtually no policing of the kind which might have apprehended the LeT terrorists as they landed on the beach outside Mumbai. That there is regular smuggling from across the sea and our land borders is an open secret. Terrorists slip through using these smuggling routes often relying upon corrupted elements in security forces. No ad-

ditional bureaucratic layers added to an already top heavy system are likely to make much difference unless the reality at the local level is addressed. Are the political parties ready to commit to implementing the long awaited, indeed Supreme Court directed, police reforms?

There is inordinate stress on the personal security of political personages and senior officials at the expense of public security. There are three security personnel, on an average, for every VIP. Some political leaders are protected by as many as a hundred or more security guards at the state's expense. This is anachronistic in a democratic and egalitarian society, but also impacts adversely on the state's ability to ensure public security and law and order without which terrorist threats cannot be addressed. Is any political party ready to declare that it will not seek privileged security cover for its members but focus instead on improving public security?

These are some of the real issues relating to national security and can be addressed through efficient and accountable institutions and not through individual bravery or brilliance. Citizens have the right to hold their political leaders and governing institutions accountable and that is only possible if there is transparency mandated by law, not left to the discretion of a government. It is unacceptable to assert that questioning the armed forces or government is unpatriotic. Armed forces are not invincible. They can make mistakes, they may lack capacity or the right kind of weaponry and equipment. National security does not justify hiding from one's own citizens the infirmities which plague our security forces. Governments make mistakes and will continue making them if citizens cannot question them. Are our parties ready to commit themselves to comprehensively evaluating national security institutions and processes through credible and respected public figures and independent professionals?

Let us, by all means, make national security an election issue because there are serious concerns on how it is being handled. Treating it as an evanescent electoral ploy rather than as an existential matter is selling the country short.

The writer is a former foreign secretary and senior fellow, CPR. He was chairman, National Security Advisory Board 2013-15



SAURABH KAPOOR

## CASE OF EXPLODING HASHTAGS

Pulwama aftermath underlines it: News is not what is published, it's all that spreads

IN 1913, A socialist monthly in the US published a controversial cartoon showing the head of a prominent wire service pouring bottles of "lies," "slander" and "prejudice" into the well of news. *The Masses* called it, "Poisoned at the Source". In a world of accelerating interconnectedness a hundred years later, plugged into this source is a relentless social media conveyor belt. There are no bottles, but hashtags hidden in plain sight.

As two nuclear-armed nations teetered on the brink of war, familiar strangers on Twitter and Facebook timelines used trending hashtags to plot their positions on the social media battlefield. #FinalStrike, #DeclarePakTerrorState, #IndianStrikesBack, #PakStrikesBack, #SayYesToWar were just a few acts of digital blitzkrieg. It reaffirmed that social media has redefined the way news is traded up the consumption chain. While it is still far from replacing traditional news sources, social media has established itself as a dominant "discovery tool" for news. Stories become hashtags before they become headlines in your daily newspaper. Opinion, emotions and speculation now act as augmented reality filters for news, much like the ones for pictures on Instagram or Snapchat.

After the IAF airstrikes across the border, the Pakistan army was quick to tweet its responses, while our forces acted risk-averse in sharing details. In between, there were information voids that were filled with fiction and conspiracy theories.

News is no longer all that is published, it is all that spreads. That's why resources are increasingly dedicated to tell real from the fake. And that's where a hashtag acquires the power of driving change in case of a #MeToo or getting weaponised. As the rising fog of war rubbed its back against our internetted screens, every share or retweet with #BadlaKab, #ExposeDeshDrohis, #ExposePakLovers, #BoycottPak, #PulwamaRevenge and others such had a real-world impact in shaping or distorting the narrative. After the IAF airstrikes across the border, the Pakistan army was quick to tweet its responses, while our forces acted risk-averse in sharing details. In between, there were information voids that were filled with fiction and conspiracy theories. So, while your information stream looked organic on the outside, it was constantly drip-fed with images, information nuggets, graphics, videos to define the narrative through government-friendly or unverified social media handles on either side. While all talk centered around a conventional war, what we witnessed were insidious charges in a "netwar".

In the early 1990s, two political scientists with a US think tank, the RAND Corporation, offered a distinction between cyberwar —

hackers attacking enemy's economic and military capabilities online — and netwar, which they defined as information-related conflict between nations or societies aimed at "trying to disrupt, damage, or modify what a target population 'knows' or thinks it knows about itself and the world around it". John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt said that "a netwar may focus on public or elite opinion, or both" and "may involve public diplomacy, propaganda, psychological campaigns, cultural subversion or interference with the local media."

From videos of a "second IAF pilot captured by Pakistan", which turned out to be fake, to contested pictures of a what was presented as a PAF fighter pilot killed after his F16 was downed in a dogfight, the hostilities in this information war continue unabated from both sides. Expect more shots to be fired from these cyber shadow lines. But remember, as Arquilla and Ronfeldt argued, "Deterrence in a chaotic world may become as much a function of one's cyber posture and presence as of one's force posture and presence." And a netwar can also be "an instrument for trying, early on, to prevent a real war from arising".

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## MARCH 14, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

KOSYGIN-DESAI TALKS SOVIET PREMIER ALEXEI Kosygin, who returned to New Delhi cutting short his tour around the country by a day, held talks for two and a half hours with the Indian delegation led by Prime Minister Morarji Desai and consisting of the deputy prime ministers, the foreign minister and ministers representing various economic ministries. The were wide-ranging, covering bilateral economic co-operation and an exchange of views on international affairs, role of non-aligned and Moscow's relations with Washington. In this context, Kosygin said an agreement with the US on strategic arms limitation would be finalised "quite soon". China and its recent ac-

tion in Vietnam did not figure in the talks. JANATA IN ASSAM THE TWO JANATA high command observers — R K Hegde and Renuka Devi Barkatani — who visited Gauhati to study the situation created by the demand of party dissidents for change of leadership, are believed to have returned to New Delhi carrying the impression that while a large number of party legislators wanted the chief minister, Golap Chandra Borbora, to change his style of functioning, the pro-changers were in a minority. The ministry has the support of 60 Janata legislators, four Plains Tribal Council members and 12 CPM MLAs — 76 in a House 126.

UNWELCOME GUEST THE JAMMU AND Kashmir government is not in favour of the Minorities Commission visiting the state. It does not want to treat Kushak Bakula, a member of the commission, as a state guest. Bakula is from Ladakh. He and Sheikh Abdullah are not known to be friends. The Jammu and Kashmir assembly adopted a resolution moved by the CM to set up an 11-man committee on whether the Minorities Commission had jurisdiction over the state.

(There was no edition of the newspaper on March 15 on account of Holi. These are from the issue dated March 14)

# 15 THE IDEAS PAGE

## Why education doesn't become a poll issue

The gains of education are long-term and call for sustained efforts. Outcomes are often illegible to the electorate and too complex for political parties to take credit for them



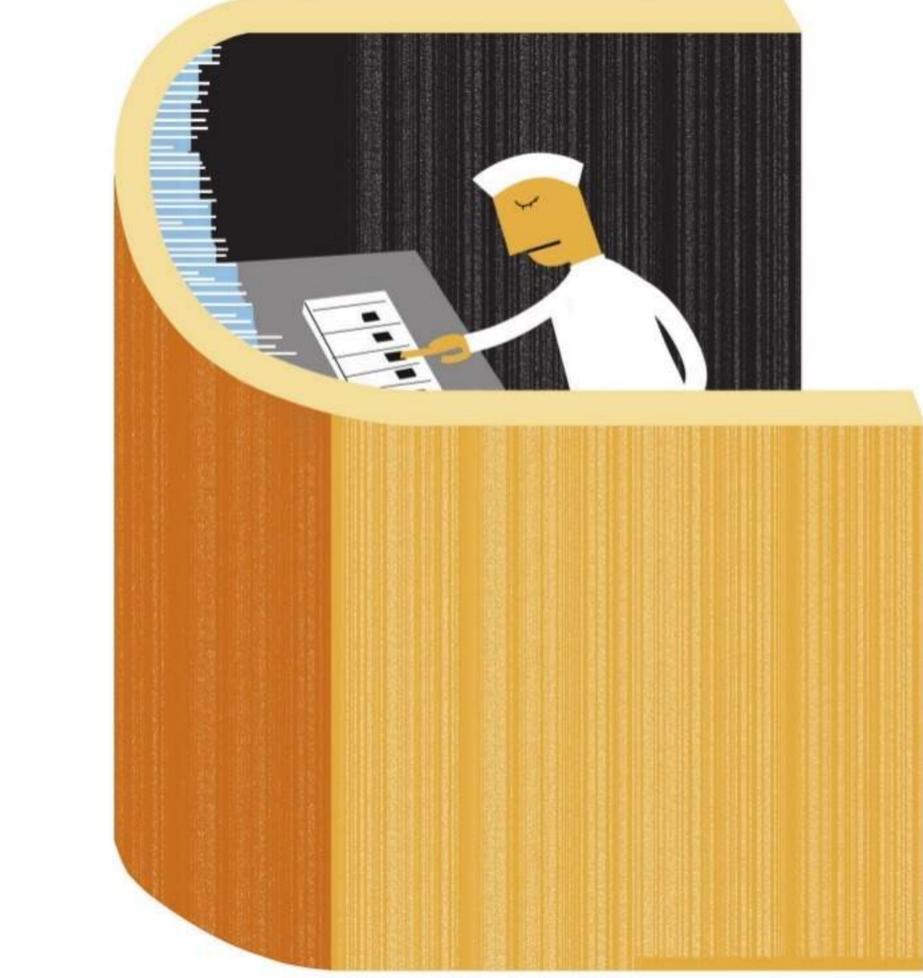
KRISHNA KUMAR

DECISIONS IN THE field of education are usually quite illegible to the public eye. Some of them look inconsequential. Others look so obviously correct that no one bothers to examine them. Their political consequences, therefore, are rare and insignificant. That is one big reason why education has little value as an election issue.

Consider the recent decision — taken with genuine political consensus — about diluting the no-detention policy of the Right to Education Act. Politicians of just about every hue supported it. In the media, too, there was little criticism. Though it is a retrograde step, it looks as if it was the right thing to do. People find it obviously correct in light of their own childhood memories. One recalls being scared in childhood of failing in exams. This popular memory reinforces the commonsense logic that we all worked hard because we were afraid of failing. This logic is a shortcut to the conclusion that children will stop working hard if the fear of failing is erased. So, now one can happily take the final step: Learning standards are low (as dubious surveys have repeatedly proved) because the no-detention policy has taken the fear factor off learning. These quick conclusions become axiomatic if you are deliberating on children of the poor. Old, nicely entrenched middle-class images of the poor suggest that their children will take learning seriously only if the school injects into their minds a hefty, preferably daily, dose of fear.

This example demonstrates why bad decisions taken in education carry little political cost. Now we can address a question often asked before elections: If education is so important for development, why doesn't it make a difference to the outcome of elections? There are several reasons, and we have sampled just one of them. Let us turn to the others. Education presents an elusive terrain to voters. They respond to chronic shortages of electricity or bad roads. Urban voters feel good about a party during whose regime the water supply improved. This kind of reaction does not happen in the case of poorly-maintained schools or high failure rate in examination. You can't think of an election in which an education-related demand brought voters together. Nor can you think of an election in which the neglect or mismanagement of education led to a party's defeat. In election after election, one gets the impression that schools and colleges, no matter how badly they are maintained, just do not matter in elections. The status of education as an election issue is far, far lower than that of *bijli, sadak, pani* and *naukri* (electricity, road, water and employment).

Yet, political parties seldom fail to include education in their election manifestoes. The promises made are often grandiose, offering a new national policy on education, increase in expenditure, improved infrastructure, accountability among teachers, and so on. But when these promises are not fulfilled, no one seems to use the vote as a means to punish a party or candidate. Apparently, people don't expect much change or improvement in education. There is widespread acceptance of the state's failure on the education front. Acceptance is also reflected in the general willingness to turn to privately-run in-



CR Sasikumar

stitutions when state institutions fail to satisfy. This point looks a lot sharper as a statement than it is in social reality. Search for private alternatives is part of a long unfolding of common distrust in state institutions and the legitimate feeling that no individual can have a say in how these are run.

Another reason why education carries little value as an election issue lies in its nature as a long-range area of governance. Improvement in any component of education calls for sustained, long-term effort. The fruit takes many years — certainly more than five — to come into view. By then, public memory phases out the origin of these effects. The media doesn't help either. The din of election has little room for analysing a ruling party's performance in education because it is hard to sift older continuities from recently taken steps.

Another reason why education seldom figures in an election debate is its confusing placement between the Centre and the states. The "concurrent" status education holds between the two is not new. Most people find the distribution and overlap of responsibilities quite confusing. In reality, too, the responsibilities of the two sides are far from clearly divided. Even on radical measures like the RTE, the roles of the Centre and the states remain unclear. Who, exactly, is responsible for the slowing down of the RTE momentum is hard to pin down and explain to voters, especially in the Hindi belt. Given the nature of election-time ethos in our country, anything

As for higher education, it remains both opaque and irrelevant for the majority of children never make it to a college. So, if a regime has actively damaged institutions of higher learning, the matter cannot bring much political loss. Moreover, higher education is perceived primarily in terms of its degree-dispensing role. To be told that it has an intellectual purpose too makes little sense to an average parent-voter.

that sounds complex loses out. That alone may suffice to disqualify education as an election issue. It offers unlimited scope for confusion and obfuscation. Little is known outside about what is happening inside schools and classrooms. Tall claims can be made without much fear of contestation. The fact that governments have chosen to ignore basic issues afflicting the system of education is nicely concealed in the glamour of technology-based "solutions".

In the secondary education slab, the division between Centre and states conceals the class divide. The higher income groups are served by a Central Board of Examination (CBSE) while the rest of society sends its children to schools affiliated to state boards, Delhi being a major exception to this pattern. Pass percentage differs quite sharply between the CBSE and state boards. Millions fail in the latter boards, arousing little interest in Delhi and the national media. As for higher education, it remains both opaque and irrelevant for the majority of children never make it to a college. So, if a regime has actively damaged institutions of higher learning, the matter cannot bring much political loss. Moreover, higher education is perceived primarily in terms of its degree-dispensing role. To be told that it has an intellectual purpose, too, makes little sense to an average parent-voter.

The writer is a former director of NCERT

### WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Boeing should focus on eliminating risks, rather than trying to wipe out public concern through releasing statements over its own confidence in its product safety." — GLOBAL TIMES CHINA

## Stranger in the Northeast

BJP will need to shed ideological baggage and embrace local concerns if it wishes to build on its electoral successes



THANGKHANELAL NGAIHTE

SPEAKING AT A book launch function in New Delhi on November 24, 2017, the BJP leader, Ram Madhav, said that unlike the RSS, the BJP is unashamedly interested in winning elections and gaining power. Sharing the dais with a slew of BJP ministers from the Northeast and RSS leaders, he was in a triumphant mood. The previous year, the BJP had won the assembly election in Assam, the most populous state in the Northeast. Manipur followed in 2017. The book, *The Last Battle of Saraighat*, is a chronicle of how these victories were won.

Madhav went on to narrate how the BJP has evolved from being a party of India's "cow belt" to become a party of choice in places like the Northeast and Jammu and Kashmir. He painted a rosy picture for the future. Just three months later, the BJP added Tripura to its score while also becoming a partner in the new governments of Nagaland and Meghalaya. Mass defections had already led to the collapse of the Congress government in Arunachal Pradesh. With the defeat of the Congress in Mizoram in late 2018, the goal of "Congress-mukt" Northeast has, apparently, been achieved.

This surely should be a time of celebration for the BJP. But it was not to be. The new year saw the entire Northeast region besieged with hysteria over the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB). As the bill was passed in the Lok Sabha, agitations took on a feverish pace. All of a sudden, the BJP, which thought it had just conquered the Northeast, found itself without friends. It became BJP versus the rest.

What's happening? What explains the BJP's dramatic rise and its sudden look of vulnerability and loss over the now-lapsed CAB? What are the prospects of the BJP in the region, going forward?

First, one needs to qualify the claim of "Congress mukt" Northeast. It is true that all the eight states of the region now have non-Congress governments. But between Manipur, Meghalaya, Assam and Mizoram, the Congress still holds close to 80 assembly seats. This is significant because the Congress had to fight the last round of assembly elections in the face of massive anti-incumbency and a hostile government at the Centre. It would seem that in its mad rush to deliver on the promise of "Congress-mukt" Northeast, the BJP paints a much rosier picture of its position by simply counting all non-Congress votes as its own. This is misleading because in Nagaland and Meghalaya, the BJP is only a junior partner while it is not even part of the government in Sikkim and Mizoram.

Second, the most important factor for the BJP's dramatic rise in the Northeast is the

simple fact of it being in power in Delhi. The Northeastern states are small, deficit-ridden states and they need a friendly government at the Centre to keep them afloat. And when the government at the Centre has a clear goal of snatching the region from the grip of its bête noire, the Congress, changing colour to saffron becomes a necessity for survival. Not many need prompting.

Third, the image of the Narendra Modi government as a strong and decisive government, one that gets things done, played a role. People were fed up of the Congress's status quoist orientation. The energy and enthusiasm that the BJP brought to these elections and its employment of election professionals to run surveys and manage its messaging, helped.

Fourth, there was a strong anti-incumbency wave against Congress governments in Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram. The same goes for the communist government in Tripura. The BJP showed up as a viable alternative at the right time.

Lastly, the BJP carefully orchestrated its campaign to focus on local issues and concerns. In Madhav's own words: "We didn't allow the debate to turn to national issues." This was because the BJP knew it will not gain votes by harping on its core ideology. Indeed, it is difficult to see how the Northeast people will ever find the BJP's pet themes — Hindu, Hindi, cow, temple, hyper nationalism — endearing.

This was a clever strategy and it worked for the short term. But the limitation of this strategy — projecting an image contrary to its character — shows up soon in the form of the CAB. In the CAB, the Northeasterners saw the true face of the BJP and they were not happy.

To their credit, the authors of *The Last Battle of Saraighat*, Rajat Sethi and Shubhrastha, acknowledged that the BJP will need to undergo an "ideological churning" if it is to strengthen itself in the Northeast. "It would do the party a great service if the strategy decentralises itself and focus is given to local alliances and dynamics than an attempt to dictate politics from the Centre," they write.

The BJP will have to wrestle with this sooner or later. Back in March 2018, the BJP president, Amit Shah, had set a target of winning 21 Lok Sabha seats (out of 25) in the Northeast in the general election. As promised, the party will do all it can to win those seats. Ram Madhav is back doing what he does best: Cobbling up electoral alliances with regional parties. On March 13, the Asom Gana Parishad — which had exited the BJP-led government in Assam in January — returned to the BJP's fold. Others will follow.

Repressive laws like the AFSPA help mobilise people in between elections, but they have never decided election outcomes. The same may become true of the CAB. Elections are decided by multiple factors and ideology is only one among them. Yet, if the BJP fails to address ideological issues, it will always feel like a stranger in the Northeast.

The writer is assistant professor in political science at Churachandpur College, Lamka, Manipur

## The call of democracy

Those schooled in universal values need to be involved in public-political debate



FRAZER MASCARENHAS SJ

WITH ELECTIONS AROUND the corner, who would think of educators and their influence? At an event last week, Father Arturo Sosa SJ — the Superior General of the worldwide Jesuit organisation and a political scientist himself — met a few hundred alumni from Jesuit-run schools and colleges. The latter were happy to acknowledge the influence of Jesuit education on their lives. The Society of Jesus runs 12 acclaimed educational institutions in Mumbai — five institutions of higher education, St. Xavier's College, Xavier Institute of Communications, Xavier Institute of Management, St. Xavier's Institute of Education, Xavier Institute of Engineering and seven schools, Campion, St. Xavier's, Holy Family, St. Mary's SSC, St. Mary's ICSE, Xavier's Boys Academy and St. Stanislaus. To mark this occasion, a video depicting the contribution of Jesuits to education was released at the Magis Conclave held at St. Stanislaus High School, Bandra.

Twelve eminent alumni of Jesuit institutions feature in the video — Soli Sorabjee, Adi Godrej, Adille Sumariwala, Adil Chagla, Farokh Udawadia, M M Somaya, Shubha Tole, Rajdeep Sardesai, Major General Ian Cardozo, Venkatesh Srinivasan, Josy Paul and Renuka

Shahane. They paid tributes to the contribution of their Jesuit alma mater to their lives. Sardesai pointed out that if all the alumni from these institutions, who have made a mark in different fields, were to be featured together, they would fill a stadium. The value-based education that the Jesuits and their faculty have provided for well over a century has resulted in alumni who have made significant contribution to Indian society in varied walks of life. All have imbibed the values of excellence and of integrity, wanting to reach for the "more" — the "Magis" in Jesuit terminology.

The Magis Conclave itself brought together eminent alumni including several interviewed for the video, others like Anu Aga, Julio Ribeiro and about 200 more; all expressed grateful sentiments and encouraged Jesuit education to take bold steps. Education that fosters inclusiveness, discipline, freedom of thought, impartiality across communities and classes, and instills courage to oppose evil was seen as a part of the "tremendous vision" ascribed to the Jesuits' value system by Soli Sorabjee.

Father Sosa, in turn, commended the alumni for living the values they imbibed and

invited them to a partnership with the Jesuits in contributing to the formation of a community of people who "live for others". Today, as Jesuits take quality education to the margins — rural areas, tribal communities, Dalits and other disadvantaged groups — while remaining committed to engaging with all sections of Indian society, the alumni have a crucial role to play in bringing expertise, resources and civil society support in times of crisis and in contributing to a vision for education for the future so that the needs of a global but much-fragmented world may be addressed. Father Sosa spoke passionately of the great resource that the network of Jesuit alumni could be in society.

The Jesuits are known to focus on "discernment" — seeking and getting in touch with divine wisdom and in reading the signs of the times. The action of the alumni, who are influenced by this principle, would surely have political repercussions, especially at a time when propaganda, false claims, fake news and suppression of dissent are great challenges. Jesuit alumni, who bring excellence to their own fields, should also summon the courage to raise voices against hatred, exclusiveness and sectarianism. Civil

society involvement in public policy is the guarantee of true democracy and those schooled in universal values and human rights need to be involved in the public debate on development and democratic institutions. A network of influential alumni would be a force to reckon with.

The Magis Conclave saw Jesuit alumni encouraging their mentors and educators to continue the task of bringing quality education to those most in need. But the take-away from the event was the great need for Jesuit institutions to harness the goodwill, expertise and the support of the alumni in the task of developing a vision for good education and taking such education to the millions of Indians thirsting for it. The alumni acknowledged that the Jesuit system of education that inculcates values and inspires compassionate commitment would make a significant difference to India in the 21st century.

Will such education and educators have an influence in the elections that are around the corner?

The writer is a former principal, St. Xavier's College, Mumbai

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### SWARAJ FOR ALL

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Swaraj for the kisan' (IE, February 14). The writer correctly argues that ground conditions in agriculture have been changed since the 1950s and policymakers are yet to grasp that. The same holds true for labour. Most of our labour laws were enacted to serve the demands of the manufacturing sector in the 1960s while today the service sector dominates the economy. Likewise, higher education regulations also require overhaul and so do regulations pertaining to the infra sector, especially ports.

Suchak D Patel, Ahmedabad

#### WHERE IT HURTS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Beyond Masood Azhar' (IE, March 14). Instead of focusing on the UNSC, India must direct all its energies towards the FATF. It should endeavour to get the forum to declare Pakistan as a "rogue state". This will financially cripple Pakistan. India must transfer the heat back onto China by raising tariffs, combine with the US in acting against Huawei and recognise the struggle for an independent Tibet.

Ashok Goswami, Mumbai

#### MANDATES, TASKS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The class monitor' (IE, March 14). The Election Commission can be expected to desist from acting as a partisan body. But each opposition party is busy beating its own drum. The much-

#### LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to

editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301.

Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

touted grand alliance seems to have developed cracks. This will embolden the BJP to resort to jingoism.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The class monitor' (IE, March 14). The Election Commission must have the authority to decide on the list of subjects that should not be politicised. The EC is an invigilator; the real examiners are the voters.

Ketan Kishan, Gurugram



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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to [explained@expressindia.com](mailto:explained@expressindia.com)

**THIS WORD MEANS**

**ASTROBATRACHUS KURICHIYANA**  
Frog species, millions of years old, newly found in Ghats

A TINY frog species has been identified for the first time in the Western Ghats. What makes the "starry dwarf frog" significant is that it is millions of years old but had evaded attention until now. Scientists have described the species in the journal *PeerJ*.



**Astrobatrachus kurichiyana.**  
Seenapuram Palaniswamy Vijayakumar via Florida Museum of Natural History

**WHAT IT IS LIKE:** The species has been named *Astrobatrachus kurichiyana* for its constellation-like markings and the indigenous people of Kurichiyamala, the hill range where it was found. It is dark brown with a bright orange underbelly, and speckled with pale blue dots. The size of a thumbnail, it plunges into leaf litter at the slightest disturbance, hence remaining hidden. Only a few individuals have been found.

Seenapuram Palaniswamy Vijayakumar, lead author of the paper, was a doctoral student under the supervision of IISc associate professor Kartik Shanker when they discovered the species in the Western Ghats. Years later, they assembled research team to describe the species.

**WHY IT IS IMPORTANT:** A *kurichiyana* has been classified as the sole member of an ancient lineage — the newly named sub-

family *Astrobatrachinae* that is a long branch on the frog tree of life. The Florida Museum of Natural History quoted herpetologist David Blackburn as describing it as "an oddball frog — it has no close sister species for maybe tens of millions of years".

The research team found that *A kurichiyana*'s closest relatives are the family *Nyctibatrachidae*, a group of nearly 30 species native to India and Sri Lanka. But their last common ancestor could date back tens of millions of years.

Source: Florida Museum of Natural History

**SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER**

**What next after China's block**

Beijing has once again blocked New Delhi's move to get Jaish chief Azhar listed by UN as a global terrorist. Yet there are some takeaways for India in the way it has lobbied support. Where can this lead to?

**SHUBHAJIT ROY**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

**How often has China blocked UN action against Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist Masood Azhar?**

In the last 10 years, China has repeatedly blocked India's listing proposals at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1267 sanctions committee to designate Azhar as a global terrorist. Beijing blocked it for the first time in 2009, after India had moved the proposal in the aftermath of the 26/11 Mumbai attack. In February 2016, after the Pathankot attack, India put forward a fresh proposal. China intervened at Pakistan's behest and placed a technical hold on India's move, and did so again in October 2016. It subsequently used its veto power to block the proposal in December 2016, a day before the end of the technical hold. Following a proposal by the US, the UK and France on January 19, 2017 to designate Azhar as a terrorist China once again employed a technical hold and blocked the proposal in November 2017.

**So, India was prepared to see China doing so again?**

There were indications, in the form of continuous and consistent statements from Beijing about "rules and procedures". On Wednesday, PTI quoted US State Department deputy spokesperson Robert Palladino as saying that China's blocking the proposal would run counter to the US and China's mutual goal of regional stability and peace. The strong language appeared to suggest that the US had not been able to strike a deal with China. So, when Beijing finally placed a technical hold just about an hour before the deadline for no objections, New Delhi would have been prepared for such an outcome.

**Is this latest move frustrating from the previous occasions when China acted similarly?**

This latest move is significant. In 2009 and 2016, it was India that had moved the proposal. This had prompted China and Pakistan to build a narrative that New Delhi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Sabarmati waterfront in 2014. PIB Ahmedabad

was trying to score political points over Islamabad. So in 2017, when India asked its influential strategic partners US, UK and France to move the proposal, it negated the narrative that it was an India-Pakistan tussle and was rather placed as the international community's fight against terrorism.

This time, India not only got the same three countries to move the proposal but also involved 10 more countries as co-sponsors. Besides the US, the UK and France, which are permanent UNSC members, the other 10 countries included four non-permanent UNSC members - Germany, Poland, Belgium and Equatorial Guinea - as well as Japan, Australia, Italy, Bangladesh, Maldives and Bhutan.

What is significant is that the Quad members - US, Japan and Australia - have co-sponsored the proposal, in a sign of a strategic alignment. This helps India's case that the listing of Masood Azhar is a global cause, and a key element of the global fight against terrorism.

**Are there also continuities in the way China has gone about blocking India's**

**proposals on listing Azhar?**

China has always used Pakistan, as senior Indian officials say, a "strategic weapon" against India. This is reflected in Beijing's blocking of the Azhar proposal. As per New Delhi's assessment, Azhar is a valuable strategic asset by Pakistan's military and intelligence establishment. Beijing is mindful of the cosy relationship between Rawalpindi and Jaish, and does not want to upset it.

Beyond the listing of Azhar, China has also been blocking India's aspirations to become a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. New Delhi took up this matter vigorously in June 2016, when then Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar travelled to Seoul to lobby with key NSG members.

**What does China gain by repeatedly frustrating India and the global consensus on fighting terrorism emanating from Pakistan?**

For China, Pakistan is an "all-weather ally" and an "iron brother". It has strategic investments in Pakistan, including the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. For its all-weather friend, it is ready to take a hit on its

reputation, even if it means that it is perceived to be standing on the wrong side of the global fight against terrorism.

**Is there anything at all for India to feel satisfied about after the latest disappointment?**

The support from the global community, which was reflected in the 13 co-sponsors of the listing proposal, is a reflection of broad global support India has been able to rally. In the current bout of Indo-Pak tension, China had taken a very calibrated position - which India sees as a positive - until its blocking of the proposal on Azhar. China did not slam India in the first couple of days after the Balakot airstrike for violation of Pakistan's territorial sovereignty and integrity. That was perceived to be a good signal from Beijing. Then, China also signed the UNSC condemnation statement, which named Jaish, and criticised the terrorist attack in Pulwama. For the record, more than 110 countries issued statements between Pulwama and Balakot, the majority of them favouring India.

**What is the way forward for Indian diplomacy on this issue?**

The technical hold gives India nine months to lobby with China, so that it lifts the hold and allows the listing of Azhar. That may seem a tall order, and it will be incumbent on India to find leversages with China so that it acts as per India's desire. In 2017, when China wanted to become vice-president of the Financial Action Task Force, India agreed to support its candidature against Japan (a close strategic partner of India), in return for Beijing's support for Pakistan's 'grey listing'. That was a major moment of transactionalism with Beijing. India will need to find such transactional points in the next nine months - a trade-off on a vote or a crucial election - so that it can influence Beijing's behaviour.

India will also need to work all its diplomatic levers so that Pakistan takes concrete and verifiable actions against terrorism. The FATF gives India an opportunity; it can try and persuade the international community to even blacklist Pakistan by May-September this year, if Islamabad doesn't take action against terrorists and terror groups, including Azhar and Jaish.

**TELLING NUMBERS**

**Canada's Indian languages**

AMONG THE 157 killed on board the Ethiopian Airlines crash on March 10, six were members of an Indian-origin family based in Brampton city, Canada (*The Indian Express*, March 14). Brampton, which is in mourning, has a large Indian-origin population, with Punjabi (13% of the population in 2016) the second-most widely spoken language after English (58%). Across Canada, other than English and French, Punjabi is the third-most widely spoken language (5.4 lakh).

**TOP 5 SPOKEN LANGUAGES (other than English, French)**

ALL CANADA	BRAMPTON, ONTARIO
Population 3,16,12,897	Population 5,93,368
Mandarin 6,10,835	Punjabi 79,705
Cantonese 5,94,030	Urdu 12,950
Punjabi 5,43,495	Gujarati 10,695
Tagalog 5,10,420	Tamil 8,540
Spanish 4,95,090	Hindi 7,355

Source: Canada Census of 2016

**TIP FOR READING LIST**

**A MAN'S WORLD, DEFINED BY DATA**

THE PRONOUN "he" is often used as the default to mean "he or she", but many people picture a man when they hear it. British activist and author Caroline Criado Perez delves into data that show how the world has been largely built for and by men. Smartphones do not fit easily in a woman's palm; only 13% of non-human characters on children's TV are female; women are more likely to die from heart attacks due to unequal treatment because it's not well-publicised that female heart attacks have different symptoms than male heart attacks.

proach to supposedly gender-neutral products is disadvantaging women," Criado Perez writes in *Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men*.

While acknowledging that the book offers endless nuggets to chew on, science writer Angela Saini, author of *Inferior: How Science Got Women Wrong and the New Research That's Rewriting the Story*, observes that an equal world can only be one in which people change. Reviewing Criado Perez's book for *The Guardian*, Saini writes: "The power of data to shame people into making society fairer, it seems, goes only so far. Beyond a certain point, it's difficult not to conclude that they don't particularly care. What should worry us more than the data gap, then, is that huge and seemingly intractable don't-give-a-damn gap."



"There is plenty of data showing that women have, on average, smaller hands than men, and yet we continue to design equipment around the average male hand as if one-size-fits-men is the same as one-size-fits-all. This one-size-fits-men ap-

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

EXCEPT WHEN landing or taking off, modern aircraft largely fly on their own. In the aftermath of the Lion Air and Ethiopian Airlines crashes, questions have been raised over automation. Investigators believe pilots of the Lion Air B737 MAX 8 weren't fully conversant with the plane's automated systems. The aircraft in the Ethiopian crash was a Boeing of the same make.

On March 12, President Donald Trump tweeted: "Airplanes are becoming far too complex... Pilots are no longer needed, but rather computer scientists from MIT... Seeking to go one unnecessary step further, when often old and simpler is far better. Complexity creates danger... I want great flying professionals that are allowed to easily and quickly take control of a plane!"

Is too much automation making aircraft unsafe?

**The criticism**

Critics of "over-automation" say pilots spend more time trying to understand complicated automated systems than actually flying. *The New York Times* reported, based

on multiple interviews with pilots and instructors. If computers malfunction at any time, a pilot who is more a "systems operator" than an aviator could be too late reacting.

**Old concerns**

■ Back in 1997, an American Airlines pilot-training video flagged the overdependence on automation.

■ About six years ago, the US aviation regulator Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) asked pilots to practise tackling an aircraft that is losing lift. But it did not enforce the direction until this week.

■ In 2011, a US federal study found that in 60% of 46 recent accidents, pilots struggled to fly manually, and were sometimes confused by complicated automation systems.

■ In 2013, another US government report recommended that pilots should focus on flying better manually. In the Asiana Airlines crash in San Francisco that year, investigators found an over-reliance on automation.

■ In 2016, an internal report indicted the FAA for not making sure that pilots were adequately trained in manual flying, and for not monitoring how much manual flying they really did.

■ Sully Sullenberger, the hero pilot who landed a loaded aircraft in the Hudson off Manhattan in 2009, has been quoted as

**FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY**

**How does autopilot match up to a (good) pilot?**



Inside the cockpit of a Jet Airways Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft in Mumbai. Reuters file photo from June 2018

200 hours — a small fraction of what the FAA requires, but the same as the requirement for a commercial pilot's licence in India.

Some critics have blamed insurance companies for capping the amount of manual flying training that flight school students are allowed in poor visibility. Others have argued that the real problem isn't with the training, but with the loss of learnt skills once pilots get used to autopilot.

After the 2013 San Francisco crash, investigators found that Asiana had "emphasised the full use of all automation and did not encourage manual flight", *The NYT* reported.

**A stellar record**

Still, automation has made a massive contribution to improving airline safety. Many pilots say the advantages of automation are too many to bear comparison with any risks it might carry in certain situations. *The NYT* quoted former FAA inspector David Williams as saying: "The data is there that we've got a good system. The reduction of training is over-ridden by the advances in the equipment."

All the world's 47 airlines flying nearly 350 MAX 8s have now grounded these planes. Until then, MAX 8s had completed an estimated 8,600 flights in a typical week, according to data from Flightradar24.

warning that fatal accidents were "inevitable if we continue down this path (of relying too much on automation)".

**Industry constraints**

Aircraft are becoming increasingly more automated and the global shortage of pilots is growing, so airlines are using less experienced pilots who, as an international airline pilot with a PhD on pilot training told *The NYT*, "can punch the buttons" but may not "be able to fly that airplane when it breaks". One pilot in the Ethiopian crash had flown

**Itself in grey zone, why Pak has complained to terror finance watchdog about India**

**RAHUL TRIPATHI**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

PAKISTAN'S FINANCE Minister Asad Umar has written to the president of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) asking that India be removed as co-chair of the FATF's Asia-Pacific Joint Group (APJG), which is reviewing Islamabad's progress on action against terrorist financing. A delegation of the APJG, which is a regional associate of the FATF, is scheduled to reach Islamabad on March 24, and following a review over the next two days, submit its report to the FATF.

Umar wrote to FATF president Marshall Billingslea that "India's animosity towards Pakistan is well-known and the recent violation of Pakistan's airspace and dropping of bombs inside Pakistani territory was another manifestation of India's hostile attitude." He asked FATF to appoint any other member country as co-chair "to ensure that the review

process is fair, unbiased and objective".

**The FATF**

The FATF was established in July 1989 by a G-7 Summit in Paris to examine and develop measures to combat money laundering. In October 2001, it expanded its mandate to incorporate efforts to combat terrorist financing as well. The FATF's objectives are "to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system".

The FATF monitors the progress of members and non-members in implementing the FATF Recommendations, "a comprehensive and consistent framework of measures which countries should implement in order to combat money laundering and terrorist financing, as well as the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction". It

identifies jurisdictions with "weak measures to combat money laundering and terrorist financing (AML/CFT) in two FATF public documents that are issued three times a year".

The FATF's decision-making body, the FATF Plenary, meets three times in Paris between July and June — usually in October, February and June. The FATF's 38 members (36 member jurisdictions and two regional organisations, the European Commission and Gulf Cooperation Council), two observer jurisdictions (Indonesia and Saudi Arabia), and multiple observer organisations (mainly international banks and law enforcement bodies) attend the Plenary. India is an FATF member; Pakistan is not.

**The APJG**

APJG is a working group that functions under the FATF, and is not to be confused with the Asia/Pacific Group (APG) headquartered in Sydney, Australia. The APG is the largest of nine FATF-Style Regional

Bodies (FSRBs) whose 41 members include both India and Pakistan. Eleven of these members are members of FATF as well. India became a member of the APG in March 1998; Pakistan in May 2010.

The APG examines AML/CFT efforts of members countries every 10 years. Pakistan will be reviewed in 2019-20. "While FATF will look into the 26-point action plan, APG will hold a separate review," an Indian official said.

**26-point plan**

In 2018, FATF approved the nomination for monitoring of Pakistan under its International Cooperation Review Group, commonly known as the 'grey list'. The resolution against Pakistan was moved by the US, and supported by the UK, France, Germany, and India. It said Pakistan was not doing enough to comply with anti-terrorist financing and anti-money laundering regulations.

In June 2018, Pakistan submitted a 26-point action plan to the FATF, committing to

implement it over the next 15 months. The action plan included a squeeze on the finances of Jamaat-ud Dawa, Falah-i-Insaniyat, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Haqqani Network and the Afghan Taliban. The failure to negotiate the action plan could have led to Pakistan being blacklisted.

In January 2019, the FATF decided to keep Pakistan on the grey list, based on a review that concluded that the country had made "limited progress" in curbing money laundering and terrorism. Expressing dissatisfaction, FATF said Pakistan could "not demonstrate a proper understanding of the terror financing risks posed by Daesh (ISIS), al-Qaeda, Jamaat-ud-Dawa, Falah-i-Insaniyat Foundation, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Haqqani Network, and persons affiliated with the Taliban".

Whether Pakistan remains in the grey list or is placed in the black list will be clear by October 2019. Pakistan was on the FATF watchlist between 2012 and 2015 as well,

but only for money laundering.

**What happens now**

Officials said it was unlikely that Pakistan's complaint against India to the FATF would have an impact. Pakistan is not a member of FATF; India, on the other hand, has been an active member in the FATF and in its various sub-groups after 2013 following New Delhi's effort to introduce changes to the AML/CFT systems and laws. In June 2013, the FATF recognised that India had made significant progress in addressing deficiencies identified in its mutual evaluation report, and decided that it should be removed from the regular follow-up process.

India has been lobbying hard with the US for the strict monitoring of Pakistan, and highlighting the funding of terrorist activities by that country. India has in the past provided evidence of the involvement of Pakistani officials in peddling fake currency, and planning attacks on Indian assets on foreign soil.



## China's block

Its decision on Masood Azhar is shocking — but India must keep up persuasive diplomacy

China's decision to block the listing of Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist at the UN Security Council is both a setback to India's post-Pulwama diplomatic strategy and a reality check on ties with China at present. After the February 14 attack, claimed by the JeM, the government had made the listing of Azhar a focus in its diplomatic efforts. It reached out to several governments, and shared a dossier on Azhar with each member of the Security Council, who are all members of the 1267 ISIL and al-Qaeda sanctions committee. A special effort was made with Beijing, which has blocked the Azhar listing in the past, including just after the 2008 Mumbai attacks. From 2016 to 2018, India's proposals to list Azhar, with evidence of JeM involvement in the Pathankot airbase attack, were also foiled by China, which placed holds on the listing, and then vetoed it. The vetoes came despite the fact that the JeM is banned, and in the UNSC listing it is noted that Azhar, as its leader and founder, accepted funds from Osama bin Laden. China, as the one country that has refused to allow Azhar's name on the list, is well aware of the evidence against him, but is not ready to withdraw its objections. It is clear that despite India-China relations improving after the Wuhan summit in April 2018, China is unwilling to align itself with India on its concerns on cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan.

China's stand is regrettable and condemnable, and it has been consistent on this issue. New Delhi must now consider whether it wishes to accept this as a *fait accompli*, or confront Beijing to try to persuade it to change its stand by means of incentives or coercion. This is a challenge, as any kind of concerted international pressure from the Western countries in this regard has in the past only served to be counterproductive. It is also unlikely that the suggestions being offered by some political groups, of cutting imports from China and other punitive actions, will yield much. The government may be more successful if it identifies the incentives it can offer China in the next few months to review its position. While some of those incentives would be bilateral, the Chinese spokesperson's hint that dialogue between New Delhi and Islamabad, and even possible "triangular" talks including Beijing, is indicative of China's thinking. The government must also not lose sight of the bigger picture: that the UNSC cannot enforce its own listings, and other leaders who have been sanctioned in the past remain free and unencumbered. While listing Azhar at the UNSC is an unfinished task, the larger issue remains: to ensure that Pakistan takes substantive action against Azhar, the JeM and other terrorist groups that are threatening India. China, with its economic and strategic leverage with Pakistan, may be better-placed to help in this matter.

## Horror in Pollachi

Cases of sexual assault and blackmail must be pursued swiftly and the guilty brought to book

The Tamil Nadu government's decision to transfer the 'Pollachi sexual abuse case' to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) gives the case rightful priority, and the agency must swiftly unravel the sexual assault and blackmail racket that has victimised a number of young women. The case had its origins in a complaint of sexual harassment, assault and robbery in a town in Coimbatore district. While the arrest of the accused was made in end-February, the case created a storm early this week when a leaked video found its way into the public sphere. Sourced from the phones of those who were arrested, it had a woman piteously pleading with her abusers to leave her alone. In fact, what has been uncovered so far might be the mere tip of the iceberg, as initial investigation has indicated that the scale of the operations of the four young men in Pollachi might be much larger than is obvious now. Among the accused was a member of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (who has since been removed from the party's membership), and Opposition parties allege that the case involves those much higher in the State's ruling party leadership.

The public outrage that ensued had the government first ordering that the case be transferred to the Crime Branch-CID, and then in just a day, to the CBI. Given the timing, with the Lok Sabha polls and critical Assembly by-elections around the corner, the political glow on the case is likely to be accentuated. But it is important that even as the investigation proceeds to nail the guilty and establish the scale of the abuse and blackmail crimes, the women's identity and their privacy be strictly protected. The State Women's Commission has promised that it will conduct an investigation into the matter, providing telephone numbers that victims can call to lodge complaints with complete confidentiality. The National Commission for Women has expressed serious concern over the safety of women in Tamil Nadu. In a letter to the State DGP, its Chairperson has asked that appropriate action be taken, and sought an action taken report. For its part, the government cannot wash its hands of the matter with the transfer of the case to the CBI. It must allow and assist in a free and fair probe into the incidents to bring justice to the victims, and to ensure their dignity and anonymity are maintained. In this election season, the ruling and Opposition parties must summon their political morality by articulating the gravity of the crime and refraining from trying to make political capital out of this heinous crime. Sexual assault and blackmail are dark crimes — the guilty must be brought to book. And the women and their families must be assured of justice and confidentiality.

# An abhorrent and unjust device

Retention of the death penalty utterly undermines India's moral foundations



SUHRITH PARTHASARATHY

On March 5, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court delivered verdicts in three different death penalty cases. In two of those the court entirely exonerated the suspects, while in the third it not only found the accused guilty of murder, but also deserving of capital punishment. Individually deep, the judgments typify the deep penological confusion that pervades India's criminal justice system. Collectively, the cases demonstrate how arbitrary the death penalty is, how its application is mired by a belief in conflicting values, and how the fundamental requirement of precision in criminal law has been replaced by a rhetorical cry for avenging crime by invoking the "collective conscience" of society.

### Conjecture and farce

In the first of the cases, *Digamber Vaishnav v. State of Chhattisgarh*, two persons were convicted of murdering five women and were sentenced to death in 2014. A year later, the Chhattisgarh High Court affirmed these sentences. But the chief testimony, which formed the backbone of the prosecution's case, was that of a nine-year-old child, who was, shockingly, not even an eye-witness to the crime. This, the court therefore ruled, was effectively a conviction premised on surmise and conjecture.

*Ankush Maruti Shinde v. State of Maharashtra*, the second of the cases, saw a gut-wrenching series of events being reduced to macabre farce. In 2006, a trial court found six persons guilty of rape

and murder and sentenced each of them to death. A year later, the Bombay High Court confirmed the finding of guilt, but commuted the sentences imposed on three of the individuals to life imprisonment. However, in 2009, the Supreme Court not only dismissed the appeals filed by those sentenced to death, but also, astonishingly, enhanced the penalties of the three persons whose sentences had been commuted by ordering that they too be punished with death. In doing so, the court relied on a 1996 verdict, in *Ravji v. State of Rajasthan*, where it had ruled that in determining whether to award the death penalty "it is the nature and gravity of the crime" alone that demand consideration. Although in May 2009, the Supreme Court had declared its earlier ruling in *Ravji* incorrect, by holding that even in those cases where the crime is brutal and heinous the criminal's antecedents, including his economic and social background, must have a bearing on the award of the sentence, it took until October last year for the court to recall its order sentencing the six persons to death.

During this time, the court records, "The accused remained under constant stress and in the perpetual fear of death." What is more, one of them, who was later found to be a juvenile at the time when the alleged crime was committed, was kept in solitary confinement. He was not allowed to meet any of the other prisoners and was only allowed an occasional meeting with his mother. For their troubles — for having spent more than a decade on death row despite having committed no crime — the bench ordered that the state pay each of them a sum of ₹5 lakh. But while the court was quick to apportion blame on the prosecution, it didn't so much as mention its own errors and its own



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### A 'rarest of rare' case

Yet, we might have been forgiven for thinking that the court's experience in hearing *Digamber Vaishnav* and, especially, *Ankush Maruti Shinde* may have made it more circumspect in upholding death sentences. After all, if these decisions had shown us anything, it was that the judicial process is far from inerrant. But the collective conscience of society, represented through the court's capital punishment jurisprudence, it appears, is still alive and kicking. For in the third of the cases, in *Khushwinder Singh v. State of Punjab*, it not only affirmed the conviction of the accused, on charges of murdering six members of a family, but also gave its imprimatur to the award of the death penalty. The murders, the judgment holds, were "diabolical and dastardly" and the case fell into the "rarest of rare" categories where "there is no alternative punishment suitable, except the death sentence".

The rarest of rare doctrine has its origins in *Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab* (1980). There, the court declared Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code, which prescribes the death penalty for murder, as constitutionally valid, but bounded its limits by holding that the punishment can only be prescribed in the rarest of rare cases. Since then, the court has repeatedly cautioned that capital punishment ought to

only be decreed when the state can clearly establish that a convict is incapable of being reformed and rehabilitated. But, in *Khushwinder Singh*, the court does not place on record any such piece of evidence that the state was called on to produce. Indeed, the court does not so much as attempt to answer whether the accused was, in fact, capable of reformation or not. Instead, it merely endorses the death sentence by holding that there simply were no mitigating circumstances warranting an alternative penalty.

### Victims of the system

That capital punishment serves no legitimate penological purpose is by now abundantly clear. There's almost no empirical evidence available showing that the death penalty actually deters crime. If anything, independent studies have repeatedly shown the converse to be true. In the U.S., for instance, States that employ capital punishment have had drastically higher rates of homicide in comparison with those States where the death penalty is no longer engaged. In India, evidence also points to a disproportionate application of the sentence, with the most economically and socially marginalised amongst us suffering the most. The Death Penalty India Report (DPIR), released on May 6, 2016, by Project 39A of the National Law University, Delhi, for example, shows that 74% of prisoners on death row, at the time of the study, were economically vulnerable, and 63% were either the primary or sole earners in their families. More than 60% of those sentenced to death had not completed their secondary school education, and 23% had never attended school, a factor which, as the report states, "points to the alienation that they would experience from the legal process, in terms of

the extent to which they are able to understand the case against them and engage with the criminal justice system." Just as distressingly, 76% of those sentenced to death belonged to backward classes and religious minorities, including all 12 female prisoners.

In the face of this invidiously prejudiced application, the retention of capital punishment utterly undermines the country's moral foundations. Over the course of the last decade, the Supreme Court may well have expanded the rights of death row prisoners: delays by the President in disposing of mercy petitions now constitute a valid ground for commutation; review petitions filed by death row convicts now have to be mandatorily heard in open court. But as the judgments delivered on March 5 reveal, the very preservation of the death penalty creates iniquitous results. Cases such as *Ankush Maruti Shinde*, where the accused, as the judgment records, were very poor labourers, "nomadic tribes coming from the lower strata of the society," ought to make it evident that the death penalty is an abhorrent and unjust device.

Not only are wholly irrational criteria applied to arrive at dangerously irreversible decisions, the law's application is made all the more sinister by invariably imposing these standards on the most vulnerable members of society. The Constitution promises to every person equality before the law. But capital punishment renders this pledge hollow. It legalises a form of violence, and it closes down, as Judith Butler wrote, expounding Jacques Derrida, "the distinction between justice and vengeance," where "justice becomes the moralised form that vengeance assumes."

Suhrith Parthasarathy is an advocate practising at the Madras High Court

# From revolutions to roses

Women's Day should be an occasion to ponder over how much more is to be done for gender justice



RADHIKA SANTHANAM

On Women's Day this year, messages clogged my inbox. They offered tempting discounts in salons, on shoes, clothes and cosmetics, and even complimentary cocktails. Despite women organising seminars on finance, sexual harassment and health problems across the country, tokenistic marketing threatened to reduce the day to hashtags and discounts.

### The irony and history

On the International Women's Day 2019 website, the partners included McDonald's, Amazon and Oracle. McDonald's is facing flak in the U.S. for failing to pay its largely female workforce the minimum wage. Amazon is reported to have a huge gender diversity problem, and Oracle is facing a civil rights suit that alleges female employees were paid on average \$13,000 less per year than men doing similar work. All three were apparently in support of the 2019 campaign theme, 'Better the balance, better the world'.

The irony of all this is particu-

larly rich given that International Women's Day has its origins in socialism. German socialist and feminist Clara Zetkin, who organised the first International Women's Day, was a socialist first and a feminist next. In the magazine *Die Gleichheit* (Equality), Zetkin wrote in 1894: "Bourgeois feminism and the movement of proletarian women are two fundamentally different social movements." Zetkin held that "bourgeois feminists" were not concerned with the conditions of working class women who were fighting not only against men who sought to suppress them, but also with men against a common oppressor, capitalism. She believed that as white, upper class feminists would only fight to better their own conditions, socialism was the only way to serve the needs of working class women.

Zetkin suggested in the Second International Conference of Socialist Women at Copenhagen in 1910 that Women's Day be celebrated each year, the foremost purpose of which would be "to aid the attainment of women's suffrage". The timing of the proposal was ideal — a year earlier, the Socialist Party in the U.S. had also suggested that a National Women's Day be observed, in honour of a strike that took place in 1908. More than 15,000 women garment workers fought for higher wages



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and shorter working hours in that strike.

Following Zetkin's proposal, International Women's Day was observed in a few European countries on March 19, commemorating the 1848 Revolution in Prussia when a people's uprising had forced the king to promise women the right to vote, which he later failed to keep.

But the day became truly revolutionary only later. In Russia, protests erupted on March 8, 1917, against World War I and brought down the Tsarist Empire. The new government gave the women the right to vote. International Women's Day was thus a day of resistance and demand. The reason the UN observed the day only decades later, from 1975 onwards, was because the Americans were aware of — and wary of — its origins in socialism.

Over the decades, women's de-

mands have varied across cultures. In India, for instance, following the anti-colonial and social reform movement, the Constitution guaranteed justice, dignity and equality for women. However, these values came in conflict with old patriarchal values, thus limiting women's progress. The women's movement became fragmented, only to see a resurgence in the 1970s after the Emergency when there was a rallying cry for civil rights. This led to the birth of several women's organisations, which successfully pushed for legal reforms. The women's movement slowly regained strength, fighting against dowry deaths, domestic violence, and sexual abuse. However, it never really appreciated the struggles of Dalit and Bahujan women.

### Issues in India

On this March 8, in some parts of the world (mostly Latin America and Europe), women continued to do what women in the early '90s did — protest. In India, however, several companies with gender diversity and pay gap problems celebrated the day, despite the alarming trend of more and more women withdrawing from the workforce (female participation in the workforce fell from 42.7% in 2004-05 to 23.3% in 2017-18). WhatsApp forwards continued to celebrate women as mothers,

daughters and sisters who are able to multi-task effortlessly, underlining the widespread belief that it is acceptable for women to work as long as they also carry out their traditional duties at home. Given the huge inequality in the treatment and payment of women workers, and with labour conditions being unfriendly to women, it is important to ask what really women want on this day: roses or reforms?

Instead of celebrating women, companies would do well to reflect on how they treat their women: is their pay on a par with men? Are sexual harassment cells in place and do they function? Are there crèches at workplaces? And what about the informal sector, the working class women, who are not represented by "bourgeois feminists"? How do we consolidate various women's movements across classes and castes?

In an increasingly unequal world, March 8 gives us the opportunity to ask ourselves how much more is to be done and how it is to be accomplished. Instead of allowing a day rooted in protest to be taken over by consumerism, women could mobilise around specific issues — better sanitation facilities and better wages — and make sustained demands for effective change in their conditions.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### China's veto

It is appalling that for the fourth time, China has blatantly abused the power it enjoys as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council to block the proposal to proscribe Masood Azhar, the founder-leader of the Pakistan-based terrorist group, the Jaish-e-Mohammad (Page 1, "China places hold on listing Azhar as designated terrorist", March 14). China's success in having its will prevail at the UNSC and adopting a defiant stand despite the overwhelming support that India had on the issue at the UNSC is a clear indication of its ruthless, unabashed ambition to supersede the U.S. as the next superpower. It also casts a dark shadow on its attempts at emerging as a responsible global power. China's move of supporting its ally, Pakistan, can be

traced to its apparent attempts at mollicoddling terror groups who pose a security threat to its economic corridor. Little does it realise that it is losing sight of long-term perspectives for short-term gains. China's current animosity towards India could also stem from the fact that its 'string of pearls' policy has taken a beating recently. India can take solace from the fact that the move to ban Azhar was co-sponsored by other members of the UNSC. Therefore, China's stand also humiliates them.

NALINI VIJAYARAGHAVAN,  
Thiruvananthapuram

■ China is at it again. It is clear that China has its own interests in mind, afraid that terror groups can affect its economic ambitions. China's statement is an insult to all other UNSC member

countries. They should still try to make it see reason.  
K.V. SEETHARAMAIAH,  
Hassan, Karnataka

■ China has, once again, let India badly down. Instead of having an ostrich in the sand approach to the matter and giving shallow explanations like it needs 'more time to investigate' evidence against the terrorist, it is time Beijing realised that on account of its continued and unjustifiably inflexible stand, the united, strong and committed fight of many nations against global terrorism will only get weakened.

A. MOHAN,  
Chennai

■ India's continued conciliatory approach toward China exposes the fact that New Delhi lacks any leverage with it on Azhar and that Beijing interprets India's pussyfooting as a sign of weakness. Unless India sees

Pakistan and China as one hiphennated strategic entity and takes an integrated policy approach, piecemeal efforts will remain ineffective and even counter-productive.  
R. SIVAKUMAR,  
Chennai

### On the IS

The article, "Down, but definitely not out" (Editorial page, March 14), talks about how the U.K. Home Secretary has been criticised for his alleged disregard of the human rights of a young British mother in distress, who fled the country to join the Islamic State. The writer has not mentioned a key point published by many credible U.K.-based media houses: on accounts of the girl having had no regrets in joining the IS. Yet she intends to return to the U.K. on humanitarian grounds. I do not intend to challenge or undermine the overall

narrative or the content but feel that opinion pieces must capture all the ethical dilemmas so as to enrich readers.  
VISHWARATH REDDY,  
New Delhi

■ What we must note is that it is the absence of stable and democratic governments that is actually paving the way for the rise of deadly terrorist groups. It is with the backing of the U.S. that the Syrian Democratic Forces is succeeding in getting back lost territories. We must not forget that the Islamic State is a hydra-headed terrorist group which can't be eliminated quickly. It can bounce back if there is a political vacuum.

JELVIN JOSE,  
Thrissur, Kerala

### ODI win

There is no need to read too much into the unexpected series loss at the hands of

Australia except that it could make India come out of its complacency ("Sport" page, "Australia burst India's invincibility, script memorable series win", March 14). Experimentation has paid dividends in the past. It is an ongoing process and helps to gauge the bench strength which can be employed in case a need arises. But for experimentation, Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal who replaced R. Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja, would have never represented India. In the fifth ODI, except Vijay Shankar, all the other players were top notch one-day players. We must appreciate Australia's resilience. However, resting M.S. Dhoni defies logic as he plays only limited version games and might call it a day soon.  
V. SUBRAMANIAN,  
Chennai

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# Will a court-mandated mediation on Ayodhya solve the issue?

PARLEY

The Supreme Court's attempt at mediation has its share of supporters and critics

*The Supreme Court has opted for a time-bound mediation process in a bid to resolve the Ayodhya dispute. Sukumar Muralidharan and Sanjay Hegde debate whether mediation is necessary at this stage, and if the process is viable, in a discussion moderated by K. Venkataraman. Excerpts:*

**Is mediation viable at this stage of the litigation, when the Supreme Court is set to begin the final hearing in the Ayodhya dispute? Is it advisable and desirable?**

**Sukumar Muralidharan:** I think the Supreme Court has stepped in as a problem-solver at numerous stages of this dispute over the years. And sometimes it has declined to play that role – instances being as far back as in 1989, when it was asked to put a stop to the Shila Pujans that were going on all over the country and causing a lot of communal violence, and it declined to do so; and then again in 1992, when it was asked to ensure the safety of the structure when the Vishva Hindu Parishad was planning its kar seva on December 6, 1992. Of course, it did issue a writ and asked for guarantees to the safety of the structure. The rest is history. Then, the reference was made to determine whether there was a Hindu religious structure under the mosque prior to the mosque being built. The Supreme Court declined to hear it but held that the acquisition of the land was good in law. And that a mosque was not part of essential religious practice for the Islamic faith and, hence, there was no violation of religious freedom in the acquisition of that land. It then reverted the case to the Lucknow Bench for a determination of the title suit. So, that's what we had coming out in 2010. This mediation decision comes out of an appeal against the Lucknow Bench's decision. So, I think this fits in with the normal course of adjudication in the matter. The mediation decision is the court, in a manner of speaking, abdicating its responsibility.

**Sanjay Hegde:** Any court always

has the option of asking parties to mediate before it proceeds to adjudicate. That is laid down in the Civil Procedure Code. This is a kind of case where even if there is adjudication, the court is not particularly sure as to whether its verdict would be honoured if it is unpopular on one side or the other. However, the court decided to be proactive, not in the sense of abdicating its jurisdiction, but is aware now that mediation itself is a specialised process. It is not exactly in the sense of a negotiating or bargaining kind of situation. Mediation is something much deeper and the court wants to see whether that process with the trained mediator plus two others who are of repute within the community, both legally as well as in terms of a broader religious appeal... they've tried to get some kind of representational team together. And see where the process goes.

**There is a small window of eight weeks for mediation. Would it have been better if the mediation process was given more time, or if it was opened so that there could be a more viable process?**

**S.H.:** If you give too much time, nothing really happens. So, having a deadline also concentrates parties' minds wonderfully, inasmuch as there is time pressure to arrive at a solution.

**S.M.:** My worry is that the court has opted for a deadline that just puts it over the threshold of the electoral cycle, so that it does not get affected by the heat and dust of the election campaign. Now, it may be prudent to have done this, but I don't see that the court should really be allowing this political scenario to impinge upon its decision. Now, once the mediation begins, who will the mediators involve in the process? There are a number of litigants involved. The original litigants are the Nirmohi Akhara, the Wakf Board, and there is Ram Lalla, the deity. But the VHP is creating trouble on the streets, and they have become, by virtue of their coercive politics,



litigants in the problem. So, who are going to be part of the mediation? It's going to be a tricky process because whoever is left out of the mediation process can move out to the streets with their grievance, and whip up public fury.

**The suits are representative in nature with the two communities on either side of the dispute. It is said it will be difficult to enforce a decree of the court, if one party expresses misgivings and the other party is happy about it. Does this not apply to the mediation process also?**

**S.H.:** A negotiated settlement will also ultimately end up in a decree of the court. What will happen on the enforcement of the decree is another question. Right now, we are wondering whether the decree can be arrived at by consensus among the parties to the litigation, or whether the decree has to be arrived at only through the adjudicatory route.

Do you agree with the basic formulation – that this is a matter concerning faith and not merely the civil rights of the respective parties?

**S.M.:** There's so much of politics riding on this. They [the Muslim parties] say they are willing to cede the land if it is proven that it was taken by fraud or by force from the other side. And the other side is arguing, 'No, it is a matter of faith, and we cannot negotiate, or have a judicial determination on a matter of faith.' I don't see any reason why they will retreat from that really hard-line position now, without risk

**We've allowed a number of political campaigns to ride on this issue, which should have been settled right at the moment it was born.**

of loss of face, since it has become such a high-stakes issue politically. The judiciary could have just proceeded to take the bull by the horn, rather than bring in the question of faith and the emotion.

**Do you get the sense that the legal issues are secondary?**

**S.H.:** Politically, it has always been framed like that. How does the judiciary handle it? The judiciary could have well said, 'Look there are no manageable standards,' and declined to get into the dispute altogether. Or, it could have said, 'We have no space for faith and belief out here. Let us go simply by the law as laid down.' The mosque has stood there for nearly 500 years, and we all saw this go down in 1992. How does, in the face of all that evidence, one side prove it?

There are two basic emotions out here. One emotion on the Hindu side is, 'We have suffered religious hurt and we have lived with it through 500 years. This may not be a Hindu state, but it is a Hindu majority country. The wishes of the majority on this thing must prevail.' On the Muslim side, it is this emotion that, 'Look, we are not intruders. These are things that have happened so many years ago.' These underlying emotions, if the multi-faith mediation team could address somewhere, and get people to un-

derstand that irrespective of faith, irrespective of the past... this country needs to move on ahead.

**It is argued that for Hindus it is a matter of faith as far as the spot is concerned, whereas the right of worship of Muslims can be exercised anywhere. The idea behind the mediation seems to be to get the Muslim side to give up their claim over the site, and instead have a mosque elsewhere. Against this backdrop, it is interesting that the Sunni Wakf Board and the All India Muslim Personal Law Board were open to the idea of mediation, whereas the three Hindu parties were not in favour of it.**

**S.H.:** You are right that the Muslim side in a way perceives itself to be the weaker side, and it had always said whatever the court orders, it will abide by it. The thing on the Hindu side is that after all this is god's property. There is almost a sense of crusade out there and we cannot give up anything, having started the fight in god's name. At the end of the day, Hindus and Muslims are all part of India.

**S.M.:** We should avoid any impression that the institutions of our governance process are skewing the whole balance in favour of favour of majoritarian coercive politics. Because, I think the people of the minority faith have a sense of grievance that they have not been given a fair deal in this process. In fact, even the ruling that the acquisition of land was legitimate because the place of worship is not an essential part of the religious faith of Muslims – that also has caused some disquiet... but now they're even being restrained from even offering prayers in public places.

**Would you like to comment on the choice of the mediators?**

**S.H.:** Well, about two choices nobody has any doubts: Sriram Panchu and Justice Kalifulla. The question is about Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. The point is that you needed somebody on the Hindu side who could possibly sell a settlement to the larger Hindu community. Therefore it did make sense to bring in a holy man.

But why this particular godman? That is a choice left to individual judges who can constitute the Bench.

**S.M.:** Well, he's on record saying Muslims should give up their claim to the title of the land and also threatening dire consequences if that does not happen. So, that gives him not exactly the best claim to being a fair mediator to this process. So before the task of achieving a mediated outcome between the different litigants to this process, I think the mediators have to achieve consensus amongst themselves about how they're going to approach this. And given the composition of this team, I think that is not a trivial challenge.

**What do you think will be the larger implications for constitutional values like the rule of law and secularism, when this litigation reaches either an adjudicated or negotiated settlement?**

**S.H.:** Quite frankly, I think we, as a democracy, gave up our belief in the rule of law on December 6, 1992. What we are trying to do is to snatch back whatever remains; to rebuild it, because ultimately, let me put it this way and this is my question to even those who propound a Hindu Rashtra: Even a Hindu Rashtra can't work without the rule of law. And if you do something which is out of the law, and then you try to retrospectively make it right, it just doesn't work.

**S.M.:** That is the key question going forward. Because once you have destroyed the faith that people of different religious convictions might have in the neutrality of the governance process, it is very difficult to retrieve that. Over the last 30 years, the balance has shifted too far in favour of majoritarian assertion and we've allowed a number of political campaigns to ride on this issue, which should have been settled right at the moment it was born. That default over 30 years has allowed this issue to become a political matter on which very emotive campaigns were mounted by both sides. The damage has been very deep and it'll be very lasting unless we sort things out very quickly.



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Scan the QR code to watch the full interview online

## SINGLE FILE

### Can sharing be private?

Facebook's 'pivot to privacy' plan signals a shift in its centre of gravity

G. SAMPATH

For years now, Facebook has been facing flak for privacy violations. The most notorious of these was the Cambridge Analytica scandal. Under relentless pressure from regulators to tighten its privacy safeguards, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, in a post last week, appears to have made a 180-degree shift in what Facebook has stood for all along: from sharing and openness, to privacy and encryption.

In a 3,200-word post on Facebook, Mr. Zuckerberg unveiled what he calls "a privacy-focused vision for social networking". Facebook is a company whose very business model is built on encouraging, coaxing, and manipulating people to share more and more of their private lives. So understandably, its founder's latest posture on privacy has struck many as little more than posturing.

In his post, Mr. Zuckerberg outlined a four-fold strategy to position privacy at the heart of Facebook's business. First, all social media activity would be end-to-end encrypted, as WhatsApp currently is, across Facebook, WhatsApp, Messenger and Instagram. Second, users could post 'ephemeral' messages that would all get automatically get deleted unless they specified otherwise. Third, interoperability, which would enable users to seamlessly send and receive messages across WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram or SMS, would be possible owing to a unification of the technological back-end of all these platforms. Many fear that this might open the gateway for massive data mining and be a way to duck anti-trust legislation. Finally, Facebook will not store data in countries that have a questionable record in protecting human rights such as privacy and free speech. This is to protect users' privacy by ensuring that data is not "improperly accessed."

Of these four, the most radical promise is encryption across platforms. If implemented, which many still doubt, it would mean that even Facebook cannot 'see' what its billions of users are sharing. As per Mr. Zuckerberg's analogy, it also signals a shift in Facebook Inc's centre of gravity – from the social network imagined as a town square (Facebook), where you are sharing something with all or most of your friends, to the social network imagined as your living room (such as a small WhatsApp or Messenger group), where a more intimate – and more private – sharing can take place. What happens to Facebook's ad-based business model in such a scenario?

Mr. Zuckerberg's answer suggests that the 'pivot to privacy' would itself be based on a pivot towards "payments, commerce, and ultimately a platform for many other kinds of private services." He hasn't offered a time frame for effecting this transition.

Not surprisingly, given Facebook's long history of sacrificing privacy at the altar of Mammon, many remain sceptical. A brilliant *New Yorker* cartoon captured the general sentiment that greeted Mr. Zuckerberg's proclamation. In the cartoon, Mr. Zuckerberg, speaking from a podium, announces to the world, "Facebook is changing. From now on, sharing is private. War is peace, freedom is slavery, and ignorance is strength."

The writer is the Social Affairs Editor of The Hindu



## NOTEBOOK

### Field notes from the election battleground

Biryani, liquor and money are non-negotiable

B. KOLAPPAN

The distribution of money to voters during election time is one of the challenges democracy in India faces. Though it has been an established practice, inflation applies here too, and the amounts seem to have increased.

Even the local office-bearers and cadres of political parties will not carry out election work unless the candidate and the high command meet their regular expenses: biryani and liquor. When it comes to the time of elections, biryani becomes a national food.

When I was a student and worked for political parties, a group of local leaders would often visit the areas we were in – in an Ambassador car – to distribute money and posters. Kariyalayams, or small sheds that were put up temporarily, would function as a party office. Cadres would use the money to buy gum, which was made by boiling tapioca powder in water, to stick

the party publicity posters, help in the wall writing and get the snacks. The amount came to a little over ₹100 per day.

In the evening we would visit the local hotel and have a sumptuous meal of dosa and rava vada, washed down with a cup of tea or coffee or sukku coffee. More often than not, Opposition party cadres would also be there seated on the benches facing us. They would never eat what we ate. Only the Communists would spend out of their own pockets.

When the money was spent on the gum, paint and lime for the white wash of the walls, the cadres would make upma and sukku coffee in the kariyalayams. At times they would boil tapioca and have it with freshly ground chilli and garlic paste as a side dish. As there was no time frame for the election campaign, our arguments and discussions would go on endlessly. There were times when a senior leader or even the candidate

would drop by to greet the cadres. On the day of election, buttermilk or panagam (lemon juice with jagery) would be distributed to voters. We sat before a transistor radio on the day of counting and listened to the bulletin of All India Radio, a process that would often take two to three days to complete.

In many constituencies, the cadres would be able to predict the candidates based not only their wealth but also their commitment and ability to do party work. So the candidate list always had a mix of wealthy and a committed party workers who depended on the high command for election expenses.

The trend was the same even in the late 1980s. While covering an election, I was engaged in a conversation with a senior Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam candidate, who was once the Mayor of Chennai. He told me that the high command had given him ₹4 lakh for the election expen-

diture and that he could save ₹1.75 lakh after meeting the expenses.

He said, "If the party offers me a seat today, I may not be in a position to enter the fray as contesting an election has become a rich man's business. If I win the elections, it is well and good. If I lose, I will be in debt permanently."

He was absolutely right. Once an aspirant for the Panamarathupatti constituency showed me a demand draft made out for ₹50 lakh when he came for the interview for candidates. He said, "I had to show it to the party leaders to prove how much I am worth."

His views were echoed by another former Minister. He said, "Today, contesting in an Assembly constituency will cost you at least ₹3 crore. Partymen who run businesses, educational institutions and existing MPs and MLAs alone can afford it." A Lok Sabha constituency covers six Assembly constituencies. So you can calculate the amount.

## FROM THE HINDU ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 15, 1969

### Mujibur Rahman warns of movement

The National Awami League leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, sore over the failure of the round table talks in Rawalpindi to secure acceptance of the demand for autonomy for East Pakistan, yesterday [March 13] called on Air Marshal Asghar Khan and, according to Radio Pakistan, discussed with him the political situation. This was the first notable development following the conclusion of the Round Table Conference yesterday [March 13] between President Ayub Khan and Opposition leaders. The Sheikh to-day [March 14] said at Lahore that he would present his own draft constitutional reforms soon. *The Times* (London) correspondent from Rawalpindi reported to-day [March 14] that Mr. Rahman hinted that the "revolt" in East Pakistan might turn into a serious separatist movement unless Mr. Ayub Khan granted the 70 million Bengalis full autonomy almost immediately. The correspondent said that after the third session of the Rawalpindi talks, the Sheikh said it would be natural if people began thinking in terms of "complete independence" if the present talks failed. "I do not know how much longer their patience will last, President Ayub can concede our demands, but much depends on the attitude of the rest of the administration."

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 15, 1919.

### Kerosine Oil.

Since sometime past great difficulty is experienced from the general shortage of kerosine oil, and no vigorous steps have yet been taken to allay the distress of the public. Between the hours of 4 and 6 in the evening every day a kerosine oil bazaar is swarmed by people anxiously waiting for their day's supply of oil. A local depot keeper when asked by one of our representatives told him that since the stoppage of the American oil and the irregular and insufficient supply by the importing companies the situation had become more aggravated. Further enquiry showed him that in addition to this partial truth, the depot keepers do not put in market the entire quantity that they obtain from the agents. A great part of their supply is sold to retailers and who in turn raise the price as it suits them best. If these unscrupulous profiteers are pointed out their illegality and dishonest business the situation becomes worse and one has to go back disappointed. Another vagary of the bazaarman is that they do not sell before 4 o'clock or after seven o'clock in the evenings.

## POLL CALL

### Absentee ballot

This refers to a vote cast by someone who is unable to go to the polling station. The system is designed to increase voter turnout. In some countries, the voter is required to give a reason for not going to the polling station, before participating in an absentee ballot. In India, a postal ballot is available to only some citizens. The Representation of the People Act, 1950 allows heads of states and those serving in the armed forces to vote through postal means. The Lok Sabha recently passed a Bill to allow proxy voting for NRIs. However, domestic migrants and absentee voters in India cannot cast postal votes.

## MORE ON THE WEB

Rescued puppy becomes top sniffer dog in Bengal Police bomb squad

<http://bit.ly/SnifferDog>



## सोने और चांदी से जीवन का आनंद नहीं मिल सकता

आदमियों को तितारत करना मूर्खों का काम है। सोने और लोहे के बदले मनुष्य को बेचना मना है। आजकल भाप को कलों का दाम तो हजारों रुपये है; परंतु मनुष्य कौड़ी के सो-सौ विकते हैं! सोने और चांदी की प्राप्ति से जीवन का आनंद नहीं मिल सकता। सच्चा आनंद तो मुझे नहीं मिल सकता है। मुझे अपना काम मिल जाए, तो फिर स्वर्गाप्ति को इच्छा नहीं, मनुष्य-पूजा ही सच्ची ईश्वर-पूजा है। मंदिर और गिरजे में क्या रखा है? ईंट, पत्थर, चूना कुच्छ ही कहां - आज से हम अपने ईश्वर की तलाश मंदिर, मस्जिद, गिरजा और पोथी में न करेंगे। अब तो यही इरादा है कि मनुष्य अनमोल आत्मा में ईश्वर के दर्शन करेंगे। यही आर्ट है-यही धर्म है। मनुष्य के हाथ से ही ईश्वर के दर्शन कराने वाले निकलते हैं। बिना काम, बिना मजदूरी, बिना हाथ के कला-कौशल के विचार और चिंतन किस काम के! सभी देशों के इतिहासों से सिद्ध है कि दान के अन्न पर पला हुआ ईश्वर-चिंतन, अंत में पाप, आलस्य और भ्रष्टाचार में परिवर्तित हो जाता है। जिन देशों में हाथ और मुंह पर मजदूरी की धूल नहीं पड़ने पाती, वे धर्म और कला-कौशल में कभी उन्नति नहीं कर सकते। पद्मनाभन निकमो सिद्ध हो चुके हैं। वही आसन ईश्वर-प्राप्ति करा सकते हैं, जिसे जोतने, बोन, काटने और मजदूरी का काम लिया जाता है। लकड़ी, ईंट और पत्थर को मूर्तिमान करने वाले लुहार, बड़ई, तथा किसान आदि जैसे ही पुरुष हैं, जैसे कवि, महात्मा और योगी आदि। उत्तम से उत्तम और नीच से नीच काम, सबके सब प्रेम-शरीर के अंग हैं। निकमो रहकर मनुष्यों की चिंतन-शक्ति थक गई है। विस्तरों और आसनों पर सोते और बैठे-बैठे मन के घोड़े हार गए हैं। सारा जीवन निचुड़ चुका है।



जैसी कि अपेक्षा थी, कुछ पुरुषों द्वारा इस पर काफी तीखी प्रतिक्रिया जताई गई, जो मानते हैं कि ये महिलाएं जैसे अधिकार मांग रही हैं, जो संस्कृति के खिलाफ हैं। लेकिन वे यह भूल जाते हैं कि इस संस्कृति ने ही उन्हें आवाज उठाने वाली महिलाओं की ऑनर किलिंग की इजाजत दी है। वे यह भूल जाते हैं कि कोई भी मजहब और संस्कृति ऑनर किलिंग की इजाजत नहीं देती। फिर हमारे यहां खासकर पख्तून में एक क्रूर संस्कृति भी है, जिसमें विवाह में महिलाओं की अदला-बदली होती है। अगर कोई स्त्री किसी पुरुष से शादी करती है, तो उसकी बहन को उसके भाई से शादी करनी होती है और उसकी बहन से उसकी राय भी नहीं पूछी जाती। पाकिस्तान ने दुनिया की पहली मुस्लिम महिला प्रधानमंत्री बेनजिर भुट्टो को देखा है, लेकिन राजनीति में आने के लिए आम पाकिस्तानी महिलाओं के सामने अब भी कई चुनौतियां हैं।

पाकिस्तानी महिलाओं के सामने एक अन्य मुद्दा यह है कि शहरी केंद्रों में कार्यबल में उनकी हिस्सेदारी बहुत कम है, इस प्रकार वे कई आर्थिक स्वतंत्रता से वंचित रहती हैं। विश्व बैंक के आंकड़ों के अनुसार पाकिस्तान में महिला कार्यबल की भागीदारी मात्र 24 फीसदी है।

इस वर्ष 'औरत मार्च' में कई ऐसी महिलाएं भी शामिल थीं, जो अब बूढ़ी हो चुकी हैं, पर उन्होंने बीती सदी के अस्सी के दशक में पाकिस्तान में नारीवादी आंदोलन को आगे बढ़ाया था, जब उन्होंने सैन्य तानाशाह जनरल जिया उल हक के खिलाफ प्रदर्शन किया था, जिनका महिलाओं के खिलाफ बहुत क्रूर कानून था। लेकिन तमाम प्राप्ति के बावजूद आज भी इसे एक सहकारी आंदोलन में बदलने के लिए काफी कुछ किए जाने की जरूरत है, जो वास्तव में पाकिस्तान में सामाजिक व राजनीतिक बदलाव को बढ़ावा दे सके।

## राहुल, मेहना और चाय

एक चाय दुकान, जहां से मेहना को समझ में आया कि गरीब भी इज्जत के साथ कैसे चाय पी सकते हैं।



राहुल और मेहना कंपनी की तरफ से दो दिन के लिए मुंबई गए थे। मुंबई पहुंचने पर दोनों ने अपनी मीटिंग खत्म की और सैर पर निकल पड़े। गिरगांव चौपाटी से मरीन ड्राइव होते हुए वे दोनों गेटवे ऑफ इंडिया पहुंचे। थोड़ी देर वहां समय बिताकर वे पास के चाय हाउस में गए। सुहाना मौसम, समुद्र का किनारा और गर्मागर्म चाय। तभी मेहना की नजर एक आदमी पर पड़ी, जो मरिंडीज से उतरा और चाय हाउस में आकर बैठ गया। वेटर ऑर्डर लेने पहुंचा, तो वह बोला, एक मसाला कटिंग मुझे, और एक टेबल पर। मेहना को कुछ समझ में नहीं आया। कुछ देर में वेटर एक आधी कप चाय और एक दफती का स्टैंड लेकर आया, जिस पर लिखा था-एक मसाला कटिंग। उस शब्द से चाय पी और वहां से निकल गया। कुछ देर बाद भिखारी जैसा दिखने वाला एक गरीब आदमी वहां आया और उसी मरिंडीज वाले शब्द की जगह बैठ गया। वेटर आया, तो उस आदमी ने वेटर को वही दफती वाला स्टैंड पकड़ा दिया। वेटर कुछ देर में उसके लिए आधा कप चाय ले आया। वही पास वाली टेबल पर चार लड़के बैठे थे। जब वेटर उनसे ऑर्डर लेने गया, तो वे बोले, चार स्पेशल और एक टेबल पर। इस बार मेहना सब कुछ समझ गई। उसे वह आइडिया अच्छा लगा। राहुल ने पूछा, क्या हुआ? मेहना बोली, वह जो आदमी दिखाई दे रहा है, उसके पास शायद चाय पीने के पैसे भी न हों। पर यहां उसको किसी से भीख मांगने की जरूरत नहीं। वह इज्जत से अपनी चाय पी रहा है। और होटल को भी इससे कोई नुकसान नहीं है न बेहदरीन सोच! राहुल थोड़ा चकराते हुए बोला, कोई मुफ्त चाय पिए और होटल को भी कोई नुकसान न हो, भला ऐसा कैसे हो सकता है? तभी मेहना ने वेटर को इशारा किया और बोली, दो स्पेशल और एक टेबल पर।

यदि समर्थ लोग थोड़ी संवेदना दिखाएं, तो गरीब भी इज्जत से जी सकते हैं।

मसूद अजहर को वैश्विक आतंकी घोषित करने की राह में चीन ने चौथी बार अड़ंगा लगाकर एक बार फिर पाकिस्तान के प्रति नरम रुख दिखाया है। इसके बावजूद भारत को आतंकवाद के खिलाफ लड़ाई में अपने कूटनीतिक प्रयास और तेज करने चाहिए।

## चीन का अड़ंगा

संबंधित प्रस्ताव को लटका चुका है। दरअसल 62 अरब डॉलर के निवेश से बनाए जा रहे चीन-पाकिस्तान आर्थिक गलियारे को पाकिस्तान अधिकृत कश्मीर से गुजरना है, लिहाजा यह माना जा रहा है कि चीन अपने मित्र पाकिस्तान को नाराज नहीं करना चाहता। चीन ने यह कदम तब उठाया है, जब भारत ने पुलवामा हमले में जैश-ए-मोहम्मद और मसूद अजहर की संलिप्तता के सबूत पाकिस्तान सहित अंतरराष्ट्रीय विरादरी को मुहैया कराए हैं। ध्यान रहे, पुलवामा हमले की चीन ने भी निंदा की थी, लेकिन जब बात मसूद अजहर पर शिकंजा कसने की आई, तो उसने पैंतरा बदल लिया। एक धारणा यह भी है कि चीन भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच मध्यस्थता करना चाहता है, लेकिन भारत का इस पर रुख एकदम स्पष्ट है कि वह जम्मू-

कश्मीर के मसले पर किसी तीसरे पक्ष को स्वीकार नहीं करेगा और पाकिस्तान के साथ बातचीत तभी हो सकती है, जब वह अपनी जमीन से भारत के खिलाफ आतंकी गतिविधियां बंद करे। यह दुखद है कि आतंकवाद के मुद्दे को राजनीतिक दलों ने एक दूसरे पर हमले के लिए चुनावी मुद्दे में बदल दिया है। जबकि इस घटनाक्रम से स्पष्ट है कि भारत को दीर्घकालीन रणनीति पर विचार करना चाहिए। सुरक्षा परिषद में अब छह महीने बाद ही अगला प्रस्ताव आ सकता है और चीन को तीन महीने का अतिरिक्त समय भी मिल सकता है। यही ठीक समय है, जब भारत को चीन को राजी करने के साथ ही सुरक्षा परिषद की वीटो व्यवस्था में सुधार के लिए कूटनीतिक प्रयास तेज करने चाहिए।

# पाकिस्तानी महिलाओं का आंदोलन



अंतरराष्ट्रीय महिला दिवस पर इस्लामाबाद, लाहौर और कराची समेत अनेक शहरों में हजारों महिलाओं ने इकट्ठा होकर पितृसत्ता के खिलाफ नारे लगाए और अपने हकों की बात की।

मरिआना बाबर, पाकिस्तानी पत्रकार



हटाने की मांग की और यहां तक कि उनकी अपनी पार्टी के सदस्यों, जैसे मानवाधिकार मंत्री ने ट्वीट कर प्रधानमंत्री से मांग की कि उन्हें हटा दिया जाना चाहिए। पाकिस्तान में यह एक स्वस्थ नया बदलाव है, जहां धीरे-धीरे, लेकिन निश्चित रूप से अल्पसंख्यकों के प्रति सहिष्णुता दिखाई जा रही है।

इस बीच कराची, लाहौर, क्वेटा, इस्लामाबाद, मुल्तान, हैदराबाद, लरकाना और पाकिस्तान के अन्य नगरों में हजारों महिलाओं ने 'हम औरों'

बैनर के तले इकट्ठा होकर पितृसत्ता के खिलाफ नारे लगाए और मुक्त में महिलाओं द्वारा झेली जाने वाली यातनाओं और सामाजिक विकास व अन्य क्षेत्रों में उनके योगदान पर बातें कीं। यह देखना दिलचस्प था कि इस वर्ष ट्रांसजेंडर भी 'औरत मार्च' में शामिल होने आए थे। सरकार धीरे-धीरे समाज में इन ट्रांसजेंडरों को शामिल कर रही है और उन्हें विशेषाधिकार दिए जा रहे हैं। 'औरत मार्च' का उद्देश्य पूरे पाकिस्तान की

## भा

रत और पाकिस्तान के युद्ध के कगार से पीछे हटते ही दोनों मुल्कों के उच्चायुक्त अपने-अपने काम में लग गए और करतारपुर कारिडोर पर वार्ता के लिए योजनाएं बनाई जाने लगीं। इससे यह लगने लगा है कि इस उपमहाद्वीप में हालात सामान्य हो गए हैं। अंतरराष्ट्रीय महिला दिवस के अवसर पर पिछले हफ्ते पाकिस्तान में महिलाओं ने 'औरत मार्च' निकाला, जिसकी अब भी चर्चा हो रही है। हमने वर्षों से देखा है कि भारतीय महिलाएं कितनी मुखर और पतिशाल हैं और उन्होंने विशेष रूप से बलात्कार के खिलाफ अंतहीन विरोध प्रदर्शनों में भाग लिया है, क्योंकि बलात्कार की घटनाएं भारत में बढ़ गई हैं।

हालांकि पाकिस्तान की महिलाएं भी यौन उत्पीड़न के खिलाफ विरोध प्रदर्शन करती हैं, लेकिन अब भी वे समलैंगिक अधिकारों के लिए आगे नहीं आई हैं, जिसके लिए हाल में भारत में पुरुषों और महिलाओं को आंदोलन करते देखा गया। पाकिस्तान न केवल एक संकीर्ण समाज है, बल्कि समलैंगिकता इस्लाम में भी प्रतिबंधित है। अंतरराष्ट्रीय महिला दिवस पर सांसद कृष्णा कुमारी कोहली को सम्मान देते हुए सीनेट के अध्यक्ष ने उन्हें अपनी सीट पर बैठकर उस दिन के सत्र का संचालन करने के लिए कहा। कृष्णा कुमारी कोहली पहली हिंदू दलित और दूसरी हिंदू महिला हैं, जिन्हें यह सम्मान दिया गया। वह महिला अधिकारों और बंधुआ मजदूरी के खिलाफ अपने अभियानों के लिए जानी जाती हैं।

इससे ठीक पहले पंजाब मंत्रिमंडल के सूचना मंत्री फैय्याजुल चहान को प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान ने हिंदुओं के खिलाफ टिप्पणी करने के कारण पद से हटा दिया। पूरे पाकिस्तान ने एकजुट होकर उन्हें

## इंजीनियर नहीं बन पाया पर नई खोज जारी है

जब मैं अपने गांव में कबाड़ से लोहा-लकड़ निकालकर कुछ बनाने की कोशिश करता था, तब लोग मुझ पर हंसते और मुझे पागल कहते थे। कुछ पढ़े-लिखे, शिक्षित लोग मेरे पास आकर खड़े हो जाते और बेकार का काम छोड़कर मुझे कुछ सार्थक करने के लिए कहते। मैं समझ नहीं पाता था कि मैं जो कुछ करने जा रहा हूँ, उसे ये लोग बेकार का काम क्यों समझ रहे हैं। लेकिन अच्छा यह हुआ कि गांव के लोगों की टोकाटोकी से बेपरवाह मैं अपने काम में लगा रहा। उसी का नतीजा था कि मैं पॉलिथीन थैली बनाने की मशीन तैयार कर पाया। वह 1988 की बात थी। उसकी भी एक अलग कहानी है। मैं असम के जिस लखीमपुर जिले का रहने वाला हूँ, वहां उस समय चाय के अलावा और कोई उद्योग नहीं था। चाय उद्योग को पैकिंग के लिए भारी मात्रा में पॉलिथीन थैलियों की जरूरत पड़ती थी। हमारे यहां पॉलिथीन थैली बनाने का कोई उद्योग नहीं था। मैंने तब 67,000 रुपये में पॉलिथीन थैली तैयार करने की मशीन बनाई, जिसे स्थानीय स्तर पर बहुत सराहा गया। अभी तक मैं करीब डेढ़ सौ नई चीजें बना चुका हूँ। नवाचार भरी इसी सोच के कारण मुझे पद्मश्री सम्मान सहित अनेक पुरस्कार मिल चुके हैं।

लेकिन मेरा बचपन इतना सुखद नहीं था। मैं बहुत मेधावी छात्र था। बहुत छोटी उम्र में ही मुझे नई-नई चीजें बनाने का शौक था और मैं इंजीनियर बनना चाहता था। पर हमारी पारिवारिक स्थिति अचानक खराब हो गई, तो पिता द्वारा लिया गया भारी कर्ज चुकाने के लिए मुझे कॉलेज की पढ़ाई छोड़नी पड़ी। तब मुझे अनेक छोटे-मोटे काम करने पड़े। लेकिन तब भी नई खोज का मेरा उत्साह थोड़ा भी कम नहीं हुआ। बल्कि पॉलिथीन थैली मशीन बनाने के बाद मेरा आत्मविश्वास बढ़ गया था। मैं दरअसल जुगाड़ के जरिये बड़ी मशीनों का सस्ता विकल्प तैयार करने के प्रति ज्यादा उत्सुक था, जो टिकाऊ भी हो और कुशल भी।

कुछ समय बाद मैं एक नौकरी पर अरुणाचल प्रदेश चला गया। लेकिन तीन साल बड़े भाई की असमय मृत्यु के बाद मुझे लखीमपुर लौटना पड़ा, क्योंकि अब घर की जिम्मेदारी मेरे कंधे पर आ गई थी।

अगले दस साल तक घर पर रहकर मैंने कुल चौबीस उत्पाद बनाए, जो खेती में किसानों की मदद के लिए थे। इसमें लहसुन से लेकर गन्ना छीलने वाली मशीन हैं, तो चाय पत्ती कटर भी हैं। इन खोजों की भी एक वजह है। दरअसल बड़ी-बड़ी कंपनियां ज्यादातर बड़े उद्योगों के लिए काम करती हैं। बड़ी कंपनियां खेती और किसानों की बेहतरी के बारे में नहीं सोचतीं। लेकिन मुझे सबसे ज्यादा प्रशंसा तब मिली, जब 2006 में मैंने अनार छीलकर उसके दाने निकालने की एक मशीन का आविष्कार किया। इस मशीन की खासियत यह है कि छिलका हटाने के क्रम में अनारदानों को थोड़ा भी नुकसान नहीं पहुंचता। इस खोज ने मेरी पहचान बना दी और नेशनल इन्वोल्वेशन सेंटर, अहमदाबाद ने इसका संज्ञान लिया। यही नहीं, अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर भी मेरी इस खोज की चर्चा हुई। काम, पहचान और पैसा हो जाने के बावजूद मैं गरीबों के लिए काम करता हूँ। हाल ही में मैंने लखीमपुर में गरीबों के लिए एक शेल्टर होम शुरू किया, जहां भोजन की भी व्यवस्था है। इसके अलावा निःशक्तजनों की बेहतरी के लिए भी मैं कुछ काम कर रहा हूँ। जिस पृष्ठभूमि में मैं निकलकर आया हूँ, उसमें कहीं भी पहुंच जाऊँ, मैं अपनी जड़ों को नहीं भूल सकता।

# चुनाव के लिए किसानों का एजेंडा

जवानों की तरह किसान भी देश की सेवा करते हैं और हमारे लिए अन्न उपजाते हैं। क्या किसान देश की जो सेवा करते हैं, वह राष्ट्रवाद के दायरे में नहीं आता? यह चुनाव एक बड़ा अवसर है, जब किसानों की भी आवाज सुनी जाए।



वी एम सिंह

लिए निर्भर न हों, इसके लिए एमएसपी का निर्धारण सी-2 के अनुसार हो, जिसमें परिवारिक श्रम, जमीन का किराया और ब्याज को लागत में जोड़ा जाता है। सरकार यह भी सुनिश्चित करे कि फसल एमएसपी से कम में न बिके। यानी न्यूनतम का मतलब न्यूनतम ही हो और इससे कम में खरीद करने वालों को दंडित करने का प्रावधान हो।

फसल बीमा : चूंकि किसान कर्ज व्यक्तिगत स्तर पर लेते हैं, इसलिए बीमा दावे के लिए फसल के नुकसान का आकलन भी पूरे गांव के आधार पर नहीं, बल्कि किसानों को हुए व्यक्तिगत नुकसान के आधार पर हो। प्राकृतिक कारणों से फसल नुकसान की स्थिति में कर्ज में उसी अनुपात में छूट मिले।

## खुली खिड़की



## मोबाइल इंटरनेट की औसत रफ्तार

मोबाइल इंटरनेट की रफ्तार के मामले में आइसलैंड दुनिया में सबसे अग्रणी है, उसके बाद नॉर्वे और कतर का स्थान आता है। लेकिन हमारे देश में मोबाइल इंटरनेट की रफ्तार बहुत धीमी (9.9 एमबीपीएस) है, और दुनिया में इसका स्थान 11वां है।

## जीवन की कसौटियां

एक दिन चाणक्य का एक परिचित उनके पास आकर बहुत उत्साह के साथ कहने लगा, आप जानते हैं कि अभी-अभी मैंने आपके मित्र के बारे में क्या सुना है? चाणक्य अपनी तर्कशक्ति, ज्ञान और व्यवहार कुशलता के लिए विख्यात थे। उन्होंने उस परिचित की सूचना पर बहुत अधिक उत्सुकता नहीं दिखाई। थोड़ी देर सोचने के बाद उन्होंने सामने वाले से पूछा, मेरे मित्र के बारे में आप जो कुछ भी कहने वाले हैं, क्या वह सत्य है? और क्या इस बारे में आपको पूरी जानकारी है? यह सुनते ही उस आदमी का चेहरा मुरझा गया। उसने धीमे स्वर में कहा, नहीं, यह तो मैं नहीं कह सकता कि यह सच ही है। बल्कि मैंने इस बारे में कहीं सुना था। मैं यह भी नहीं कह सकता कि आपके मित्र के बारे में जो बात मैं आपको बताने वाला हूँ, वह पूरी तरह सच ही है। चाणक्य ने दोबारा उस व्यक्ति से पूछा, क्या आप मेरे मित्र को कोई अच्छाई बताते जा रहे हैं? नहीं, ऐसा भी नहीं है, उस आदमी ने कहा। चाणक्य ने कहा, यानी आप मेरे मित्र के बारे में जो भी कहना चाहते हैं, वह न सत्य है और न ही अच्छा है। ठीक है। मेरे एक और सवाल का जवाब दीजिए। क्या मेरे मित्र से संबंधित उस जानकारी की मेरे लिए कोई उपयोगिता है? उस आदमी ने कहा, नहीं, उपयोगिता तो नहीं है, हां इससे आपको उनके बारे में पता चलता। अब चाणक्य ने कहा, फिर मुझे वह बात नहीं सुननी है, रहने दीजिए।

# विचार

## दैनिक जागरण

बुरा अनुभव भी एक बढ़िया सीख दे जाता है

# चीन का हाथ आतंक के साथ

चीन ने भारतीय हितों और अंतरराष्ट्रीय जनमत के खिलाफ जाकर पाकिस्तान में पल रहे आतंकी सरगना मसूद अजहर का बचाव करके यही साबित किया कि वह भारत को नीचा दिखाने के लिए किसी भी हद तक जाने और यहाँ तक कि आतंकवाद की तरफदारी करने को भी तैयार है। उसने संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद में मसूद अजहर का चौथी बार बचाव करके यही दिखाया कि वह अपने संकीर्ण स्वार्थों के लिए विश्व व्यवस्था को खतरे में भी डाल सकता है। चीन के गैर जिम्मेदाराना रवैये को देखते हुए इस नतीजे पर पहुंचने के अलावा और कोई उपाय नहीं कि वह भारत के खिलाफ पाकिस्तान का न केवल इस्तेमाल करता रहेगा, बल्कि उसे उसकाता भी रहेगा। यह चीन की चालबाजी के अलावा और कुछ नहीं कि उसे मसूद अजहर के खिलाफ और सुवर्त चाहिए। जो सुवर्त दुनिया के अन्य देशों को मान्य हैं वे अगर चीन को अपयॉांप दिख रहे तो इसीलिए, क्योंकि वह भारतीय हितों को चोट पहुंचाना चाह रहा है। वह प्रतिस्पर्द्धा करने के बजाय भारत की राह में रोड़े बिछा रहा है। इसी कारण एक ओर वह आतंकी सरगना के साथ खुल कर खड़े होना पसंद कर रहा और दूसरी ओर परमाणु आपूर्तिकर्ता समूह यानी एनएस्सी में भारत की सदस्यता में बाधक बन रहा है। यह हास्यास्पद है कि चीन को यह साधारण सी बात समझ में नहीं आ रही कि जिस आतंकी सरगना का संगठन संयुक्त राष्ट्र की ओर से प्रतिबंधित है उस पर भी पाबंदी लगाना जरूरी है। चीन यह तो चाहता है कि भारत उसके हितों की परवाह करे, लेकिन वह खुद भारतीय हितों को तनिक भी चिंता नहीं कर रहा।

चीन ने तुवान में बनी समझबूझ को जिस तरह ताक पर रख दिया उसके बाद भारत को इस पर नए सिरे से विचार करना ही होगा कि उसके अंडोलन रवैये से कैसे पार पाया जाए? यह सोच-विचार केवल सरकार को ही नहीं, राजनीतिक दलों और आम लोगों को भी करना होगा। इसके लिए कोई दीर्घकालीन रणनीति भी बनानी होगी। यह तब बनेगी जब राजनीतिक दल दलगत हितों से ऊपर उठकर राष्ट्रीय हितों को प्राथमिकता प्रदान करेंगे। दुर्भाग्य से इसका ही अभाव दिख रहा है। समझना कठिन है कि कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष रहलू गांधी इस नतीजे पर कैसे पहुंच गए कि प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी चीनी राष्ट्रपति से भयभीत हैं। क्या चीनी राष्ट्रपति को भला-बुरा कहने से चीन सही रास्ते पर आ जाएगा? डोकलाम विवाद के समय गुपचुप रूप से चीनी राजदूत से मिलने वाले रहलू को इसका थोड़ा तो ज्ञान होना ही चाहिए कि विदेश नीति और कूटनीति कैसे काम करती है? आखिर यह मोदी सरकार की ही कूटनीति थी कि चीन डोकलाम से पीछे हटने को राजी हुआ। इसी तरह अगर इस बार संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद में कहीं अधिक देशों ने मसूद अजहर पर पाबंदी के प्रस्ताव का समर्थन किया तो यह भी भारतीय कूटनीति की कामयाबी ही है। इसमें दोषय नहीं कि चीन ने अमैत्रीपूर्ण व्यवहार किया है, लेकिन आखिर इसका क्या मतलब कि उससे पार पाने को लेकर हमारे राजनीतिक दलों के बीच कलह नजर आए? कूटनीतिक मसलों पर इस कलह से तो चीन और पाकिस्तान को ही फायदा होगा।

# तृणमूल को झटका

पश्चिम बंगाल के उत्तर 24 परगना जिले के भाटपाड़ा के विधायक अर्जुन सिंह तृणमूल को छोड़कर भाजपा में शामिल हो गए। चुनाव के समय नेताओं के अपनी पार्टी में टिकट नहीं मिलने पर दूसरी पार्टियों में शामिल हो जाना कोई नई बात नहीं है, लेकिन जनाधार और अपने क्षेत्र में विशेष दबदबा रखने वाला कोई नेता दलबदल करता है तो प्रभाव पड़ता है। अर्जुन सिंह के भी अचानक तृणमूल कांग्रेस छोड़कर भाजपा का दामन थाम लेने से मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी को झटका लगा है। मुकुल राय के भाजपा में शामिल होने के बाद कांचरापांडा से लेकर कमहट्टी तक विस्तृत औद्योगिक क्षेत्र में तृणमूल कांग्रेस को संभालने की जिम्मेदारी अर्जुन सिंह की थी। इसके साथ झारखंड समेत अन्य कई हिंदी भाषी क्षेत्रों में सिंह तृणमूल कांग्रेस के लिए प्रचार-प्रसार का काम करते थे। अर्जुन सिंह एक तरह से ममता के करीबी और भरोसेमंद बन गए थे। बैरकपुर से दो बार दिनेश त्रिवेदी को जिताने में भी उनकी महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका थी। पार्टी के प्रति इतना समर्पित रहने के बावजूद अर्जुन सिंह को तृणमूल कांग्रेस एवं ममता सरकार में कभी वह अहमियत नहीं मिली जिसके वह हकदार थे। दरअसल इस बार वह खुद बैरकपुर लोकसभा से सांसद का चुनाव लड़ना चाहते थे। एक विधायक सांसद बनने की इच्छा रखता है तो उसे गलत भी नहीं कहा जा सकता है, लेकिन ममता को अर्जुन सिंह की भावनाएं समझने में चूक हो गई। बहुत संभव है कि भाजपा बैरकपुर से अर्जुन सिंह को उम्मीदवार बनाएगी। सिंह बैरकपुर से भाजपा के टिकट पर चुनाव लड़ते हैं तो दिनेश त्रिवेदी के समक्ष चुनौतियां पैदा होगी। भाजपा में शामिल होने के बाद अर्जुन सिंह ने कहा कि 30 साल तक उन्होंने ममता बनर्जी के साथ काम किया। देश हित से ज्यादा वह अपनी पार्टी को महत्व देती हैं। सिंह के इस तरह के बयान से साफ है कि वह तृणमूल कांग्रेस और ममता बनर्जी के व्यवहार से क्षुब्ध थे। हालांकि ममता बनर्जी पहले ही कह चुकी हैं कि कोई आए कोई जाए उससे कोई फर्क नहीं पड़ेगा, परंतु यह तो जरूर है कि जूट बेल्ट में अर्जुन सिंह को व्यापक प्रभाव है।

# जब दुख का अंधेरा सघन हो जाए

डॉ. महेश परिमल

जीवन में उतार-चढ़ाव आते ही रहते हैं। कई बार हमें अतिआनंद की अनुभूति होती है तो कई बार ऐसा लगता है कि यह हमारे जीवन की सबसे सघन रात है। बिल्कुल अनावस्था की तरह। जब हम पर दुखों का पहाड़ टूटता है, तब नकारात्मक विचारों की बाढ़ आ जाती है। तब हमें ऐसा लगता है कि इस पूरे ब्रह्मांड में कोई भी मेरा अपना नहीं है। जिससे मैं अपने दुख को बात करूं। ऐसी कोई शक्ति भी नहीं है, जो मुझे संभाल ले। भय, चिंता, निराशा और क्रोध हमें घेर लेते हैं। ऐसी स्थिति में हम यह सोचते हैं कि अब हमारे पास कोई विकल्प नहीं बचा, पर ध्यान से सोचें तो हमारे पास केवल दो ही विकल्प बचे होते हैं। पहला तो मन की बात को सुनना और दूसरा मन के विचारों को तटस्थता से देखना। यदि हमें दुख से लड़ना है तो दूसरा विकल्प आजमाना होगा। दुख का सबसे बड़ा कारण है, अनंत इच्छाएं और भ्रम। हमारा मन बहुत ही चंचल है, वह हमेशा खुशी ही चाहता है। वह ऐसा जीवन चाहता है, जिसमें कोई दुख ही नहीं है। जिस तरह से छोटे बच्चे एक के बाद एक फरमाइश करते रहते हैं, ठीक उसी तरह एक इच्छा की पूर्ति के बाद मन को दूसरी इच्छा होती है। इस

**हमें यह अच्छी तरह से समझ लेना चाहिए कि सुख और दुख जीवनरूपी गाड़ी के दो पहिए हैं। एक पहिए से गाड़ी नहीं चलती**

तरह से यह सिलसिला शुरू हो जाता है। इसकी यात्रा अनंत होती है। जब इच्छाओं की पूर्ति नहीं है। जिससे मैं अपने दुख को बात करूं। इसकी सीढ़ी तो हमें लगता है कि हम किसी काम के नहीं रहे। हमें अकेलापन सताने लगता है। हम अवसाद के क्षणों में जीने लगते हैं।

हमें यह अच्छी तरह से समझ लेना चाहिए कि सुख और दुख जीवनरूपी गाड़ी के दो पहिए हैं। एक पहिए से गाड़ी नहीं चलती। इसलिए केवल सुख से ही गाड़ी नहीं चल पाएगी। इसमें दुख का समावेश आवश्यक है। जिसने काफी दुख झेला है, जब उसे सुख की प्राप्ति होती है तो वही उस सुख का अच्छे से उपयोग कर पाता है। सघन अंधेरे के बाद कहीं से सूर्य की हल्की किरण आया खुशी देती है, ठीक उसी तरह दुख के बाद आने वाला सुख अपार खुशी देता है। लोग यह जानने की कोशिश करते रहते हैं कि दुख से कैसे बचा जाए? इससे न बचना ही ठीक है,



ए. सूर्यप्रकाश

**अयोध्या विवाद से जुड़े सभी पक्षों को आपसी समझबूझ से इसका समाधान निकालने के लिए मध्यस्थता प्रक्रिया में शामिल होकर मध्यस्थों को एक मौका अवश्य देना चाहिए**

अयोध्या में रामजन्मभूमि के विवादित मसले को सुलझाने के लिए सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने हाल में तीन मध्यस्थ नियुक्त किए हैं। इस मसले से जुड़े पक्षों के लिए अदालत से बाहर कोई स्वीकार्य समाधान निकालने के लिहाज से इसे एक अंतिम अवसर माना जा रहा है। यह एक ऐसा मसला है जो सामाजिक सौहार्द के लिए लंबे अरसे से एक बड़ी चुनौती बना हुआ है। मध्यस्थता की यह कवायद अदालत द्वारा आरंभ की गई है जिसकी निगरानी भी अदालत ही करेगी। इसमें पूरी गोपनीयता बरती जाएगी और मीडिया को भी इसकी रिपोर्टिंग की अनुमति नहीं है। रामजन्मभूमि मामले को मध्यस्थता के माध्यम से सुलझाने का विचार कोई नया नहीं है। दो साल पहले मार्च 2017 में ही सुप्रीम कोर्ट के तत्कालीन मुख्य न्याधीश जस्टिस जेएफ खेहर ने भी आपसी बातचीत से मसला सुलझाने का सुझाव देते हुए खुद मध्यस्थ बनने की पेशकश की थी। हालांकि ऑल इंडिया मुस्लिम पर्सनल लॉ बोर्ड और बावरी मस्जिद एक्शन कमटी के एतराज की वजह से वह प्रस्ताव आगे नहीं बढ़ पाया। इस बार विरोध के वैसे स्वर नहीं सुनाई पड़े तो शायद इसकी एक वजह अदालत का वह रवैया भी है जिसमें उसने सभी पक्षों को वार्ता के लिए तैयार किया।

रामजन्मभूमि-बावरी मस्जिद विवाद से जुड़ा पूरा घटनाक्रम बहुत दुःखदायी रहा है, लेकिन बोर्ड और मीमों के बीच मंचों पर उल्लेखनीय प्रगति देखने को मिली है। पहला पड़ाव तो अक्टूबर, 1994 में डॉ. एम इमाइल फारूकी और अन्य

बनाम भारत संघ मामले में आया सुप्रीम कोर्ट का फैसला था। इस मामले में अयोध्या अधिनियम, 1993 में कुछ क्षेत्रों के अधिग्रहण की संवैधानिक वैधता को चुनौती दी गई थी। अदालत ने अधिनियम को तो बरकरार रखा, लेकिन उसकी धारा 4(3) को अवैध करार दिया। इस फैसले का नतीजा यह हुआ कि इलाहाबाद हाईकोर्ट के समक्ष लंबित सभी याचिकाओं में एक तरह से नई जान पड़ गई। इस मामले में भारत सरकार द्वारा सितंबर, 1994 में सुप्रीम कोर्ट के समक्ष दी गई संप्रभु गारंटी दूसरा मील का बड़ा पथर है। उसमें सरकार ने कहा था कि अगर वह सिद्ध हो जाता है कि विवादित स्थल पर मस्जिद से पहले मंदिर का अस्तित्व था तो वह इस स्थान को हिंदुओं को सौंप देगी। तब सरकार ने संविधान के अनुच्छेद 143(1) के तहत प्रेसिडेंशियल रेफरेंस का सहारा लिया। उसमें सुप्रीम कोर्ट से पूछा गया कि क्या विवादित स्थल पर पहले कभी कोई हिंदू मंदिर या हिंदुओं से जुड़े धार्मिक ढांचे का अस्तित्व था? प्रेसिडेंशियल रेफरेंस में यह भी कहा गया कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट से राय लेने के बाद सरकार ने विवाद को सुलझाने का एक प्रस्ताव रखा है। इस पर कुछ मुस्लिम पक्षकारों ने कहा कि रेफरेंस की कवायद से कुछ हासिल नहीं होगा। इस पर अदालत ने सॉलिसिटर जनरल से जवाब तलब किया। सॉलिसिटर जनरल ने सरकार की ओर से सुप्रीम कोर्ट में लिखित प्रतिवेदन में जो कहा वह काफी महत्वपूर्ण है। उसमें सरकार ने कहा कि वह राम मंदिर और मस्जिद बनाने के लिए प्रतिबद्ध है, लेकिन वे किन स्थानों पर बनेंगे,

# ओआइसी में भारत की भागीदारी का महत्व

इस माह एक मार्च को ओआइसी यानी इस्लामिक सहयोग संगठन के विदेश मंत्रियों की बैठक के 46वें सत्र की बैठक संयुक्त अरब अमीरात की राजधानी अबूधाबी में बुलाई गई। बैठक का विषय था, '50 साल का अंतर-इस्लामिक सहयोग : समृद्धि और विकास का खाका। इस्लामिक दुनिया के साथ भारत के जुड़ाव को समझते हुए, भारत को संयुक्त अरब अमीरात के विदेश मंत्री शेख अब्दुल्ला बिन जयद अल नाहयान द्वारा 'ग्रेस्ट ऑफ ऑनर' देश के रूप में आमंत्रित किया गया था। भारत का प्रतिनिधित्व विदेश मंत्री सुभाष स्वराज ने किया। ओआइसी की स्थापना के बाद बीते 50 वर्षों में यह पहली बार था कि भारत ने उसके किसी सत्र में भाग लिया। अतीत में कई बार ऐसे अवसर आए जब ओआइसी सदस्यों ने भारत को उसकी समस्या आबादी और उसके विभिन्न इस्लामिक राष्ट्रों के साथ भू-राजनीतिक रिश्तों के कारण ओआइसी में शामिल होने के लिए प्रेरित किया, लेकिन भारत ने अनिच्छा दिखाई। 1969 में मोरक्को के शहर रबात में हुए एक अधिवेशन के बाद ओआइसी वजूद में आया था। इस अधिवेशन में भारत की भागीदारी पर पाकिस्तान ने अड़ंगा लगा दिया था। वक्त ने कवट ली और बीते दिनों पाकिस्तान की अड़ोंबाजी के बावजूद सुभाष स्वराज उसके मंच पर पहुंचीं।

ओआइसी में लगभग 57 मुस्लिम देश हैं जिसमें से 30 इसके संस्थापक सदस्य हैं। यह संयुक्त राष्ट्र के बाद विश्व की दूसरी बड़ी संस्था है। ओआइसी के शुरुआती अधिवेशनों में कभी कश्मीर का मुद्दा चर्चा का हिस्सा नहीं बना। इसके चर्चा में आने का कारण पाकिस्तान बना। शुरु से कई बार यह बात भिन्न-भिन्न देशों ने ओआइसी में उठाई कि भारत को भी इस संस्था का सदस्य बनना चाहिए, क्योंकि विश्व में दूसरी बड़ी संख्या में मुसलमान भारत में रहते हैं, परंतु जब पाकिस्तान को इस बात की काट का कोई उपाय नजर नहीं आया तो उसने कश्मीर के मुद्दे पर अपनी कूटनीति तैयार की। उसने कहा कि विश्व का कोई भी देश अगर ओआइसी के संस्थापक देशों के साथ सीधे टकराव में है तो वह ओआइसी सदस्य नहीं बन सकता। इस पर अन्य सदस्यों ने भारत के ओआइसी में प्रवेश पर चर्चा साध ली। पाकिस्तान के निरंतर विरोध करने के बावजूद 2006 में सऊदी अरब के शासक अब्दुल्ला जब 26 जनवरी, 2006 को भारतीय गणतंत्र दिवस के मुख्य अतिथि बने तब उन्होंने यह प्रस्ताव रखा कि भारत को ओआइसी के साथ जुड़ना चाहिए। उन्होंने कहा था कि भारत को एक पर्यवेक्षक सदस्य के रूप में इस संस्था के साथ आना चाहिए। इसके अगले साल 2007 में अमेरिका के तत्कालीन राष्ट्रपति जॉर्ज बुश ने अमेरिका के एक दूत को



रामिश सिद्दीकी



इस संस्था के साथ स्थायी रूप से जोड़ दिया। आज रूस और थाईलैंड जैसे देश भी ओआइसी के पर्यवेक्षक सदस्य हैं, जबकि इन सब देशों में मुस्लिमों की संख्या न के बराबर है। भारत को ओआइसी में पर्यवेक्षक इसलिए होना चाहिए, क्योंकि इसके मंचों पर पाकिस्तान कश्मीर मुद्दे को उछाल रहा है। वह न केवल कश्मीर, बल्कि भारत में मुसलमानों की स्थिति के बारे में भी आए दिन बोलते नजर आता है। आरचर्चजनक रूप से भारत कई वर्षों तक केवल संयुक्त राष्ट्र द्वारा प्रदान किए गए मंचों पर पाकिस्तान प्रायोजित आतंकवाद के खिलाफ बोलता रहा, लेकिन गए पांच वर्षों में हमारी अंतरराष्ट्रीय नीतियों में महत्वपूर्ण परिवर्तन आया है। आज हम पाकिस्तान का असली चेहरा दिखाने के लिए जितने संभव हों उतने राजनयिक चैनलों का उपयोग करने के बारे में सोच रहे हैं और ओआइसी के मंच पर बात का जाना इसका ही प्रमाण है।

द्वितीय विश्वयुद्ध के बाद विश्व ने अमेरिका और सोवियत संघ के बीच युद्ध की तनावपूर्ण स्थिति देखी जिनसे शीत युद्ध भी कहा जाता है। उस दौरान तो तत्कालीन अमेरिकी नेतृत्व ने बहुत समझदारी से काम लिया, लेकिन वहीं अमेरिका अलकायदा, तालिबान और आइएसआइएस के खतरे को समझने में नाकाम रहा। ऐसा इसलिए हुआ, क्योंकि उसने अपने कट्टरपंथी दुश्मनों के खिलाफ अपने हथियारों की



अवधेश राजपूत

इसका निर्धारण प्रेसिडेंशियल रेफरेंस में सुप्रीम कोर्ट की राय से होगा। उस प्रतिवेदन में सरकार ने सुप्रीम कोर्ट के समक्ष कुछ प्रतिबद्धताएं जताईं। उनमें एक यह भी थी कि वह प्रेसिडेंशियल रेफरेंस में सुप्रीम कोर्ट के निर्णय को एक निर्णय की तरह लेगी जो अंतिम एवं बाध्यकारी होगा। अदालती राय के अनुरूप ही सरकार बातचीत के माध्यम से समाधान तलाशने का प्रयास करेगी। यदि वार्ता से भी समाधान संभव नहीं हुआ तो वह अदालत की राय के अनुसार कोई बाध्यकारी विकल्प लागू करेगी। और यदि इसका नकारात्मक यानी यह जवाब हुआ कि वहां कोई हिंदू मंदिर या ढांचा था तब सरकार हिंदू समुदाय के पक्ष में फैसला करेगी। दूसरी ओर यदि इसका नकारात्मक यानी यह जवाब हुआ कि वहां कोई हिंदू मंदिर या ढांचा नहीं था तब मुस्लिम समुदाय के पक्ष को ध्यान में रखकर फैसला करेगी।' आखिर केंद्र सरकार ने सुप्रीम कोर्ट में यह सवाल क्यों किया?

अयोध्या ढांचे के ध्वंस के बाद सरकार द्वारा जारी श्वेत पत्र से उक्त सवाल का कुछ अंदाजा

मिलता है। उसमें कहा गया था कि एक सौहार्दपूर्ण समझौते के लिए बातचीत के दौरान सबसे पहला सवाल यही आया कि क्या वहां हिंदू मंदिर था और क्या मस्जिद बनाने के लिए उसे तोड़ा गया था? मुस्लिम संगठनों ने दावा किया कि इसे साबित करने के लिए कोई साक्ष्य नहीं है। मुस्लिम जनताओं ने यह भी कहा कि अगर ऐसा साबित हो जाता है तो मुसलमान खुद विवादित स्थल को स्वीच्छिक रूप से हिंदुओं को सौंप दें। सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने इसका जवाब देने से इन्कार कर दिया। अक्टूबर 1994 में फारूकी मामले में फैसला सुनाने वाली पांच सदस्यीय पीठ ने साथ ही साथ प्रेसिडेंशिल रेफरेंस का भी निपटारा कर दिया। उसने कहा कि 'रेफरेंस निरर्थक और अनावश्यक था जिसके जवाब की आवश्यकता नहीं।' हालांकि इस मामले में जवाब तलाश रही केंद्र सरकार को इससे तो कुछ हासिल नहीं हुआ, लेकिन इसके कारण इलाहाबाद हाईकोर्ट के समक्ष लंबित याचिकाओं के निपटारे में जरूर कुछ मदद मिली।

इलाहाबाद हाईकोर्ट ने भारतीय पुरातत्व



## ऊर्जा

## जीवन की अंतिम बेला

आधुनिक युग की आधाधापी में जीवन की अंतिम बेला का अहसास व्यक्ति को अधिकतर उसी समय होता है, जब वह मृत्यु शैया पर होता है।लोग अपने करियर, परिवार और जिम्मेदारियों के तले इतना दबे हुए होते हैं कि उनसे बाहर आने की फुरसत ही उन्हें समय पर नहीं होती है।वे या तो अस्वस्थ हो चुके होते हैं अथवा जीवन के अंतिम पलों को गिन रहे होते हैं। कब बसंत ऋतु आई, कब ग्रीष्म के थपेड़ों ने धरती को थरथराया, कब सावन ने धरा पर कदम रखे और शीतल फुहारों से तन मन को आनंदित कर दिया। इन सब के अहसास से अधिकतर मनुष्य अछूते ही रह जाते हैं। धरती पर अगिनाने कलाएं व्यक्ति के हृदय को प्रभावित करने के लिए खिचरी पड़ी हैं। पर लोग आगे बढ़ने की धुन में इस कदम उलझे रहते हैं कि नदी की कल-कल धारा में भी संगीत है, मद मस्त हवाओं में भी प्रीत है और मन को छूने वाली हर वस्तु एक मीत है, वे इन संवेदनाओं का अहसास ही नहीं कर पाते।

ऑस्ट्रेलिया की ब्रौनी वेयर ने एक बेहद प्रसिद्ध पुस्तक लिखी है, 'टॉप फाइव रिपेट्स ऑफ डाइंग।' इसमें ब्रौनी वेयर ने लोगों के अनुभव को पांच उन खेदों में व्यक्त किया है जो वे मृत्यु शैया पर प्रष्ट करती हैं। वे पांच खेद हैं-जीवन को अपने हिसाब से न जीकर दूसरों के हिसाब से जीना। जीवन को चलाने के लिए बड़ा परिश्रम करना। अपनी भावनाओं का सही समय पर इजहार न करना। अपने मित्रों/संबंधियों के संपर्क में न रहना। काश उन्होंने अपनी सभी इच्छाओं को पूरा किया होता और अपने जीवन को अपने हिसाब से जिया होता।

कुछ लोग बड़ी सफलता और कामयाबी का इंतजार करते रह जाते हैं और छोटी-छोटी खुशियों के आनंद से वंचित रहते हैं।जिस तरह छोटे-छोटे कदमों से मीलों का सफर तय होता है, उसी तरह छोटी-छोटी खुशियां से आनंद के क्षण बढ़े होते हैं। लोभ से स्वयं को कुछ पलों में इस कदर जीना सीख लें जहां पर केवल आप हैं और आप का अंतर्मान। इसके लिए प्रतिदिन समय मिलने पर केवल आधा घंटा स्वयं के साथ बिताएं, अपनी रुचियों को पूर्ण करें, प्रकृति के साथ और गहरी श्वास के साथ मुक्त हस्त से जीवन को जिएं। ऐसा करने पर आपको अपने अंतिम समय में खेद कतई नहीं होगा।

नीरज कुमार पाठक, नोएडा

**लोक-लुभावनी घोषणाएं**
लोकसभा चुनाव हो या विधानसभा का, जनता को अपनी ओर आकर्षित करने के लिए देश की सभी राजनीतिक पार्टियां लुभावनी घोषणाएं करती हैं। हालांकि चुनाव जीतने के बाद ये घोषणाएं धरातल पर सही तरीके से कितनी उतर पाती हैं, यह अलग बात है। लेकिन पार्टियों चुनाव में इस्सका फायदा जरूर उठा लेती हैं।

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

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## दोहरा रुख

आतंकी संगठन जैश-ए-मोहम्मद के प्रमुख मसूद अजहर को अंतरराष्ट्रीय आतंकवादियों की सूची में शामिल कराने के प्रयासों पर चीन ने जिस तरह अपनी वीटो-शक्ति का इस्तेमाल किया, वह उसका नया रुख नहीं है। हालांकि इस बात की आशंका पहले से थी कि संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद में अमेरिका, ब्रिटेन और फ्रांस की ओर से पेश इस प्रस्ताव को पारित कराने के मामले में चीन सहयोग नहीं करेगा। इसके बावजूद हाल में जम्मू-कश्मीर के पुलवामा में हुए आतंकी हमले के दौरान सीआरपीएफ के बयालीस जवानों की जान जाने और जैश-ए-मोहम्मद की ओर से इस घटना की जिम्मेदारी लेने के बाद यह उम्मीद थी कि चीन वास्तविकता को ध्यान में रख कर इस बार अपने पुराने रुख से अलग फैसला लेगा। लेकिन इस प्रस्ताव के सामने आने पर चीन ने साफतौर पर कह दिया कि वह मसूद अजहर पर प्रतिबंध लगाने की अपील को समझने के लिए और समय चाहता है। सवाल है कि जैश-ए-मोहम्मद, मसूद अजहर या उसकी गतिविधियों के संबंध में अब क्या छिपा हुआ है कि उसे समझने के लिए चीन को अलग से कोशिश करनी पड़ेगी!

गौरतलब है कि यह चौथा मौका था जब संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद में मसूद अजहर को अंतरराष्ट्रीय आतंकी घोषित करने लिए प्रस्ताव आया तो चीन ने अपनी वीटो शक्ति का इस्तेमाल कर उसे पारित नहीं होने दिया। अजहर मसूद के संगठन जैश-ए-मोहम्मद को करीब आठरह साल पहले ही आतंकी घोषित किया जा चुका है। यह समझना मुश्किल है कि चीन की नजर में आतंकवादी होने की परिभाषा क्या है और आखिर किन वजहों से वह वैश्विक मत को दरकिनार करके मसूद अजहर को लेकर इतना नरम रुख बनाए हुए है। क्या इसे आतंकवाद के मसले पर चीन के दोहरे रवैये के तौर पर नहीं देखा जाना चाहिए? कुछ समय पहले चीन के विदेश मंत्रालय के एक प्रवक्ता ने कहा था कि हम भारत के साथ आतंकवाद विरोधी और सुरक्षा सहयोग के मोर्चे को मजबूत करना चाहेंगे और दोनों देश मिल कर क्षेत्रीय शांति और सुरक्षा के लिए काम करेंगे। सवाल है कि जिस व्यक्ति को तकनीकी रूप से अंतरराष्ट्रीय आतंकी घोषित कराने के लिए संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद के सदस्य अमेरिका, ब्रिटेन और फ्रांस जैसे देश भी पहल कर रहे हैं, उसका बचाव करके चीन भारत के साथ आतंकवाद विरोध के किस मोर्चे को मजबूत करने की बात करना चाहता है?

गौरतलब है कि करीब डेढ़ साल पहले चीन के शियामेन ब्रिक्स सम्मेलन के घोषणा-पत्र में आतंकवाद के सभी रूपों की निंदा की गई थी। उसमें पाकिस्तान स्थित आतंकवादी संगठनों मसलन लश्कर-ए-तैयबा, जैश-ए-मोहम्मद और हक्कानी नेटवर्क का भी जिक्र किया गया था। तब निश्चित तौर पर ब्रिक्स सम्मेलन में पाकिस्तान स्थित टिकानों से अपनी गतिविधियां चलाने वाले आतंकी संगठनों के खिलाफ निंदा को घोषणा-पत्र में शामिल कराने को भारत की कूटनीतिक कामयाबी के तौर पर देखा गया था। लेकिन यह भी सच है कि संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद में मसूद अजहर के मसले पर कूटनीतिक प्रयासों को वांछित सफलता नहीं मिल सकी। लेकिन क्या यह विचित्र नहीं है कि जैश-ए-मोहम्मद नामक जिस संगठन को आतंकवादी बता कर निंदा करने के प्रस्ताव पर चीन ने सहमत जताई थी, उसके मुखिया को आतंकवादी घोषित कराने और प्रतिबंध लगाने की कोशिश को वह बाधित करता है? अगर चीन भारत के साथ सहयोग संबंध को मजबूत करने का दावा करता है, तो उसे आतंकवाद के मसले पर भारत की पीड़ा को भी समझने की कोशिश करनी होगी।

## गंगा की गंदगी

गंगा को स्वच्छ और निर्मल बनाने के लिए करीब तीस साल पहले गंगा कार्ययोजना तैयार की गई थी। इस योजना के तहत अब तक अरबों रुपए खर्च किए जा चुके हैं पर स्थिति यह है कि गंगा दिन पर दिन गंदी ही होती गई है। मौजूदा सरकार ने गंगा की सफाई के लिए एक अलग से मंत्रालय गठित किया। गंगा को राष्ट्रीय नदी का दर्जा दिया गया है। पर इसकी सफाई को लेकर सरकारें कितनी संजीदा हैं, इसका अंदाजा इससे लगाया जा सकता है कि राष्ट्रीय हरित अधिकरण के जवाब तलब करने पर राष्ट्रीय स्वच्छ गंगा मिशन यानी एनएमसीजी ने हलफनामा दायर करके बताया कि उत्तर प्रदेश, बिहार, झारखंड और पश्चिम बंगाल सरकारों ने समुचित जानकारियां उपलब्ध नहीं कराई हैं, जिससे दूसरे और तीसरे चरण यानी कानपुर से बक्सर और फिर बक्सर से गंगासागर तक की कार्ययोजना की रूपरेखा तैयार करने में मुश्किलें आ रही हैं। हरित अधिकरण ने इसके लिए एनएमसीजी को फटकार लगाई है। इसके साथ ही उत्तराखंड और उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार को निर्देश दिया है कि वे प्रमुख स्थलों पर गंगा जल की गुणवत्ता की जांचकारी हर महीने सार्वजनिक करें। हरित अधिकरण ऐसी फटकार पहले भी कई मौकों पर लगा चुका है, पर राज्यों के प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्डों के कार्य-व्यवहार में कोई खास बदलाव नजर नहीं आया है।

हालांकि हरित अधिकरण ने अपने ताजा निर्देश में सख्त टिप्पणी करते हुए कहा है कि एनएमसीजी का गठन गंगा के कायाकल्प के लिए किया गया है और राज्यों के प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्डों के साथ समन्वय उसकी जिम्मेदारी है। अब उसे कोई टाल-मटोल नहीं सुननी। अगर तीस अप्रैल तक गंगा कार्ययोजना की रूपरेखा पेश नहीं की गई तो वह सख्त कदम उठाने को बाध्य होगा। इसके लिए संबंधित राज्य सरकारों को पर्यावरण क्षति का भुगतान करना पड़ सकता है। देखना है, अधिकरण के इस सख्त रुख का राष्ट्रीय स्वच्छ गंगा मिशन और राज्यों के प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्डों पर कितना और कैसा असर पड़ता है। प्रयाग में कुंभ के दौरान गंगा में मिलने वाली गंदगी को रोकने में बड़ी कामयाबी देखी गई। हरित अधिकरण ने कहा है कि वहां आजमाए गए तकनीकी उपायों का अध्ययन कर इस अभियान में लगे विशेषज्ञों से परामर्श लिया जा सकता है।

दरअसल, राज्यों के प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड नदियों की सफाई को लेकर कभी गंभीर नहीं दिखे। इसमें उनके टाल-मटोल भरे रवैए की कुछ वजहें दूसरी भी हो सकती हैं। गंगा की सफाई के लिए उन्हें न सिर्फ यह बताना होगा कि कहां-कहां किन स्रोतों से कचरा गंगा में आकर मिलता है, बल्कि उन स्रोतों को बंद कराने में भी सक्रिय भागीदारी करनी होगी। छिपी बात नहीं है कि गंगा के प्रदूषित होने का बड़ा कारण शहरों के रिहाइशी इलाकों से निकलने वाले जल-मल और औद्योगिक इकाइयों के रासायनिक कचरे को बिना शोधित किए गंगा में गिरने देना है। औद्योगिक इकाइयों को कई बार निर्देश जारी किए जा चुके हैं कि वे बिना शोधन के औद्योगिक कचरा नदियों में न मिलने दें। इसी तरह शहरी जल-मल के शोधन के लिए जगह-जगह जल-मल शोधन संयंत्र लगाए जाने चाहिए। मगर बड़ी औद्योगिक इकाइयों की राजनीतिक और प्रशासनिक नजदीकी के प्रभाव के वजह से प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड आंखें बंद किए रहते हैं। इसी तरह गंगा के तट पर किए गए अतिक्रमण हटाने को लेकर मुश्किलें हैं। समझना मुश्किल है कि गंगा जैसी नदियों, जो लोगों की आस्था से जुड़ी हैं, उनमें कचरा मिलने से रोकना इतना मुश्किल क्यों बना हुआ है।

## कल्पमेधा

पाप तो इतिहास के आरंभ काल से चला आ रहा है लेकिन उसकी उपासना हमने अभी शुरू की है।

—महात्मा गांधी

## अखिलेश आर्येदु

अखिलेश आर्येदु का जन्म 1977 में उत्तर प्रदेश के मधुबनी जिले के एक गाँव में हुआ था। उन्होंने 1997 में एम.ए. किया था। उन्होंने 2003 में एम.बी.ए. किया था। उन्होंने 2007 में एम.बी.ए. किया था। उन्होंने 2011 में एम.बी.ए. किया था। उन्होंने 2015 में एम.बी.ए. किया था। उन्होंने 2019 में एम.बी.ए. किया था।

**अरावली पहाड़ियों को नष्ट करने के दुष्परिणाम हमारे सामने हैं। जिन क्षेत्रों से अरावली शृंखलाओं का विनाश हुआ उन क्षेत्रों में प्राकृतिक असंतुलन, पर्यावरण प्रदूषण, ऋतु-चक्र में बदलाव, जैविक विविधता की समाप्ति, इंसान में प्रकृति से मैत्री भाव का ह्रास, पाताल में रासायनिक विषैले तत्वों की वृद्धि, तेजी से गिरता भूजल स्तर, दुर्लभ वनस्पतियों का विनाश और मानवीय संवेदना में लगातार ह्रास जैसी गंभीर समस्याएं देखने को मिल रही हैं।**

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आठ मार्च को उच्चतम न्यायालय ने हरियाणा सरकार को अरावली वन क्षेत्र में किसी भी तरह की गतिविधियों के प्रति सचेत करते हुए चेतावनी दी कि अगर उसने निर्माण की अनुमति देने के लिए कानून में संशोधन कर अरावली की पहाड़ियों या वन क्षेत्र को कोई भी नुकसान पहुंचाया तो वह मुसीबत में होगी। गौरतलब है हरियाणा सरकार ने 27 फरवरी को कानून में संशोधन कर हजारों एकड़ भूमि क्षेत्र गैर वानिकी और रियल इस्टेट की गतिविधियों के लिए खोल दिया था। इसे लेकर पर्यावरण संरक्षकों में हलचल मच गई थी। अरावली पहाड़ियों के उजाड़ को रोकने के लिए पहला आदेश 7 मई 1992 को जारी किया गया था। राजस्थान, हरियाणा और दिल्ली क्षेत्र में फैली अरावली की पहाड़ियों को खनन गतिविधियों से जो नुकसान पहुंचाया गया उससे कई तरह की समस्याएं पैदा हुई हैं। इससे कई दुर्लभ औषधियों-वनस्पतियों, जंगली जीव-जंतु और पक्षियों का तो अस्तित्व ही समाप्त हो गया।

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### नीलम सिंह

कुछ दिनों पहले बातचीत के दौरान एक सहयोगी ने कहा- ‘मेरा शरीर मेरा अधिकार- यह क्या बकवास है !‘ उनके मुंह से यह बात सुन कर न केवल मैं हतप्रथ थी, बल्कि मेरे विद्यार्थी भी दंग रह गए। शायद इसलिए ही, कि वे शिक्षण के पेशे में थे। उन्होंने आगे कहा कि मेरे सामने स्त्री अस्मिता की बात मत करो। मैं इस सबमें विश्वास नहीं करता। स्त्री अस्मिता और उससे जुड़े अधिकारों की मांग उन्हें न केवल बेकार, बल्कि नाजायज लगती थी। उनका स्पष्ट मत था कि स्त्रियां अपनी ‘सौमा-मर्यादा’ में ही अच्छी लगती हैं। स्त्री अस्मिता उनके विचार से चरित्रहीन स्त्रियों को काम वासना की पूर्ति का हथियार भर था। उनकी बातों को सुन कर मुझे ‘निर्भया’ के बलात्कारी या उस जैसे लोगों की मानसिकता का अंदाजा हुआ जिसमें कहा जाता है कि ‘अगर रात में दस बजे घर से बाहर निकलेगी तो यही होगा... अगर विधवा नहीं करती तो उसकी हत्या नहीं होती।’ हालांकि ‘निर्भया’ का बलात्कारी एकअशिक्षित समाज से था और शिक्षा के अभाव में उसकी यह मानसिकता घटक अवश्य थी, मगर अविश्वसनीय

## अनुभव का खेल

जिस तरह क्रिकेट अपने प्रारूप में सिमटता जा रहा है जैसे टेस्ट क्रिकेट से एकदिवसीय क्रिकेट, एकदिवसीय क्रिकेट से टी-20 क्रिकेट और फिर टी-20 से टी-10 क्रिकेट, उसी प्रकार दर्शक भी स्वभावतः अपने क्रिकेटीय नजरिये में सिमटते दिख रहे हैं। कोई एक मैच में अच्छ प्रदर्शन कर देता है तो हम उसे हीरो बना देते हैं और लंबे समय से खेलते आ रहे खिलाड़ियों से तुलना करने लगते हैं पर यह भूल जाते हैं कि जिससे तुलना कर रहे हैं उसके पास लंबा अनुभव होता है।

जहां तक विश्व कप के लिए भारतीय टीम में खिलाड़ियों के चयन का प्रश्न है तो स्थिति यह है कि देश में हर क्रिकेट प्रेमी प्रत्येक मैच में अपने नए हीरो के प्रदर्शन को देखने के बाद एक नई टीम सुझाने लगता है। अभी कुछ समय पहले यह चर्चा हर समीक्षक की जुबान पर थी कि ‘धोनी का विश्व कप की टीम के लिए चयन किया जाना चाहिए या नहीं?’ पर अब शायद इसका जवाब हर किसी को मिल गया है। इसी प्रकार की दबाव की स्थिति से सचिन तेंदुलकर को भी गुजरना पड़ा था जिसका जवाब उन्होंने 2011 के विश्व कप में भारत के लिए सर्वाधिक रनों का योगदान करते हुए दिया और विश्व कप जिताने में अहम भूमिका निभाई थी।

दरअसल, हमें यह नहीं भूलना चाहिए कि प्रत्येक विश्व कप विजेता टीम में उसके अनुभवी खिलाड़ियों ने अहम भूमिका निभाई है। मसलन, 1975 और 1979 की विश्व कप विजेता टीमों में क्रमशः क्लाइव लायड और विवियन रिचर्ड ने वेस्टइंडीज के लिए, 1983 में मोहंिंदर अमरनाथ और सुनील गावस्कर ने भारतीय टीम के लिए, 1987 में डेविड वून तथा एलेन बोडर ने

# जनसत्ता

# अरावली का संकट

अरावली के अस्तित्व को लेकर कुछ वर्षों से मीडिया, कोर्ट और पर्यावरण संरक्षकों में बहस छिड़ी हुई है। सुप्रीम कोर्ट पहले ही कह चुका था कि राजस्थान सरकार का कर्तव्य बनता है कि वह कई दृष्टियों से महत्वपूर्ण अरावली की पहाड़ियों की सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित करे और अवैध खनन पर तुरंत रोक लगाए। राजस्थान के उन्नीस जिलों में अरावली की पर्वत शृंखलाएं हैं जिनसे संपूर्ण क्षेत्र की जैविक विविधता बरकरार रही है। सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने वैध-अवैध दोनों तरीकों से खनन पर रोक लगाने के आदेश दिए थे। न्यायालय का कहना था कि रसूखदार खनन माफिया ने अरावली को ऐसा नुकसान पहुंचाया है जिसकी भरपाई कभी नहीं की जा सकती है। मौजूदा पीढ़ी के साथ ही आने वाली पीढ़ी को भी इस आत्मघाती कार्य का खमियाजा भुगतान पड़ेगा। अड़तीस अरावली पहाड़ियों का अस्तित्व ही अवैध खनन के चलते समाप्त हो गया है। राजस्थान, हरियाणा, गुजरात और दिल्ली क्षेत्र में फैली इन पहाड़ियों पर पिछले चार दशकों से अवैध खनन जारी है।

अरावली पहाड़ियों का अस्सी फीसद हिस्सा राजस्थान में आता है। इसी तरह हरियाणा के गुड़गांव, फरीदाबाद, महेंद्रगढ़, मेवात और रेवाड़ी इलाके में ये फैली हुई हैं। दिल्ली व एनसीआर क्षेत्र के कई किलोमीटर में ये फैली हुई हैं जहां सालों से बजरी और पत्थर खोदने का अवैध कारोबार चल रहा है। वन विभाग की मंजूरी के चलते भी इन क्षेत्रों में वैध-अवैध खनन, निर्माण और पर्यटन स्थल के रूप में विकसित करने जैसे कार्यों से पहाड़ियों को जबरदस्त नुकसान पहुंचाया गया। गौरतलब है कि अरावली में पत्थर खनन के लिए कुछ विशेष तरह के मापदंड तय किए गए थे, जिनमें जहां से जितना पत्थर निकाला जाए वहां मिट्टी से इसकी भरपूर भरपाई की जाने की शर्त थी। लेकिन चिंता की बात यह है कि पहाड़ियों को खोदा तो गया, लेकिन वहां जो गहरे गड्ढे हुए उनमें आवश्यकता के अनुसार मिट्टी नहीं डाली गई।

वृक्ष धरती के आभूषण हैं तो पहाड़ धरती के रक्षक। ये मानव को आंभी-तृप्तान और अन्य मौसमी व भौगोलिक संकटों से बचाने का कार्य भी करते हैं। लेकिन इंसान ने धन-संपत्ति के लोभ में पड़ कर इस महत्वपूर्ण विषय पर ध्यान ही नहीं दिया। इसका परिणाम यह हुआ कि दुनियाभर में बर्फीले आंधी-तूफान, भूकम्प, सुनामी, वैश्विक तापमान, नई-नई बीमारियां, ऋतुचक्र में असंतुलन, रेगिस्तानी क्षेत्र का लगातार विस्तार जैसी नई-नई समस्याएं पैदा हो गईं। सबसे ज्यादा समस्याएं एशिया के देशों में पिछले चार दशकों में देखने में आई हैं।

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नहीं, लेकिन जब इस तरह की मानसिकता स्कूल, कॉलेज, विश्वविद्यालय में शिक्षकों और विद्यार्थियों में दिखाई देती है तो यह घातक और शर्मनाक है। दरअसल, सिमोन द बोउवा के बारे में पढ़ाने के दौरान ‘मेरा शरीर मेरा अधिकार’ जैसे विचारों पर चर्चा चल रही थी। चर्चा में एक सहयोगी शिक्षक भी कूद पड़े। उनके बोलने के ढंग से स्पष्ट था कि यह चर्चा उनके संप्रद में चल रही थी। वे अपने विचारों में बड़े स्पष्ट थे। स्त्री अस्मिता के मसले पर सोचने-समझने के क्रम में इस तरह के कुछ अनुभवों ने मुझे अंदर से झकझोर दिया। शिक्षित समाज का अनुकरण समाज का हर वर्ग करता है। ऐसे में यह छोटी-सी चर्चा सोचने पर मजबूर करती है कि क्या वास्तव में शिक्षा के प्रभाव से हमारी सोच बदलती है। स्कूल, महाविद्यालय और विश्वविद्यालय वे स्थान हैं, जहां शिक्षा, सोच, विचार और आधुनिकता पलती-बढ़ती है। यहां वे लोग रहते हैं, जिनका अनुकरण पूरा समाज करता है। परंपरागत रूप से गुरुजनों का समाज में विशेष आदर रहा है। कबीर ने तो गुरु को गोविंद के भी ऊपर बैठाया था, लेकिन जब गुरु ही विचारों से इस तरह हों तो हम विद्यार्थियों से क्या आशा रख सकते हैं! शिक्षित समाज अपनी

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## खतरनाक चीनी खेल

सुरक्षा परिषद में चीन ने आतंकी सरगना मसूदा अजहर की फिर तरफदारी कर यह साबित कर दिया है कि उसे दक्षिण एशिया के अमन-चैन की कोई चिंता नहीं है। बीते एक दशक में उसने चौथी बार अंतरराष्ट्रीय समुदाय की भावनाओं के उलट जैश-मोहम्मद के सरगना का बचाव किया है। कभी तकनीकी कारणों का हवाला देकर और कभी ठोस सबूतों की मांग कर चीन न सिर्फ सच से परहेज कर रहा है, बल्कि वह पाकिस्तान के सुर में सुर मिलाकर आतंकवाद को पालने-पोसने की कोशिश कर रहा है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र समेत विभिन्न वैश्विक मंचों पर भारत ने बार-बार साबित किया है कि पाकिस्तान की सरकार और सेना आतंकी एवं चरमपंथी गिरोहों के माध्यम से उसके विरुद्ध छद्म युद्ध का संचालन कर रही हैं। भारत को अशांत करने के लिए आतंकवाद और अलगाववाद का उपयोग पाकिस्तान की विदेशी अर्थ रक्षा नीति का हिस्सा है। एक ओर दुनियाभर में भारत को समर्थन मिलता रहा है, वहीं दूसरी ओर चीन आतंकी पाकिस्तान के पैरोकार की भूमिका निभा रहा है। चीन अपने देश में तो आतंकी तत्वों से

**चीन अपने देश में तो आतंकी तत्वों से कटोराता से निपटता है, पर दक्षिण एशिया में वह इनका उपयोग कर अपने आर्थिक और सामरिक हितों को साधने का प्रयास कर रहा है। चीन के झिंजियांग प्रांत में स्वायत्त क्षेत्र होने के बावजूद नागरिक अधिकारों की अवहेलना करते हुए हजारों लोगों को जेलनुमा शिविरों में रखा गया है, जहां उन्हें सरकारी विचारधारा और नीतियों की घुड़ौ पिलायी जाती है। आतंकियों और अलगाववादियों को कारावास और मृत्युदंड दिया जाता है। चीनी सरकार की नीति संगठित**

आतंकवाद में बदलने से पहले ही कटुरगंथ को समाप्त कर देने की है। इसके लिए वह तीन दशकों से अफगानिस्तान और पाकिस्तान के आतंकी गिरोहों से संपर्क कर उग्रूर आतंकियों के प्रशिक्षण शिविर बंद कराने और बाहरी मदद को रोकने की कोशिश करता रहा है। लगभग दो दशक पहले चीन ने आधिकारिक तौर पर तालिबान के मुखिया मुल्ला उमर से बातचीत की थी और झिंजियांग में हमले नहीं करने की शर्त पर उग्रूर आतंकियों को तालिबानियों को तर्फ से लड़ने की छूट दी थी। पाकिस्तान में चीन की अनेक परियोजनाएं चल रही हैं और वहां बड़ी संख्या में चीनी कामगार भी हैं। अपने निवेश और लोगों की सुरक्षा के लिए भी वह पाकिस्तान का साथ दे रहा है। अफगानिस्तान में तालिबान को सत्ता में हिस्सेदार बनाने की कोशिशों पर चीन का जोर भी इसी नीति का एक पहलू है। चीन के लिए मसूदा अजहर कितना महत्वपूर्ण है, इसका अनुमान इस तथ्य से लगाया जा सकता है कि उसके मुख्य ठिकाने बहावलपुर में बड़ा सौर ऊर्जा संयंत्र स्थापित किया जा रहा है। इस्लामिक सहयोग संगठन और गुटनिर्पेक्ष आंदोलन जैसे मंचों पर उसे पाकिस्तान की आवश्यकता भी है, जहां चीन की सदस्यता नहीं है। यह बेहद चिंताजनक है कि पाकिस्तान की तरह चीन भी अपने हितों को पूरा करने की कोशिश में आतंकवाद को सहयोगी बना रहा है।



बोधि वृक्ष

## विज्ञान और धर्म

सच्चा विज्ञान हमें सावधान रहना सिखाता है, जिस तरह पुरोहितों से हमें सावधान रहना चाहिए, उसी तरह वैज्ञानिकों से भी हमें सावधान रहना चाहिए, पहले अविश्वास से आरंभ करो, खानबीन करो, परीक्षा करो और प्रत्येक वस्तु का प्रमाण मांगने के बाद उसे स्वीकार करो। आजकल के विज्ञान के बहुत से प्रचलित सिद्धांत, जिनमें हम विश्वास करते हैं, सिद्ध नहीं हुए हैं। विज्ञान एकत्व की खोज के सिवा और कुछ नहीं है। ज्यों ही कोई विज्ञान पूर्ण एकता तक पहुंच जायेगा, त्यों ही उसकी प्रगति रुक जायेगी, क्योंकि तब वह अपने लक्ष्य को प्राप्त कर लेगा। इसका उदाहरण यह है- रसायन-शास्त्र यदि एक बार उस एक मूल तत्व का पता लगा ले, जिहसे और सब द्रव्य बन सकते हैं, तो फिर वह अपने और आगे नहीं बढ़ सकेगा। भौतिक-शास्त्र जब उस शक्ति का पता लगा लेगा- अन्य शक्तियां जिसकी अभिव्यक्ति है, तब वह वहीं रुक जायेगा। ठीक वैसे ही धर्म-शास्त्र भी उस समय पूर्णता को प्राप्त कर लेगा, जब वह उसको खोज लेगा, जो एकमात्र परमात्मा है, अन्य सब आत्माएं जिसकी प्रतीयमान अभिव्यक्तियां हैं। इस प्रकार अनेकता और द्वैत में होते हुए इस परम अद्वैत की प्राप्ति होती है। धर्म इसी आगे नहीं जा सकता। यही समस्त विज्ञानों का चरम तथ्य है। प्राणित जैसे शास्त्र में भी बहुत से सिद्धांत ऐसे हैं, जो केवल कामचलाक परिकल्पना के सदृश ही हैं। जब ज्ञान की वृद्धि होगी, तो ये फेंक दिये जायेंगे। ज्ञान का मार्ग अच्छा है, परंतु उसके शुष्क वाद-विवाद में परिणत हो जाने का डर रहता है। भक्ति बड़ी ही उच्च चीज है, पर उसके निरर्थक भावुकता पैदा होने के कारण वास्तविक चीज ही के नष्ट हो जाने की संभावना रहती है। ज्ञान की दृष्टि में भक्ति मुक्ति का एक साधन भी है और साथ ही भी। मेरी दृष्टि में तो यह भगद नाममात्र का है- ज्ञानी और भक्त दोनों ही अपनी-अपनी साधना-प्रणाली पर विशेष जोर देते हैं, वे यह भूल जाते हैं कि पूर्ण भक्ति के उदित होने से पूर्ण ज्ञान बिना मंगे ही मिल जाता है और इसी प्रकार पूर्ण ज्ञान के साथ पूर्ण भक्ति भी अभिन्न है।

**रवामी विवेकानंद**

## कुछ अलग

# सामाजिकता और शिक्षा व्यवस्था

यह परीक्षाओं का समय है। कुछ बोर्ड की परीक्षाएं हो रही हैं, तो कुछ की होनेवाली हैं। इसके बाद आयेगा परीक्षा परिणाम का दौर और उससे जुड़ी तमाम आकांक्षाओं के बनने-बिगड़ने का समय, विरोधाभास यह है कि एक तरफ आजकल बहुतायत में विद्यार्थियों को 95 से 100 फीसदी के बीच अंक प्राप्त हो रहे हैं, तो दूसरी तरफ हम यह भी देखते हैं कि वे बच्चे देश-काल की जमीनी हकीकत से बहुत कम वाकफ होते हैं। आखिर ऐसा क्यों है? आखिर शिक्षण प्रणाली का सामाजिकता से कट जाने के पीछे क्या वजह है? इसकी दो मुख्य वजहें हैं, जो एक-दूसरे से परस्पर जुड़ी हुई हैं। पहला, पूरी शिक्षण प्रणाली का 'स्कूल' जैसे औपचारिक संस्थान तक सिमट जाना और इसी से जुड़ा हुआ दूसरा कारण इस स्कूली शिक्षा का एक ऐसे पाठ्यक्रम पर आश्रित होना, जो अपनी क्षमता पर स्थानीयता और सामाजिकता से कटा हुआ है।

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उदारवादी जीवन शैली का प्रभुत्व स्थापित होने के साथ ही एकल परिवार का चलन बढ़ा और इस प्रकार बचपन के 'सामुदायिक जीवन' का दायरा सीमित होता गया। नौकरपेशा अभिभावक, छोटा परिवार और गिनती के पड़ोसी के कारण बच्चों का समाजीकरण भी इस छोटे दायरे में ही विकसित होने लगा। सामाजिक जीवन में प्रत्यक्ष अनुभव तथा विभिन्न आयुर्वर्ग, लिंग, और अलग-अलग पृष्ठभूमि के व्यक्तियों से परस्पर संवाद की कमी से बच्चों का अपनी दुनिया से स्वाभाविक जुड़ाव बाधित हो गया। इस कमी की पूर्ति का पूरा भार स्कूल पर

डाल दिया गया। समाज ने अपने बच्चों की सामाजिक परवरिश का लगभग संपूर्ण हिस्सा स्कूल और टीचरन को सौंप दिया, जो अपनी अंतर्निहित संरचनात्मक ढोप के कारण इस जिम्मेदारी को निभाने में असफल रहे। भारतीय शिक्षा व्यवस्था में निर्धारित पाठ्यक्रम और उस पर आधारित परीक्षा जहां स्कूली बच्चों में अधिक से अधिक सीखने की प्रवृत्ति को बाधित करती है, वहीं स्कूली चारदीवारी बच्चों को प्रत्यक्ष सामाजिक अनुभव से वंचित करते हैं। इस प्रकार पूरी शिक्षा का मूल्यंकन तय पाठ्यक्रम को तैयार करने और इस आधार पर होनेवाली परीक्षा में अच्छे नंबर लाने पर केंद्रित हो जाता है। बच्चे, शिक्षक और अभिभावक सभी इस बात के लिए मेहनत करते हैं कि उन्हें अच्छे अंक प्राप्त हो जायें, न कि इस पर कि शिक्षा बच्चों को जिज्ञासु और नवाचारी बनाये। एक समय के बाद यह शिक्षा अर्थव्यवस्था से लेकर जीवन के विविध क्षेत्रों के लिए बेहद अनुपयोगी सिद्ध हो जाती है। इस दोषपूर्ण प्रक्रिया को पाठ्यक्रम का स्वरूप और सघन कर देता है। दरअसल, इस तरह का पाठ्यक्रम हमारे बच्चों को देश की चुनिंदा आवश्यकताओं की पूर्ति के लिए तो तैयार कर सकता है, लेकिन इसकी सांघर्षिकता बच्चों को निश्चित ही अपनी स्थानीयता से काट देता है। एकदम सूखे प्रदेश में रहनेवाले बच्चों को बाद निर्यात की विधियां समझाकर हमारी शिक्षा व्यवस्था किन लक्ष्यों को प्राप्त करना चाहती है, इस पर एक बार फिर से हमें विचार करने की जरूरत है।



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**देशभक्ति अब लोकतंत्र के वर्तमान उत्सव का भी मुख्य बिंदु बनी है, तो यह शुभ है। पहली बार देश में हर राजनेता- हर दल से- स्वयं को बेहतर हिंदू, बेहतर देशभक्त बता रहा है।**

## कुछ अलग

# सामाजिकता और शिक्षा व्यवस्था

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उदारवादी जीवन शैली का प्रभुत्व स्थापित होने के साथ ही एकल परिवार का चलन बढ़ा और इस प्रकार बचपन के 'सामुदायिक जीवन' का दायरा सीमित होता गया। नौकरपेशा अभिभावक, छोटा परिवार और गिनती के पड़ोसी के कारण बच्चों का समाजीकरण भी इस छोटे दायरे में ही विकसित होने लगा। सामाजिक जीवन में प्रत्यक्ष अनुभव तथा विभिन्न आयुर्वर्ग, लिंग, और अलग-अलग पृष्ठभूमि के व्यक्तियों से परस्पर संवाद की कमी से बच्चों का अपनी दुनिया से स्वाभाविक जुड़ाव बाधित हो गया। इस कमी की पूर्ति का पूरा भार स्कूल पर

डाल दिया गया। समाज ने अपने बच्चों की सामाजिक परवरिश का लगभग संपूर्ण हिस्सा स्कूल और टीचरन को सौंप दिया, जो अपनी अंतर्निहित संरचनात्मक ढोप के कारण इस जिम्मेदारी को निभाने में असफल रहे। भारतीय शिक्षा व्यवस्था में निर्धारित पाठ्यक्रम और उस पर आधारित परीक्षा जहां स्कूली बच्चों में अधिक से अधिक सीखने की प्रवृत्ति को बाधित करती है, वहीं स्कूली चारदीवारी बच्चों को प्रत्यक्ष सामाजिक अनुभव से वंचित करते हैं। इस प्रकार पूरी शिक्षा का मूल्यंकन तय पाठ्यक्रम को तैयार करने और इस आधार पर होनेवाली परीक्षा में अच्छे नंबर लाने पर केंद्रित हो जाता है। बच्चे, शिक्षक और अभिभावक सभी इस बात के लिए मेहनत करते हैं कि उन्हें अच्छे अंक प्राप्त हो जायें, न कि इस पर कि शिक्षा बच्चों को जिज्ञासु और नवाचारी बनाये। एक समय के बाद यह शिक्षा अर्थव्यवस्था से लेकर जीवन के विविध क्षेत्रों के लिए बेहद अनुपयोगी सिद्ध हो जाती है। इस दोषपूर्ण प्रक्रिया को पाठ्यक्रम का स्वरूप और सघन कर देता है। दरअसल, इस तरह का पाठ्यक्रम हमारे बच्चों को देश की चुनिंदा आवश्यकताओं की पूर्ति के लिए तो तैयार कर सकता है, लेकिन इसकी सांघर्षिकता बच्चों को निश्चित ही अपनी स्थानीयता से काट देता है। एकदम सूखे प्रदेश में रहनेवाले बच्चों को बाद निर्यात की विधियां समझाकर हमारी शिक्षा व्यवस्था किन लक्ष्यों को प्राप्त करना चाहती है, इस पर एक बार फिर से हमें विचार करने की जरूरत है।



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**किसी को वैश्विक आतंकवादी घोषित करने या प्रतिबंधित करने की संयुक्त राष्ट्र की प्रक्रिया टूट चुकी है। यह प्रमुख शक्तियों के हितों की संरक्षक भर है। भारत संयुक्त राष्ट्र से जो अपेक्षा करता है, उसे स्वयं करना होगा।**

ज्यादा आकर्षक लगे, यह भी एक महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्न है। दिल्ली में कई लोग ऐसा मानते हैं कि संयुक्त राष्ट्र की वित्तीय कार्रवाई कार्यबल (एफटीएफ) में उपाध्यक्ष पद के लिए भारत द्वारा चीन का समर्थन उसकी सोच में बदलाव ला सकता है। हालांकि, स्पष्ट तौर पर यह मुद्दा नहीं है। चीन को भारत से जिस सौदे की आस है, वह संभवतः यह है कि भारत बीआरआई में शामिल होने का इरादा कर ले। यद्यपि, कई आधारों पर बीआरआई के विरोध में ध्वजवाहक की अपनी स्थिति के बारे में भारत को गहराई से पता है, जो श्रीलंका, मलेशिया, युगांडा और एशिया और अफ्रीका के अन्य देशों की स्थिति को देखते हुए ब्याबर सही प्रतीत होता है। ऐसे में इस आधार पर किसी वादे की उम्मीद करना बेकार है।

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उसे नजरअंदाज करता रहा। इस दौरान पाकिस्तान नकदी व सामान के रूप में सहायता प्राप्त करता रहा। आप देख सकते हैं कि पिछले दिनों भारत के खिलाफ हवाई हमले में पाकिस्तान ने अमेरिकी एफ-16 विमान का इस्तेमाल भी किया। इस बार चीन है और आर्थिक मदद के रूप में चीन-पाकिस्तान आर्थिक गलियारा (सीपीईसी) प्रोजेक्ट है। यह चीन के बेल्ट एंड रोड इनिशिएटिव (बीआरआई) की प्रमुख परियोजना है। चीन का 62 बिलियन डॉलर का वादा पाकिस्तान के आर्थिक भविष्य को नहीं बदल सकता, लेकिन यह उसके स्व-उद्देश्य के लिए एक बड़ी वजह है। सीपीईसी पाकिस्तान की उस क्षमता का उदाहरण है, जिसके माध्यम से वह ग्राहक राज्य (क्लाइंट स्टेट) बनकर महान या प्रमुख शक्ति के हितों की पूर्ति कर रहा है। चीन के लिए सीपीईसी वह नब्ज है, जिसके माध्यम से वह न सिर्फ पाकिस्तान, बल्कि अफगानिस्तान, हिंद महासागर, ईरान और खुद के झिंजियांग प्रांत में अपने हितों को एक साथ साध रहा है। जाहिर है, चीन एक साथ अपने कई हितों को साधनेवाले देश का साथ आखिर क्यों छोड़ेगा?

भारत किस चीज की पेशकश कर सकता है, जो पाकिस्तान की भूमिका के मुकाबले चीन को

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# देश में देशभक्ति की वापसी

ऐसा कभी हुआ नहीं कि भारतीय वायुसेना अधिकृत ट्विटर पर अपने वायुवीर अभिनंदन वर्तमान की प्रशस्ति में लिखी कविता प्रसारित की हो। देश के मीडिया ने उसे मान्य किया, उसकी खबर छापी। यूं तो हमारे देश में देशभक्ति का जन्मा हमेशा विद्यमान रहा ही है। पर यह भी कटु सत्य है कि सामान्यतः दरबार में हाजिरी लगानेवाले रायबहादुर और रायसाहब लोग ऐश और विलास करते रहे, जबकि भगत सिंह फांसी पर चढ़ते रहे।

आज माहौल बदला हुआ है। देशभक्ति सिर्फ सीमा की रक्षा में प्राण देना मात्र नहीं, दुश्मन के घर में घुसकर आतंकी अड्डे तबाह करना मात्र नहीं, बल्कि मीडिया के अवतारों में राष्ट्रीय विश्वास पर हो रहे हमलों का करारा जवाब देना भी है। पहली बार सेकुलर कहे जानेवाले उस वर्ग को मुंह छुपाये रक्षात्मक होना पड़ रहा है, जो सात दशकों से देश के बौद्धिक आकाश में एकछत्र राज और प्रभुत्व जमाये हुए था।

देश की बहुसंख्यक जनता हिंदू है- इसी कारण कुछ लोगों को सभी मतों, संप्रदायों को समान अधिकार, अवसर और हिंदुओं पर क्रुद्ध होने, उनका मजाक उड़ाने के भी अधिकार प्राप्त हैं। पूरे देश में दो लाख से ज्यादा कश्मीरी मुसलमान छात्र-छात्राएं या तो गृह मंत्रालय से छात्रवृत्ति पाकर या अपने खर्च पर पढ़ने के लिए देश के विभिन्न नगरों में जाते हैं और इनमें शाल, कश्मीरी हस्तकला के व्यापारी, निजी व सरकारी दूरदर्शन मीडिया में कार्यरत कश्मीरी संवाददाता भी शामिल हैं। एक दुर्भाग्यजनक घटना लखनऊ में होती है, तो उसे सेकुलर मीडिया 'कश्मीरियों पर हमला' कहकर पूरे देश पर थोप देता है। लेकिन, पूरे देश में कश्मीरी सुरक्षित और निर्भय काम करते आ रहे हैं- इनकी कोई चर्चा नहीं होती। मैं स्वयं देहरादून में कश्मीरी मुस्लिम छात्राओं से मिला था, उन्हें उस वक्त पुलिस ने हर सुरक्षा दी थी।

राफेल विमानों का मामला ऐसा ही एक अन्य उदाहरण है। वे सब जो विभिन्न आर्थिक अपराधों, घोटालों में अभियुक्त बने हैं या अदालती और जांच एजेंसियों के घेरे में हैं, जिन्होंने राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा व्यवस्था मजबूत करने में कभी दिलचस्पी नहीं दिखायी, आज क्यों लामबंद हो गये? अपुष्ट आधार पर शक पैदा कर वे भारतीय सैन्य बल का मनोबल बढ़ा रहे हैं या भारत के शत्रुओं का? पर आम तौर पर उन्हें जो शाब्दिक प्रहार झेलने पड़े, इसके वे आदी नहीं थे।

हिंदुओं को अपमानित कर देश वैसे ही नहीं चलाया जा सकता, जैसे किसी भी जाति या मतवालोंकी को तिरस्कृत कर संविधान बचाया नहीं जा सकता। विभिन्न दलों व क्षेत्रों में हिंदू मानस भारत की शक्ति है, कमजोरी नहीं। पर आज तक हिंदू संवेदनाओं का अपमान प्रगतिशील

का मानक बना हुआ था। अब खबरें बनती हैं कि पहली बार इस देश के प्रधानमंत्री ने कुंभ में डुबकी लगायी या काशी विश्वनाथ धाम का भूमि पूजन किया। अमेरिकी जनता को पता चलता है कि भारत से एक ऐसा प्रधानमंत्री भी आया है, जो वॉल्ट हाउस के शानदार डिनर में नवरात्रों का व्रत होने के कारण केवल पानी पीता रहा और न्यूयार्क, लंदन, जेद्दाह, दुबई से शंघाई तक भारत की भाषा में बोलता रहा।

जिन कश्मीरी मुसलमानों ने वहां के हिंदुओं को निकाले जाने के समय सननाटा ओढ़े रखा, वे आशा करते हैं कि देश में हिंदू उनके साथ प्रेम और अल्मीकता का व्यवहार करेंगे। वैसे तो होता ही है। पर क्या आज तक एक भी कश्मीरी मुस्लिम या दिल्ली के सेकुलर प्रचकार ने पांच लाख हिंदुओं के कश्मीर से बर्बरतापूर्वक किये गये निष्क्रमण का विरोध किया और मुस्लिम जेहादियों को कठघरे में खड़ा किया?

देशभक्ति अब हिंदू उदय के साथ जुड़कर अधिक प्रभाविष्णुता पा गयी है। संविधान की सर्वोच्चता, राष्ट्र में हिंदू-मुस्लिम-सिख-ईसाई के नारे का धरातल पर सच होना केवल तब तक संभव है, जब तक भारत में हिंदू बहुसंख्यक हैं। जिस दिन हिंदू अल्पसंख्यक होने की तरफ मुड़ गया, भारत अभातर हो जायेगा। यह कहना, सुनना बेतुका बतानेवाले कभी भी वर्ष 1947 के नरसंहार, मीरपुर और बहावलपुर में हिंदुओं पर हुए हमलों की पाशविकता का स्मरण नहीं करना चाहते। वे सब और धनाढ्य सुरक्षित बिलों में वैसे ही सुरक्षित हैं, जैसे अंग्रेजों के जमाने में रायसाहब हुआ करते थे।

पिछले दिनों देश के एक वरिष्ठ राजदूत के साथ सायंकालीन रिसेप्शन में बातें हुईं। वे बोले- 'पहली बार भारत के प्रति देखने का वैश्विक नजरिया बदला है। एक ऐसा क्षण था, जब पोखरण-2 हुआ, पर पाकिस्तान के भीतर घुसकर हजार-हजार किलो के बम गिराकर लौट आना, यह भारत के लिए अविश्वसनीय है। क्योंकि अब तक भारत एक दब्लू, युद्ध के बाद भी हानिकारक समझौते करनेवाला, भ्रष्ट और विलासी राजनेताओं का देश माना जाता था।

देशभक्ति भारत का धर्म है। यहां गुरु तेगबहादुर साहब 'हिंद की चादर' कहे गये- सिखाओ या पंजाब की नहीं। शिवाजी के नाम पर तमिलनाडु में लोग अपना नाम रखते हैं। विवेकानंद जब धर्म पर बोलते हैं, तो भारत उसमें हर वाक्य में अभिव्यक्त होता है। लोग गर्व से अपने बच्चों का नाम भारत रखते हैं। यह किसी अन्य देश में नहीं होता।

देशभक्ति अब लोकतंत्र के वर्तमान उत्सव का भी मुख्य बिंदु बनी है, तो यह शुभ है। पहली बार देश में हर नेता (हर दल से) स्वयं को बेहतर हिंदू, बेहतर देशभक्त बता रहा है। जय हो!

## देश दुनिया से

### शांति बहाली से बड़ा कोई विकल्प ही नहीं

**अब जब** भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच का तनाव कुछ थम गया है, हमें इस बात पर ध्यान देना चाहिए कि हमने क्या नुकसान उठाया है। अमन और शांति की बात को बेकार नहीं माना जाना चाहिए। अमन तभी कायम होगा, जब हम योजना बनाकर इस पर काम करें। दक्षिण एशिया में दो पड़ोसी देश जब इस तरह आपस में तनाव पालेंगे, तब अंतरराष्ट्रीय समुदाय को इस बात का डर सतायेगा कि कहीं इनमें परमाणु संघर्ष न छिड़ जाये। हम जानते हैं कि DAWN के इस्तेमाल के परिणाम क्या हैं और इससे देशों को आम लोगों की जान को कितना बड़ा खतरा है। इन खतरों को अनदेखा नहीं किया जा सकता। परमाणु हथियारों की क्षमता को बढ़ानेवाले देशों की जिम्मेदारी यह भी है कि वे अमन और शांति को कायम रखने की शर्त को प्राथमिकता दें। पूरी दुनिया में यह तथ्य सर्वव्यपित है कि युद्ध किसी भी मसले का हल नहीं बन सका है, बल्कि इसने संकटों को और भी बढ़ा दिया है। हालांकि, दोनों देशों को यह बात मालूम है कि युद्ध उनके लिए कितना महंगा पड़ सकता है, और यही वह बात है, जो किसी अन्य तथ्य के मुकाबले युद्ध के खिलाफ भी जाती है। दुर्भाग्य है कि दोनों तरफ का मीडिया एक खतरनाक कौमपरस्ती को बढ़ावा दे रहा है। **आईए रहमान**

## कार्टून कोना



ईरान में न्याय  
समाहर : कार्टूनमूवमेंटऑर्टिस्टकॉम

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

## आपके पत्र

**फिर आतंकवाद से हारी दुनिया**  
चीन ने एक बार फिर अपने वीडो शक्ति का उपयोग कर जैश-ए-मोहम्मद के सरगना मसूदा अजहर को संयुक्त राष्ट्र में वैश्विक आतंकी घोषित होने से बचा लिया। वीडो की शक्ति सुरक्षा परिषद के पांच स्थायी सदस्यों के पास है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद में रेजॉल्यूशन 1267 के पड़ती और उसकी आवेजाएत भी चीन के पास है। चीन पाकिस्तान को खुश करने में लगा है क्योंकि चीन-पाकिस्तान इकॉनॉमिक कॉरिडोर चीन की महत्वाकांक्षी योजना है। चक है विश्व के हर देश आतंकवाद के खिलाफ विरोध करें और संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद में बदलाव लाने की पहल करें।

**सनल कुमार महतो,** टालीगंज, झेलकला

## राजनीतिज्ञों की अदृष्टदर्शिता

अगर कोई मनुष्य सोचा हुआ है, तो उसे आसानी से जगाया जा सकता है, परंतु जो मनुष्य सोने का उपक्रम कर रहा है, उसे जगाना असंभव है। भारत की राजनीति भी कुछ इसी तरह की हो गयी है। पुलवामा अटैक के बाद हुए एयर स्ट्राइक पर देश के कुछ लोग इस पर प्रशंसा बरसा रहे हैं। ये सारे सभ्रंत लोग राजनीतिक दल से हैं। ऐसे लोग आरंभ से ही मान कर लेते हैं कि, उन्हें खुलकर विरोध करना है, चाहे विषय कितना भी गंभीर क्यों न हो। ऐसे लोग देश में ही नहीं बल्कि विदेशों में भी जाकर अपनी बेबाक राय दे आते हैं। उन्हें इस बात से फर्क नहीं पड़ता है कि उनके आचरण से दुश्मनों के हौसले बुलंद हो जाते हैं। आज कुछ नेताओं में आपसी सामंजस्य का अभाव है, जिससे देश के दुश्मनों को फायदा पहुंचता है। राजनीतिज्ञों को आपस में मिलकर सभी मुद्दों को सुलझाने का प्रयास करना चाहिए ताकि देश प्रत्येक क्षेत्र में प्रगति कर सके और साथ ही साथ देश की सुरक्षा और अखंडता के बारे में ऐसी बातें नहीं करनी चाहिए, जिससे देश के दुश्मनों के हौसले बुलंद हो जायें।

**सैहा चौधरी,** करगोण, देवघर

## पहले मन का प्रदूषण खत्म करें

सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने प्रदूषण के लिए पटाखों से ज्यादा जिम्मेवार वाहनों को बताया है। यह बिल्कुल सही बात है। उसने केंद्र सरकार से पटाखों और वाहनों से होने वाले प्रदूषण के तुलनात्मक अध्ययन के विषय में भी पूछा है। पटाखों का उपयोग तो हम कभी-कभी ही करते हैं, पर वाहनों का उपयोग तो हर दिन करते हैं। छोटी-छोटी बातें बड़ा फर्क डालती हैं, और यही बात प्रदूषण से निबटने के बारे में भी लागू होती है। हमारी मानसिकता ही प्रदूषित हो गयी है। प्रदूषण से निबटने का जिम्मा सरकार पर थोप देते हैं और इसे व्यक्तिगत तौर पर नहीं लेते। सब अपनी सुविधा देखते हैं, चाहे उससे प्रदूषण ही क्यों न होता हो। इसलिए यह जरूरी है कि सबसे पहले हम सभी को चाहिए कि अपने मन के प्रदूषण को खत्म करें।

**सीमा साही,** बेकाने