

The fear of AI

There is a lot of scaremongering about the “malicious applications” of this technology



TECH-ENABLED

DEVANGSHU DATTA

Fear-mongering about Artificial Intelligence has become commonplace as AI adoption has spread. In mid-February, there was a storm when an open-source AI developer postponed putting one of its products into public domain due to concerns of misuse.

OpenAI is a San-Francisco based non-profit organisation with a hundred-per-

son team and funding from billionaires Vinod Khosla, Elon Musk, Peter Thiel, etc. Its mission is to “ensure that Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) benefits all of humanity”, as and when AGI arrives.

The OpenAI definition of AGI is “highly autonomous systems that outperform humans at most economically valuable work”. OpenAI has released papers on AI systems that achieve super-human gamescores, and trained robotic hands to hold and manipulate objects with dexterity, etc.

The programme in question was a text generator called GPT-2, trained through unsupervised machine learning (ML). This sounds anti-climactic. AI is extensively used in weapons that actually kill people, and autonomous vehicles have already logged quite a few fatal accidents. The hype around GPT-2 was perhaps, over the top. OpenAI has just postponed the full release by six months, while publishing a technical

paper and explaining why they are withholding certain critical details.

What is GPT-2 and why is it so scary? OpenAI put together a database of millions of “3 karma” Reddit social media posts (Reddit “karma” is the equivalent of FB “likes”). Then it gave this 40Gb database to its AI model and told the AI to learn how to learn to predict the next (most probable) word.

We use text generators every day when we type email and SMS. But GPT-2 taught itself to perform tasks like question answering, reading comprehension, summarisation, and translation, from the raw text, without any task-specific training. This is “unsupervised learning” in ML terminology. GPT-2 searches for normal speech / writing patterns on its own.

It used 10x as many resources as GPT (the original AI developed by OpenAI).

This is a serious improvement on the usual text generator, which may be able to come up with the next word in a sen-

tence, but produces gibberish, if asked to do this in sustained fashion. OpenAI claims GPT-2 can “generate coherent paragraphs and perform rudimentary comprehension, machine translation, question answering, and summarisation — all without task-specific training”.

The full model is being withheld due to “concerns about the malicious applications of this technology”. In a blog post by the OpenAI Policy Director, Jack Clark, the decision is explained as “Due to concerns about large language models being used to generate deceptive, biased, or abusive language at scale, we are only releasing a much smaller version of GPT-2 along with sampling code. We are not releasing the dataset, training code, or GPT-2 model weights.” The smaller model is less capable of producing coherent text to fool readers. This decision, and the discussion it has sparked off, are being categorised as “experimental” by OpenAI.

GPT-2 displays broad capabilities. It has good scores on standard language and comprehension tests. It can also generate conditional synthetic text samples of “human” quality, if given an input and asked to expand.

One of the samples should explain why OpenAI is worried about malicious use. GPT-2 was told to expand on the human-

written statement “Recycling is good for the world, no, you could not be more wrong”. It responded: “Recycling is NOT good for the world. It is bad for the environment, it is bad for our health, and it is bad for our economy. Recycling is not good for the environment. It is destructive to the earth and it is a major contributor to global warming. Recycling is not good for our health. It contributes to obesity and diseases like heart disease and cancer. Recycling is bad for our economy. It increases the cost of a product, and in turn, the price of everything that is made with that product. We pay a tremendous price for the privilege of having the world’s most advanced and efficient recycling system. Recycling is a huge, colossal waste of time, energy, money, and resources.”

Ok, it’s nonsense. But it’s not gibberish. It’s the sort of nonsense, a human with some education, might write. GPT-2 can indeed, generate scary samples of fake news, and it could easily do this at scale.

OpenAI has been criticised for postponing the release and the scare mongering about this program may be overstated. Other developers will surely be able to produce text generators of similar quality. But the debate could be useful and it may help us develop some filters for flagging fake news.

Will Jet continue to fly?

If Jet does not survive, the lenders will lose money but gain experience of how to deal with a defaulter airline and not repeat the Kingfisher mistake



BANKER'S TRUST

TAMAL BANDYOPADHYAY

On Thursday night, after Kolkata Knight Riders vanquished Royal Challengers Bangalore at an Indian Premier League match when Andrew Russell smacked his seventh six, Sunil Gavaskar said this was a classic instance of snatching victory from the jaws of defeat.

While watching the match in the evening on TV, I got many text messages from executives of Jet Airways (India) Ltd, giving a running commentary on how Indian Oil Corp Ltd stopped supplying aviation fuel to the airline that day and resumed later and its lessors were asking the India’s aviation regulator to deregister planes leased to Jet for non-payment of lease rental. (Once they are deregistered, the lessors can take them out of India and lease to other airlines.)

All these were happening when a group of bankers was huddled at State Bank of India’s local head office in Delhi, stitching the plan to put up the airline for sale. Can the lenders snatch Jet from the jaws of death? The clock is ticking away: Within 72 hours we will know whether Jet will survive or go the Kingfisher Airlines way. Even if Jet crashlands, a la Kingfisher

Airlines Ltd, the two stories are very different.

Wiser with the Kingfisher experience, the lenders have been proactive. They have forced the promoter Naresh Goyal out. Contrary to what many believe, they have not been trying to bail out the airline. By infusing little bit of fresh money, they want to sell it as a “going concern”.

The lenders have not moved the insolvency court as an airline is not just another borrower; barring the enterprise value, an airline doesn’t have many assets that can fetch money. Of course, if the revival plan fails, they will have no choice but to perform the last rites of Jet by moving court under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Securities Interest Act, 2002, or SARFAESI Act, to recover whatever they can. By October 2018, when the 25-year old and till then India’s second largest carrier Jet reported losses for the third straight quarter, the lenders had swung into action by writing to its promoters for a ₹4,500-crore fund infusion.

Goyal did not come forward and, in January, when the airline for the first time defaulted in its payment to the borrowers, the lenders decided to go for a bank-led resolution. Under the now-set aside 12 February 2018 Reserve Bank of India directive, banks need to act at the very first default, declare the account as bad asset and try to resolve it before going in for liquidation.

Compelled. Goyal ultimately “sacrificed” his “every control and interest” in the airline but all along he had failed to see the writing on the wall. Unlike say Kapil Wadhawan, promoter of the beleaguered Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd, who has been selling

assets left, right and centre to revive the company, Goyal was refusing to move out even though the lenders made it clear to him that no new money would flow in till he leaves.

Deep-rooted mistrust between Goyal and his partner, Abu Dhabi’s Etihad Airways PJSC also contributed to the delay in the airline’s revival plan. By end of February, when the lenders finalised the resolution plan, Goyal moved out but Etihad declined to play along.

What are the salient features of the rather complex resolution plan?

- The lenders would own 50.5 per cent of Jet equity for ₹1.

- They would infuse ₹1,500 crore in the form of non-convertible debentures — a 10-year zero coupon bond. (Going by the so-called net present value, the lenders would have lost around ₹1,200 crore following this arrangement but that could have been offset by the upside from equities.)

- The existing fund exposure of the lenders to Jet would be restructured for a 10-year loan.

- Etihad would bring in around ₹1,800 crore equity.

- A few other investors would also bring in new money. India’s first sovereign wealth fund National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) could be one of them.

- Goyal’s stake holding would come down to 17 per cent.

At its 10 March board meeting, Etihad put a spanner in the revival plan by declining to support it. I don’t know the details but what I gather from many familiar with this is Etihad did not want Goyal to have even one board seat.

By that time, HSBC also made a claim of \$140 million from Etihad as the facility



was guaranteed by it.

The airline also wanted more sacrifice by the lenders.

The revival plan envisaged around ₹10,500 crore fresh fund, half of which needed to come in the form of equity but, following the delay, the required sum now could have gone up to ₹13,000 crore. With every passing day, the cost of revival is soaring.

Invitation for expression of interest (EoI) from the prospective bidders, which is expected to close on 10 April, is the proverbial last ditch attempt to save Jet. It is also the lenders’ way of looking for price discovery — how much they can recover from their dues. The exposure of a group of banks, including Mashreq Bank but excluding HSBC, is around ₹6,600 crore. On top of that, Jet Airways owes to its operational creditors around ₹4,500 crore.

I guess, the lenders will be happy if they get back around 30 per cent of their money; ditto with the operational creditors. This means, if the new investors can bring in around ₹3,500 crore, Jet will be saved.

Of course, they would need to arrange more money to run it. Efforts are on to woo Etihad back to the Jet cockpit. It makes sense for the Abu Dhabi-based airline to bid for Jet after making close to \$4.8 billion losses in three years. Also feed of west bound traffic from Jet flights to Abu Dhabi into Etihad’s long haul network is valuable. Private equity fund TPG Capital, Indigo Partners and NIIF may come as

INSIGHT

Credibility counts

The right response to surveys showing unexpected behaviour of key parameters is not to suppress them or cast doubts



SHREEKANT SAMBRANI

Consider the statement below on Balakot:

In the early morning hours of February 26, Indian Air Force Mirage jets dropped SPICE 2000 and Popeye precision guided missiles on facilities earlier identified as training camps for Jaish-e-Mohammed cadres. Graphic evidence of the destruction caused could not be collected immediately due to cloud cover. These missiles penetrate buildings and explode within, leaving not much by way of externally visible damage to standing structures in any case. Estimating casualties is also difficult for the same reason. The National Technical Research Organisation which gathers intelligence on wireless communication had reliable evidence of about 300 mobile phones being active in the vicinity of the target just before the bombing raid.

No such statement was made either immediately after the attack or later. It has been pieced together here from bits and pieces of information that became known over several days after the event.

The statement above is terse, precise and factual, yet it leaves little doubt about

the intent of the raid and its most likely effect. It makes no claim that can be easily challenged. It would have carried great credibility and helped avoid much of the heat generated by the questions reputable western media raised following the rather triumphalistic assertions of the death and destruction supposedly caused by the sortie. How does one question the veracity of a claim that has not been made?

The same truthful yet dispassionate approach could help us place the other burning issue of this election, the status of unemployment, in perspective. A plausible narrative follows.

Verifiable information on employment in India is hard to come by, because an overwhelming proportion of the labour force works on activities that do not keep reliable records: Small enterprises in cities and towns, farming and allied occupations in villages. Findings of surveys using scientific statistical methodologies, those by both National Sample Survey Office and Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, have provided tested and time-honoured estimates in this situation.

Two complications cloud the employment picture. The first is disguised unemployment or partial employment. For example, adult members of land-owning rural households or small entrepreneurial urban families not engaged in other occupations were considered as employed in the family farm or firm, whether they actually worked in it or not.

The second is that a sizeable number of so-called jobs in the informal sector do not create or add economic value. For example, the ubiquitous chowkidars —

private security guards — would not be needed in all but the most exclusive gated housing colonies if the state discharged its policing function effectively. Operators in automatic elevators, plumbers’ or electricians’ assistants who merely carry tool bags and hand the needed implement, “cleaners” of modern buses and trucks, filing clerks and attendants in government and public offices are other examples of what can only be called filling of redundancies. Yet these jobs exist, whose numbers must be in millions.

Just as these work patterns overstated labour engaged in activities that make meaningful contributions to the overall economy, a raft of superfluous goods swelled the gross domestic product (GDP). Outages and unreliable quality were associated with grid power supply, compelling households, shops, factories and farms to invest in voltage stabilisers, diesel generators or pumpsets as fail-safe devices. Even though their value was included in the GDP calculations, they were not productive investments.

This situation is changing — and rapidly — in the last five years at that. With substantial improvements in power availability and reliability, fail-safe devices or captive generators are far less required. Improved infrastructure and logistics have greatly reduced idle investments in buffer stocks of production inputs. T N Ninan rightly observed in these pages “Greater efficiencies and the saturation of underserved markets have reduced the need for capital investment on the same scale as earlier. At least some of the downstream effects would register as an economic slowdown.” (March 23, 2019). This paradox is symptomatic of an economy transitioning from shortages to a semblance of adequacy.

A similar phenomenon may be at work on the labour front too. With faster growth and aspirational motivations, a fair number of those presently engaged in the redundancy tasks would

have realised the jobs they perform for what they really are: Dead-end occupations with zero job security and prospects of growth. They are just biding their time until something more worthwhile turns up. This is why even the lowest echelon government positions attract a huge number of applicants. They may not meet all aspirations but at least they offer security. Manish Sabharwal is right when he says that the Indian problem is not jobs per se but desirable or “good” jobs. Most such people would readily claim to be unemployed when asked about their job status, because they think what they presently do is not a job worth having. The fact that the spikes in unemployment rates reported in the surveys have occurred in periods coinciding with rapid rise in aspirations lends credence to such an interpretation.

The right response to surveys showing unexpected behaviour of key parameters is not to suppress them or cast doubts about survey methodologies or integrity. A nuanced interpretation may well provide explanation consistent with ground reality, which would also not be alarming. The above hypothesis about an aspirational labour force is one such.

Sadly, this has not happened and ugly, wholly unproductive, controversies consume attentions of policy makers, opposition politicians and scholars alike, whether the subject is the economy or national security. Governments all over the world display excessive sensitivity to such issues, clamping down hard on any data that might cast doubts on them, even as they could easily share verifiable facts and plausible analyses. I had demonstrated the validity of this approach with regard to the Rafale deal in these pages earlier (March 12, 2019), concluding that “truth remains the best defence against allegations: Transparency works at all times, while any attempt to hide facts only breeds suspicions.” Credibility counts.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Customised campaigning

In western Uttar Pradesh, candidates of the ‘gathbandhan’, or the Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party-Rashtriya Lok Dal alliance, are frequently asked why these parties have come together. At least one of them, the Samajwadi Party’s Hathras candidate, Ramji Lal Suman, is trying to win over voters by being honest. In his public meetings, Suman tells people the three parties will criticise Modi separately, but soon realised they cannot defeat him without joining forces. He says the candidates have been advised against calling the Prime Minister unparliamentary names when they are among the youth because the PM’s credibility remains high among the younger lot, while the older generation clings and appreciates if the PM is compared to someone who does not keep promises. The gathbandhan leaders have also been asked to tailor their speeches according to the time of the day. Their speeches in the afternoons — when most youngsters are out for work — are no holds barred, but those in the evenings are more restrained.

The pressure cooker challenge

The pressure cooker, the symbol with which the Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK) fought the RK Nagar by-election in 2017 and trounced many Dravidian party stalwarts, has come back to haunt its leader TV Dhinakaran. In at least three assembly constituencies, AMMK candidates are pitted against their namesakes contesting on the pressure cooker symbol. (The AMMK has changed its party symbol to a gift pack since then.) At Pappireddipatti in Dharmapuri district, AMMK candidate Rajendran DK (gift pack) is fighting independent candidate Rajendran C (pressure cooker). In Harur, the AMMK’s Murugan R is pitted against independent Murugan P, who is also contesting with the pressure cooker symbol. In Tiruvurur, the AMMK’s Kamaraj S will fight independent candidate Kamaraj B, branding... you guessed it... a pressure cooker symbol.

Dream merchant?

Pundits say US President Donald Trump takes the cake when it comes to the most outrageous lines uttered during rallies. But our politicians run him close. At an election rally in Sivaganga district, Karti Chidambaram, son of former Union finance minister P Chidambaram and the Congress candidate from the Sivaganga constituency, focused on women to drive his message. Concluding a speech, he asked the women in the audience, “Do you like *Sembaruthi*, *Lakshmi Stores* or *Kalyana Veedu*?” These, incidentally, are the titles of the three most popular Tamil-language family soaps on television. A majority of those present said they liked the first one. Junior Chidambaram’s next question was, “Do you like Parvathi (the soap’s heroine) or Vanaja (a villain)?” As expected, everyone voted for Parvathi. After a quick remark that the hero’s name (Karthik) rhymed with his own, Karti promised to bring down the monthly cable television charges, which have shot up to ₹400 from ₹100 some time ago if his party won the election.

LETTERS

Difficult to undo damage

Wisdom dawned on L K Advani when he was denied the party ticket to contest the Lok Sabha election. Depending on their political inclinations and loyalties, some say that the denial of ticket to him is an act of humiliation and betrayal while others say it is time the octogenarian retires. It is a bit doleful that he was sent to political oblivion by someone who grew up under his tutelage. Advani mentored Narendra Modi as his protégé and saved him from being shown the door by Atal Bihari Vajpayee in the wake of the Gujarat pogrom. For his critics, it is poetic justice of sorts for his role in mainstreaming communal politics. How his rath yatra culminated in the demolition of the Babri Masjid and resultant bloodshed is not easily forgotten. As he is still hale and hearty, age cannot be cited against the veteran when it comes to be a candidate.

Perhaps what he wrote in the blog is his way of disapproving of the party branding anyone and everyone critical of it and the government as anti-nationals. But when the defenders of human rights and social activists were denounced as anti-nationals, he did not rebuke the Bharatiya Janata Party or the government for doing it. He has depleted the moral authority to ask his party “to look back and look within”. Interestingly, the very day he wrote the blog, Modi accused the Congress of

backing and protecting “traitors and terrorists”. No matter what Advani says now, it was he who sowed the seeds for the party’s present leadership. It is difficult to undo the damage he did to the Indian polity.

G David Milton Maruthancode

New challenge for EC

The Chinese Whisper “Saree war” (April 5) made me think about the thousands of poor daily-wage women workers for whom it could be difficult to find a suitable attire, whereas in Gujarat everything seems to be a “*dhandra*” (business). I think many in the media might not be aware that the “KCR *kheera*” (cucumber) is a huge hit in many parts of Telangana. It so happens that KCR, apart from being a politician, is also a revolutionary *kisan* or farmer and it seems he had grown different varieties of *kheera* that had less seeds but were very juicy. The Election Commission of India, already under tremendous pressure, might have to handle one more issue if the women voters turn up wearing Modi/Priyanka sarees on polling day.

N Nagarajan Secunderabad

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



Regressive step

Pensions should be decided by the executive, not courts

The Supreme Court has upheld a Kerala High Court judgment against the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), as a consequence of which certain amendments to how pensions have been calculated will be struck down. This will create a situation in which those who had a particularly high previously drawn salary and several years of service might see their pension raised by as much as 1,000 per cent. This is naturally not in keeping with the ethos of the provident fund, which has always been scaled towards aiding the saving and retirement of those at the lower rung of the formal sector. The Court may well have upheld this regressive order, but the question is where the money to pay these much larger pensions will come from. That question has certainly not been taken into account by the court.

This appears to be an instance of legislative over-reach. The structure of the pension plan, the profitability and sustainability of the scheme, and so on, are questions that are properly determined by the executive. It is the executive that has to decide the proper distribution of subsidies and taxes — and support provided to state-guaranteed pension funds are nothing but a subset of that fiscal decision, which in all countries must remain with the executive. The executive, not the judiciary, is where the trade-offs that determine who benefits from guaranteed pensions should take place. For example, the EPFO system, which is limited essentially to employees in the formal sector, may not be considered the best form of savings, given the small size and disproportionate bargaining power of formal sector employment.

It is also entirely the executive's decision to decide how tax revenue must be spent to ensure greatest justice as long as the fundamental rights are not being ignored. If the executive believes that pensions are a less effective use of tax revenue than, say, health care, that is the executive's prerogative. Certainly, there are many Indian savings schemes open to the formal sector. On the other hand, health care is under-resourced, which hurts many older people. And employees who are outside the formal economy struggle to access proper savings schemes that are both state-guaranteed and provide a minimum return. This is part of the reason for the popularity of pyramid schemes and "chit funds". The judiciary can naturally not take any of these important questions into account — which is why it is best to allow the executive to make this sort of decision.

It is worth noting that the government has already set up a better alternative to the EPFO, which is allowing for high-end savers, namely the National Pension Scheme (NPS). The EPFO accounts should have been migrated to the NPS. In order to ensure that pension schemes can pay for themselves in time, entitlements based on individual pay-ins, structured around retirement accounts, are a good idea. However, how can the government proceed with such much-needed reforms if the courts believe that they can step in to prevent them from being carried out? Rational analysis, and not arbitrary court orders, should decide what proportion of an employee's earnings should mandatorily be saved.

Tomorrow, tomorrow and...

The 'fextension' could be a good bet for Brexit

As things stand, the United Kingdom could leave the European Union (EU) on April 12, almost certainly without a deal, or on May 22 or June 30 with or without a deal, or on March 29, 2020, with or without a deal. Alternatively, it could choose to remain in the union by revoking Article 50 of the EU's Lisbon Treaty, the clause under which members can voluntarily leave. All options are on the table as confusion over Brexit intensifies, and businesses on both sides of the channel continue in a state of limbo. A frustrated EU 27 had refused a second extension of June 30 to the UK's embattled Prime Minister, Theresa May, but are being asked to reconsider that date when it meets on April 10 for the next summit. Whether the EU leadership will agree to the June 30 deadline again is an open question, since French President Emmanuel Macron has demanded a clear reason for the extension. In the circumstances, the European Union Council President Donald Tusk's proposal that the EU consider a "fextension" deadline of March 29, 2020, with an option to exit before that if Parliament passes the withdrawal agreement, appears to offer all parties a breather from the deadlock at Westminster and Brussels.

But as with all things Brexit, the June 30 deadline and the "fextension" both mean that the UK would be legally bound to participate in the elections for the EU Parliament. This prospect has enraged both the centrists in Ms May's Conservative Party and in the opposition Labour Party, both fearing a resurgence of far right politicians who have had a deleterious impact on British politics. Given that Ms May is unlikely to deliver a deal by the June 30 deadline — assuming the EU Council accepts it — Mr Tusk's "fextension" could, at the very least, help clarify the political situation in which an increasingly unpopular prime minister grimly hangs on to office (indeed, the pound rose against the dollar following Mr Tusk's proposal). Having belatedly reached across the aisles to the opposition Labour Party to discuss mutually agreeable terms for a withdrawal agreement, she appears to have doubled down on the same deal that has been voted down three times in Parliament.

The alternative solution for the UK to leave without a deal has also been raised. In this situation, World Trade Organization (WTO) rules will apply, a solution that Brexiters may consider a tenable one. A WTO regime, however, appears a poorer solution than the Backstop agreement, the principal sticking-point of Ms May's deal. WTO rules imply that the UK would be treated like any third country — and without a trade agreement that would mean a return to tariffs on some items and border checks, including in Northern Ireland, which the Backstop, however open-ended and politically unacceptable, seeks to avoid. The disruption on businesses is incalculable. On current reckoning, there appear to be no good options for Brexit, underlining the dangers of relying on popular referendums in political decision-making in functioning democracies. The deadlock is taking its toll. The UK, once among Europe's fastest-growing economies, has seen growth slow since 2015. The public spectacle of the political deadlock is narrowing its options as multiple deadlines elapse. In the short term, April 12 could be the UK's D-Day.

ILLUSTRATION: AJAY MOHANTY



Better transition planning

The puzzle of 2019 lies in bringing enough knowledge and debate into the early weeks, to lay the foundations for an economic resurgence by 2022-23

The post-election transition is a difficult and important time. As institutions in India are weak, a lot rides on personalities. There is a pileup of 'debt' incurred from the previous period that demands attention and resources. There is a unique opportunity for long-term thinking. It is efficient to develop a transition team that will think about manifesto, CMP, staffing, and early actions.

Whether the BJP wins the elections or not, the next five years are going to be different. Even though the UPA won the elections in 2009, the nature of the UPA-2 was quite different. Even if a certain person, who occupies a certain cabinet portfolio in 2014, remains intact into 2019, that person has evolved, and the approach in 2019 will be different. And in practice, changes at the level of cabinet and officials are often found after elections.

Once the election results are in, the media will make a lot of noise about the greatness of the winners. There will be a certain euphoria in the air. Many people assume there is a 'honeymoon period' where a new team has great opportunities. However, these transitions are difficult problems.

In India, institutions are weak, and hence individuals matter greatly. New people take time to understand the landscape and learn the ropes. A thumb rule followed by many experienced civil servants is to speak less and do less for the first six months in a job. When institutions are weak, the relationships

between individuals and institutions are fragile and learned slowly.

What is different about the first six months are the time horizons. It is possible to act with greater intellectualism in the first six months, as there are four years in which the fruits of this labour can be obtained. This gives time for implementing complex reforms, and for the economy to absorb the change.

As an example, it is politically easiest to combat protectionism in the first few weeks. The incumbents who are hurt by these reforms will complain in the first year. But by year 4, the full gains from improved resource allocation and productivity are reaped. By this logic, June to September 2019 is an ideal time to remove customs tariffs, data localisation rules, FDI restrictions, etc.

As time passes, decision making becomes more short-term when the next elections come closer. This leads to the accumulation of 'policy debt'. Problems like sugar, IL&FS, Jet Airways, IDBI Bank, and off-balance sheet fiscal operations are being dealt with in short-term ways in the last year leading up to the election. This accumulated 'debt' has to be addressed by the next team.

The period immediately after the elections is thus a time where the new team is unsure of itself, has to deal with the policy debt left from the previous year or two, and has the opportunity to find long-term solutions as it has the luxury of time. The best story of



SNAKES & LADDERS

AJAY SHAH

Inconvenient truth of climate change

The question no longer is if climate change is real. The question is: What can we do as temperatures increase and weather changes to bring devastation in different parts of the world? This is where our conversation is struggling to keep pace with the scale of the energy transition that is required. But there is some good news in terms of where the possible answers will lie. This is what we should discuss. But in these ways forward, we must understand why transitions will be even more contested and even more difficult if we don't recognise the need for climate justice.

So, what is the good news? At first, the International Energy Agency's (IEA's) Global Energy — the CO₂ Status report for 2018 makes for depressing reading. It finds global energy consumption is up — twice the average rate of growth since 2010. This is because of robust economic growth in the world and weird weather, ironically because of climate change. As a result, energy-related CO₂ emissions are up, with the power sector accounting for two-thirds of emission growth. Oil demand increased by 1.3 per cent in 2018 and so did the demand for coal — but it is slower and much more sluggish than in the period before. But still coal is king; coal-based power plants, when added, end up being the single-largest contributor to growth in emission in 2018. The IEA estimates CO₂ emitted from coal combustion was responsible for over 0.3°C of the 1°C increase in temperature over pre-industrial levels. But there are some new trends which, if the world

can accelerate, may help to turn around the energy trajectory that jeopardises our future. First, coal is being switched big time with natural gas for generating power — roughly 24 per cent of growth in natural gas use in the world was because it was substituted for coal in power plants. This happened mostly in the US and in China, where its domestic policy to clean air pollution (called the Blue Skies initiative) pushed for coal use to be curtailed in industrial boilers and power plants. Without this shift, CO₂ emissions would have been 15 per cent higher, estimates the IEA. We need to note, however, that gas does have higher methane emissions — methane is also a potent greenhouse gas — and this is not accounted for by the IEA in this CO₂ balance sheet.

Secondly, renewable energy — everything from solar, wind, hydro and bioenergy — is now part of the big-power balance sheet of the world. Renewable-based electricity generation increased by 7 per cent — this, as the IEA puts in perspective, is Brazil's energy electricity demand and one point higher

than the annual growth rate since 2010. China accounted for 40 per cent of the increase in renewables; Europe some 25 per cent and, interestingly, the US and India were matched at 13 per cent increase in renewable energy growth. Renewable energy accounted for a quarter of the global power output in 2018, second after coal. In Germany and also in the UK, renewable energy provided over 35 per cent of electricity.



DOWN TO EARTH

SUNITA NARAIN

good work under such conditions is the July 1991 Budget speech.

When institutions are weak, personnel is policy. We can form a good prognosis about performance in the coming five years by looking at the intellectual capacity, and team coherence, of the key persons in leadership roles by June or July. The puzzle of 2019 lies in bringing enough knowledge and debate into the early weeks, to lay the foundations for an economic resurgence by 2022-23.

Three kinds of mistakes need to be avoided. The first kind of mistake is that of only undertaking short-term moves to deal with the policy debt: the policy response to IL&FS in June 2019 should be different from that employed in June 2018. The second kind of mistake is to get carried away by the euphoria in the media and prematurely claim that the economic problems are solved. We should not believe our own press releases. The third kind of mistake is to not initiate a batch of difficult and long-term reforms — e.g. 10 teams for 10 work areas — which will yield results by 2022-23.

Of central importance is fiscal, financial, and monetary policy, which comes together to create conditions for firms to invest. Private persons are keen observers of the policy process, and respond to the prospect for improvement. When policymakers showcase teams and ideas, this yields rapid gains in the economy, as private persons become more optimistic about the economic environment. A strong performance on the inputs to policy (team, strategy, first wave of actions) in 2019 and 2020 will induce improvements in outcomes (private investment) in 2020 and 2021. Ideas and teams for economic reforms are the cheapest counter-cyclical policy.

How can political parties make the best of the first six months? Better planning holds the key. As an example, in the US, transition work starts in October, the election results come out in November, and the new team takes office in January. Four months of developmental work is in place before the new team takes charge. In India, we do not have these institutional arrangements. We go from cabinet formation in late May to Budget speeches in July and then February, by the seat of the pants.

How can we do better? Manifesto development is a good place where the objectives of the campaign are served while simultaneously preparing the mind for taking charge. Coalition governments have, in the past, negotiated 'common minimum programmes'. This negotiation helps focus upon policy questions, and better development of a manifesto caters to better CMP negotiations, which in turn cater to better policy planning. A full planning process of the first year is required, identifying areas of work, concept notes for the work programmes, and the expertise.

General Eisenhower once said that the plan is useless, but the planning makes all the difference. Well before the election results, political parties need to get started on the planning process. This will prepare the mind, develop capabilities in key persons, and generate improved performance when the work actually starts.

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The club that fuelled culture



BOOK REVIEW

LYNDALL GORDON

"O conversation the staff of life," the young T S Eliot wrote to his Harvard friend and fellow poet Conrad Aiken in 1914. "Shall I get any at Oxford?" A newcomer to England, Eliot looked to London as a city that once had been a centre of civilisation. There, conversation among thinkers fizzing with originality had its acme in a club founded in 1764 by the dictionary-maker Samuel Johnson and the portrait painter Joshua Reynolds. They asked seven more friends to meet each Friday at the Turk's Head Tavern in Gerrard Street, to talk, dine and drink till midnight.

In *The Club*, the American literary scholar Leo Damrosch brilliantly brings

together the members' voices. The nine founding members of the Club joined quite early in their careers. Johnson had yet to write his masterpiece, *Lives of the Poets* (prompted in part by a conversation with King George III, who, in Boswell's account, expressed "a desire to have the literary biography of this country ably executed"); Oliver Goldsmith had yet to publish the novel that would make his name, *The Vicar of Wakefield*; and Edmund Burke had yet to find renown as a parliamentary orator.

Neither fame nor public position was required, and yet a surprising number of these friends would rise to lasting greatness. Elections were made by unanimous vote. Those of James Boswell, David Garrick and Adam Smith in the 1770s expanded the group to include the greatest biographer, the greatest actor and the greatest economist of the century.

As this stellar book moves from one Club member to another, it comes together as an ambitious venture homing in on the nature of creative stimulus. Here are multiple, deeply researched biographies in

one. Resonating beyond the well-documented links among these leading lights, *The Club* captures their distinctly individual voices and invites us to feel the pulsations of contact over a period of 20 years. What made this collaborative pulse so strong across many fields?

Although it's impossible to explain genius, and although not all members deserved that label, the question is implicit in Damrosch's portraits of the group's defining figures. *The Club* accurately recreates a milieu keen on character, egged on by the English taste for unashamed eccentricity. The impact of Johnson's sonorous pronouncements — "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life" — is in no way diminished by his compulsive tics, slovenly clothes and a wig singed from bending too close to a candle to examine a text. Mr Damrosch is equal to his characters, considering their comments from our vantage point, especially our present awareness of women's lives.

Inevitably, certain opinions are alien, even offensive to modern ears. Johnson's invoking the phrase "barbarous nations"

to describe the victims of Britain's imperial wars; his dismissal of the American colonists' protest against taxation without representation; and, despite sympathising with Native Americans whose lands were being wrested from them, his refusal to suggest that these lands should be returned to them.

Regarding women, all these 18th-century British men endorsed a double standard. Women, Johnson said bluntly, must be taught to keep their legs together. The rationale was pragmatic: to secure the line of inheritance that kept property in male hands. We read on because we are drawn by the alluring drama of character. This drama is biographical, not political.

Character includes ambiguity and defects. There is abundant evidence of Boswell's habit of abusing girls, many of them orphans and desperate for sixpence. Yet Mr Damrosch rightly keeps the focus on Boswell the "impresario," who drew on his training as a lawyer to spark new topics of conversation, and, of course, on Boswell the avid recorder. His *Journal* is astonishingly candid about his failings and humiliations, as when Rousseau's partner, Thérèse, who once slept with Boswell while en route from France to England, tells him how clueless he is as a lover. (She advises

him to use his hands.)

The Club, eventually renamed the London Literary Society, has continued to this day but never again lived up to its glory years. Johnson died in 1784. Toward the end, he attended only about three times a year. It's telling that by 1783 membership had swollen to 35. Many of the members were highly gifted, including the playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan, author of *The School for Scandal*, and the historian Edward Gibbon. No doubt the intimacy of the earlier, smaller group worked better for Johnson.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the Club's members were largely politicians and other public figures. The poet laureate Tennyson was there, but not Dickens. The election of T S Eliot, in 1942, came rather late in his career as a poet. And then, too, as Mr Damrosch points out, there was no George Eliot, no Virginia Woolf: "It never ceased to be a club for men." He compensates for this exclusion by focusing on the women who formed what he calls a "shadow club." The artist Frances Reynolds (Joshua's able but suppressed sister) affirmed that Johnson "set a higher value upon female friendship than, perhaps, most men."

Looking at this book's list of chapters,

All in all, without the switch to gas, increased use of nuclear and renewables, CO₂ emissions would have been 50 per cent higher for the same economic growth than the world saw in 2018. This is not small. This is not to be scoffed at.

But this is not enough. The problem is the unequal nature of wealth in the world and the fact that this energy transition has to be made even as significant parts of the world need more energy — to light up homes, cook food and motorise, and run industries. This is the challenge and this is where we fall short.

The US, for instance, desperately needs to decrease its greenhouse gas emissions — its contribution to the stock of gases in the atmosphere is massive (almost a quarter). It has to reduce. But in 2018, its CO₂ emissions increased by 3.7 per cent. This, even when it substituted coal for gas and brought down its emission intensity. In other words, it has increased its emissions to such an extent that it has negated any gains it could have made because of this shift. This is also when methane is not being added to its balance sheet. This is not good. Not good at all.

Similarly, the use of oil — primarily used for road transportation — increased higher in the US, even compared to China and India. This, when ownership and use of personal vehicles is already gargantuan and gross in the country.

So, how will the world contract its emission? How will it still provide the right to development of the poor and the now emerging countries? Will it and can it? This is what needs to be discussed. This is the inconvenient truth of climate change action.

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I wondered at first why the portrait of Gibbon comes toward the end. He was elected to the Club in 1774, while writing the first volume of his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The book was recognised at once as a classic, combining extraordinary breadth with what Gibbon calls "the art of narrating." As Mr Damrosch puts it, Gibbon broke with "tedious chronicles of fact," maintaining a "storytelling momentum" that is "constantly enlivened by memorable incidents and characterisations." This could be a description of Mr Damrosch's own achievement. The best historians, he goes on, invite readers to accompany them "behind the scenes." Damrosch does precisely that here, and the chapter makes a fitting near-finale to a book that sustains a shared conversation, a terrific feat in keeping with that of the Club itself.

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THE CLUB
Johnson, Boswell, and the Friends Who Shaped an Age
Leo Damrosch
Yale University Press; \$30; 473 pages

Opinion

MONDAY, APRIL 8, 2019



TRADE PACT WITH US

Arvind Panagariya, former Niti Aayog vice-chairman

Down the road, the US being such an important strategic partner, one area where we can explore an FTA agreement is services. FTA with US in goods at least in the near future does not look to me like something that can happen

India's rates too high, RBI lost a golden opportunity

If inflation is benign and growth slowing, a 50 bps cut was called for, more so given how long transmission takes

GIVEN HOW RBI'S inflation forecasts have been trimmed and its seemingly benign outlook on prices, it is surprising that the repo rate was not trimmed by 50 bps instead of just 25. RBI on Thursday trimmed its headline CPI inflation projection for H1FY20 to 2.9-3% from 3.2-3.4% and to 3.5-3.8% for H2FY20; for the year to March 2021, RBI sees inflation at 3.8-4.1%. To be sure, RBI has listed risk factors such as poor monsoons, possible rise in oil prices and fiscal slippage but that has been baked into the outlook. At this point, when the economy is struggling to grow at beyond 7%, and India's high real rates of interest are a factor in keeping investment low, a 50 bps cut would have given corporate borrowers some relief; transmission, though, can take 4-6 quarters and yields have, in fact, risen after last week's cut.

RBI has lowered the FY20 growth forecast to 7.2% from the previous estimate of 7.4% and could, therefore, have front-loaded the cut. Private sector investment is already very sluggish and while lower interest rates alone cannot reverse the trend, they could help at the margin. In fact, economists believe RBI's growth expectations are optimistic given tighter financial conditions will continue to impact markets and slowing global growth.

The fiscal situation, however, is now a real reason for concern. This is partly because the government itself is borrowing heavily—gross borrowings of ₹7.2 lakh crore in FY20—but more so because of the extra-budgetary borrowings which were close to ₹1.75 lakh crore in FY19. The spate of loan waivers and chances of more to come would see state governments also adding to the supply of paper. Besides, the several cash transfer welfare schemes being rolled out could necessitate more borrowings. Despite a repo rate cut and chances of another 25 basis points cut in either June or August, the yield on the benchmark jumped 9 basis points on Thursday and rose again on Friday. If an expanding fisc is the reason for the central bank's caution, it should have been reflected in the inflation forecasts. While RBI did retain its neutral stance and did not change it to accommodative, as was widely expected, it also noted that the risks to its inflation forecasts were broadly balanced. Also, given how banks take their time to transmit the cut in the repo rate to customers, a 50 basis points cut would have helped speed up the process. Bank of Baroda, for instance, left its MCLR unchanged after a meeting on Friday. Banks have been loathe to lower loan rates because deposits are becoming harder to come by and, consequently, they are unable to trim interest rates on deposits. Lowering loan rates would mean taking a hit on their margins. A 50 basis points cut may have made it easier for them to cut rates.

Clinical trials get a boost

Welcome easing of norms for drugs approved by Western nations

THE GOVERNMENT EASING the rules for clinical trials of drugs in the country is the shot in the arm that access to drugs in the country needed. The Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules 2019 do away with the necessity to conduct local trials for drugs that have been approved to be marketed in the US, the UK, the EU, Canada, Australia and Japan. This will mean these drugs can reach patients faster than before. Data generated in these countries will be deemed acceptable. Firms introducing a drug in India that is approved in any of the six jurisdictions will only need to carry out the Phase IV clinical trial, which is a post-marketing trial that involves study of long-term effects of the drug. Despite India's high disease burden, the country hosts only 1.2% of the world's clinical trials—this means morbidity and mortality could be actually higher than in a scenario where the newest and most advanced drugs globally are available in the Indian market. The regulator can now choose to exempt orphan drugs—medicines treating conditions affecting less than 5 lakh Indians—from Phase III and IV clinical trials. The changes mandate that ethics committees reviewing clinical trials at universities must be registered with the Department of Health Research; earlier, these ethics committees were just rubber-stamp bodies. This way, the rights and the safety of the patients will be ensured.

The new rules also provide regulatory clarity. India, after tightening clinical trial regulations in 2013 following allegations of rampant ethics violations, relaxed some of the rules in 2015 after clinical trials in the country took a beating. But the relaxations were done in a piecemeal manner, and there was little clarity for the pharmaceutical industry. Given just 88 of the over 1,400 deaths among participants in clinical trials of drugs in India between 2015 and 2018 were trial related, choking off trials did more harm than good. Junking the upfront compensation clause—paid pending determination of whether the death/disability was trial related—was also much needed. It had a chilling effect on drug-makers, more so because the upfront compensation didn't need to be refunded if the death/disability was eventually proved to be unrelated to the trial. That said, the government needs to calibrate the easing of the rules for patient safety. Oral vaccines, *Nature* reports, may show varying levels of efficacy between populations in high-income nations and low-/middle-income nations. The government must review the relaxation for oral vaccines and other such drugs, if need be. The new rules also reduce the time for the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) to decide on clinical trial application from 180 days to 90 days for drugs developed outside India and to 30 days for "discovery, research and manufacture" in India. If the DCGI fails to communicate its decision for drugs discovered in India within the stipulated 30 days, the permission to conduct trials will be deemed to have been granted. This will no doubt encourage the clinical trial industry, but the government needs to ensure that this doesn't become a route for corruption and doesn't prioritise speed over drug-safety. While a review by commercial ethics boards has been allowed in the new Rules—this was restricted to bioequivalence trials before—which can make drug approval much faster, there is a need to ensure that the boards don't sacrifice scrutiny for profits.

Funding POLLS

Public funding of polls, as Congress talks about in its manifesto, doesn't seem to be a good idea

THE CONGRESS MANIFESTO talks of scrapping electoral bonds and setting up a National Election Fund, from which funds will be allocated during elections to recognised political parties as laid down by a law brought to this effect. This has revived the debate around public funding of elections, though it is hard to see how such a fund will generate voluntary contributions, with the incentive for a donor to contribute to a party of her choice gone. The underlying principle in state-funded or candidate/party agnostic public-funded (National Election Fund model) polls, of providing a level playing field, is an admirable one. But it seems impracticable for a host of reasons.

The state funding each candidate from Panchayat to Parliament would mean considerable costs and a mind-boggling number of variables that can't be squared off. To start with, political financing today is as much about the sustenance of whole-time workers of parties as it is about poll expenditure. Even if state funding were to be limited to just elections, parties may just use their own funds to meet election expenses by exploiting loopholes. It will be very difficult to frame who gets state funding and how much. For instance, if every candidate is to be given the same amount for every election, that would mean wasting state money on frivolous candidatures. Also, does a major party's candidate get the same as a local outfit's nominee, or should parties be given funds on the basis of vote share in previous elections (this would mean the winning party always has a financial advantage over the others)? None of the frameworks recommended so far can reconcile the interests of the multiple stakeholders in Indian elections. Also, with healthcare and education requiring more funds, the state funding polls doesn't seem to be the best idea.

STRUCTURAL SLOWDOWN

TO SIGNIFICANTLY ALTER THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND, 25 BPS RATE CUT WON'T CUT IT. MPC MAY HAVE TO AGGRESSIVELY SIGNAL SEVERAL ROUNDS OF RATE CUTS

India risks deflation, not more inflation

WHILE THE NDA government is currently engaged in fierce debates about the veracity of GDP

estimates and unemployment statistics, its achievements in significantly bringing down inflation and sustaining macroeconomic stability during its 5-year tenure are widely acknowledged. The government claims that this stellar success is mainly due to its legal backing of RBI's inflation-targeting (IT) framework, supplemented with fiscal discipline and supply-side reforms in the food economy. The critics point out though that India was no exception—it benefited hugely from the collapse in international oil, food and commodity prices in a persisting global deflationary ecosystem. They also vigorously argue that the government's claims on policy effectiveness could be premature or misplaced.

■ The early claim to success of the IT framework remains unsubstantiated: monetary policy transmission channel remained mostly blocked—a banking system saddled with high NPA levels and legacy deposits raised at higher rates has been operationally less responsive to any rate signal in either direction. For example, SBI, the country's largest bank, did not increase its base rate from 10% since September 2013 through January 2015, in spite of a 75 basis points hike in the repo rate to 8%. When the rate cycle reversed, banks were again slow to respond—SBI's base rate lowered just 95 basis points by February 2019 against a cumulative 175 basis points reduction in the repo rate. Moreover, RBI's desperation to force the marginal cost of funds based lending rate (MCLR) from April 1, 2016, on fresh loans had very little impact—SBI's 3-year MCLR at 8.75% is currently just 30 bps lower than its base rate. That leaves the expectation channel as the key anchor, which is ridden with uncertainty. Numerous explanations are being extended: consumer expectations vs business expectations; forward looking vs backward looking; headline vs core; and food prices vs POT (potato, onion and tomato) prices—one wonders what macroeconomic diagnostic tools are applied to turn correlation into causation!

■ Signals from the bond market weren't any different either. The 10-year bench mark yield declined a mere 30 bps since May 2014 whereas headline CPI inflation collapsed by 600 basis points. Flipping the same point around, one could

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ask if the government has been fiscally prudent, why have G-Sec yields not corrected commensurate to such a massive decline in inflation? Following the CAG report's revelations, it is now abundantly clear that fiscal consolidation on the budget conceals large off-budget revenue and capital expenditure—some analysts estimate the general government deficit, which includes Central government, states and PSUs, might have stayed the same as 5 years ago!

■ There isn't much on supply-side reforms in agriculture either. The biggest initiative, e-NAM, has hardly taken off. Nor was there any technology breakthrough comparable to the scale of the 1970s HYV seed-led green revolution; no trend acceleration in crop output or sectoral value addition relative to the previous 5 years under UPA-2, too.

Then what explains the current phase of disinflation? Analysts have been examining trends in two of its major components—food and core inflation. Between the two, it is the sharp decline in food inflation that has surprised everyone—food price inflation (47.25% weightage in CPI basket) has corrected over 1000 basis points since May 2014, remaining below 2% on average since September 2016, periodically sliding into deflation. But core inflation has moderated only 300-350 basis points since May 2014, remaining sticky at around 5%. This was counterintuitive: first, food inflation is mostly a domestic, supply-side problem and generally flares up during droughts (but it fell during two consecutive drought years, 2014-15 and 2015-16); secondly, external shocks mostly reflect in WPI movements, not CPI (Patel Committee report, 2014: page 13); and thirdly, monetary policy has very little influence on it.

What could have pushed down food

inflation so sharply in the absence of technological breakthroughs or structural market reforms? Intuition guides that lower import parity prices could have acted as a ceiling to domestic price formation for some food items, given the government's alacrity towards cheaper imports (pulses, onions, etc) to augment domestic supply. The government also took some orthodox market intervention measures: a 1970s-like buffer stocking of pulses and rigorous implementation of stock limits upon private traders, besides moderate MSP hikes for cereals in the initial years. Could these measures have been sufficient to push food prices into the deflationary zone without demand-side constraints?

RBI, which examined these trends in a conventional matrix of structural (supply-side improvement) and cyclical (business cycle/demand slow-down) factors, faced severe criticism for its persistent inflation forecast errors. The CSO's latest revised GDP estimates showing trend acceleration in growth, possibly above potential, has further compounded the problem. With demand-side aspects completely knocked off and supply-side factors exhibiting little explanatory power, structural models have ended up assigning undue credit to the new IT regime!

However, the shockingly high unemployment and labour displacement from the workforce revealed by unreleased NSSO reports (Unemployment Survey and PLFS, 2017-18) contradicts this position and raises fresh questions if deflation in food prices reflects structural demand destruction. Critics have long argued that demonetisation and faulty GST implementation turned the cyclical slowdown into a structural one by depressing informal and farm sector activities. The PLFS findings largely corroborate such presumptions although there isn't much ana-

lytical work yet to press this point further. But these unemployment statistics could certainly be correlated with the unprecedented slowdown of private investment, stretching over eight years. Many critics have said that higher real interest rates have exacerbated the condition of private firms with stressed balance sheets. From an investment perspective, the outcomes are even bleaker—RBI data shows the weighted average lending rate of commercial banks these last five years corrected only 170 bps to 10.38% in January 2019 from 12.17% in May 2014. With farmgate inflation staying closer to 2%, the real interest rate from an investment viewpoint was as high as 8%. Not surprisingly, many firms with healthy balance sheets and cash flows have stayed away from investing afresh. A recent CMIE study of 8,544 companies shows the average share of retained profits in net profits in the four years to 2017-18 was 23%; this is about 50% lower than a 47% share in the preceding four years, showing most firms preferred higher dividend payouts.

It is in this context that the MPC's decision to further lower the policy rate by 25 bps is unlikely to alter the situation on the ground. To be able to meaningfully influence the investment dynamics, it may have to aggressively signal several rounds of rate cuts. With core inflation stuck at 5% in a two-paced economy, majority members apprehend that if food inflation rebounds then headline CPI inflation could converge toward core to overshoot the medium-term target of 4%. While food inflation could witness temporary spikes due to monsoon failure or election-related deflation, there is not a single study backing its structural reversal in the medium term. Unfortunately, RBI's in-house research cannot rework its forecasting model using NSSO's unemployment data because these are virtual (unofficial)! If such a model were to project an alternative scenario where core inflation converges towards the headline, the window for multiple rate cuts would certainly open up!

Looking back, it is apparent that India suffered a balance sheet recession, which is deep; misdiagnosis and consequent policy errors have delayed the recovery. With the world economy slipping into another round of recession, India risks deflation, not more inflation. Further misdiagnosis could well push private investment into deep freeze and the economy could suffer more job losses.

Why India is so unhappy

India's people expect better, and they are now feeling disappointed

LAST MONTH SAW the release of the latest World Happiness Report, produced by prominent economists and sponsored by the United Nations. India's ranking, already low, slid further in the latest report, and stands at 140 out of 156 countries. To rub salt in this reputational wound, Pakistan ranks much higher, at 67th. This news has been widely covered, but discussions have included some basic misunderstandings. Here, I want to clarify what the report really tells us, offer some conjectures on what may be behind the seemingly puzzling data, and draw out some possible implications for the coming national elections.

The main measure of "happiness" is based on responses to surveys of how individuals subjectively evaluate their life circumstances on a 0-10 scale. National scores are averages across individual responses. Finland tops the rankings with a score of 7.769, while South Sudan is at the bottom with a score of 2.853. India's score is 4.015, and Pakistan's is 5.653. India's score has decreased by over one point since 2005-06, with most of this decline coming since 2011, short-circuiting a slight recovery from a post-financial-crisis fall. The report also looks at more fleeting "emotional" states based on reporting recent behaviour indicating positive "affect" (such as occasions of laughter) and negative "affect" (such as feeling anxious). India ranks somewhat higher on these measures, and equal or better than Pakistan. This is important, because it gives a clue to what the main indicator of "happiness" actually tells us.

The report uses data on other variables, some from national statistics, such as GDP per capita and healthy life expectancy, and others also from surveys, such as perceptions of social support, freedom of choice, and societal corruption. A statistical exercise uses these variables to try to explain

subjective evaluations by country and year. These variables turn out to have significant explanatory power, and have estimated effects that fit with our intuition: on average, a richer country has higher subjective evaluations of life circumstances, as does a nation with more social support, lower perceived corruption, and so on. Some commentators have focused on these variables to explain India's low happiness score. But none of them are components of the score, which is based on direct reporting, so these analyses are off base. Certainly, the fact that India has a low rank in social support (142nd) helps to understand its low happiness score, but the real issues are different. These are, why has the happiness score been going down when the explanatory variables (especially GDP per capita) have been improving, and why is the score lower than what the explanatory variables might predict? Indeed, Pakistan's rankings on the explanatory variables are mostly not significantly better than India's, and sometimes much worse. If India and Pakistan had happiness scores that equalled the predictions of the model, India's score would be about one point higher, and Pakistan's about one point lower. The real mystery is why the model has these predictive anomalies.

A reasonable explanation for the puzzle is that India's people expect better, and they are feeling disappointed. The idea of rising expectations is a familiar one in the Indian context, and it is difficult to think of any other explanation, though increasing inequality and feelings of injustice or unfairness are also plausible contributing factors. This also fits with the data on "affect." The low ranking of South Sudan (and countries such as Afghanistan, Yemen and Rwanda) may reflect extreme misery, while Pakistan's population may simply be more resigned to their situation. In all of

these discussions, one should also mention that the report's authors have acknowledged cultural differences in response modes across disparate regions such as East Asia and Latin America, but these are less likely to be significant within a single region such as South Asia.

What are the implications of the happiness data for India's upcoming elections? Unsurprisingly, analyses suggest that higher levels of life satisfaction favour political incumbents. For example, there is evidence from the US that areas with low measured life satisfaction (current and future) were more likely to swing to the insurgent, Donald Trump, in the 2016 presidential election. Given the trends in India, that kind of effect would be bad news for the ruling coalition. One saw some evidence of this possibility in opinion polls from a few months ago, which suggested a loss of their parliamentary majority. But there is a wrinkle in this correlation, because unhappy voters also tend to prefer those they view as strong leaders. Of course, perceived strength may not reflect competence or decency, as the case of Trump amply demonstrates.

In India's case, the recent conflict with its neighbour reminded many voters that the country's current leader is strong, precisely in that international dimension. It is possible that some voters would have reached this conclusion anyway, comparing the incumbent to the alternatives. As I have argued previously, India's voters do not have good choices on the political leadership front. Truly strong leadership includes a depth of understanding and the ability and willingness to build a competent team. Until India gets better political leadership, its citizens may continue to be less happy than the data might predict. Hopefully, they will not become resigned to the current state of affairs.

LETTERS TO

THE EDITOR

Lower interest rate

At a time when markets are hovering near record-high levels, a lower rate of interest can enhance socioeconomic activity, reduce the cost of borrowing, favour the real estate sector and encourage lending, besides boosting prospects of credit recoveries too. It can also facilitate unsecured/subsidised lending to the priority sector and the state. However, turbulent international cues and marginal slowdown in NAM economies reflect on the importance to attain sustainable liquidity/growth, lower inflation, reduce the debt levels and boost return on investments. Besides greater lending to small/medium businesses, it is also important to promote domestic production and enhance the export of digital products/services. A rate too low can reduce the income and widen the fiscal deficit, especially when the agenda of public welfare has been prioritised over austerity measures — Girish Lalwani, Delhi

Rahul's act is puzzling

Congress president Rahul Gandhi's decision to throw his hat into the Wayanad ring for the ensuing Lok Sabha polls is the mark of an unsure leader. He will also lock horns with Union minister Smriti Irani in Amethi which is considered to be a Congress bastion. One is puzzled by the Congress president's move to contest from Wayanad where LDF candidate PP Suneer (CPI) and NDA's Thushar Vellapally are in the fray. Though there were massive crowds at the road show in Kalpetta, it will be nothing short of a miracle if Rahul manages to steal the thunder from his opponents — Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

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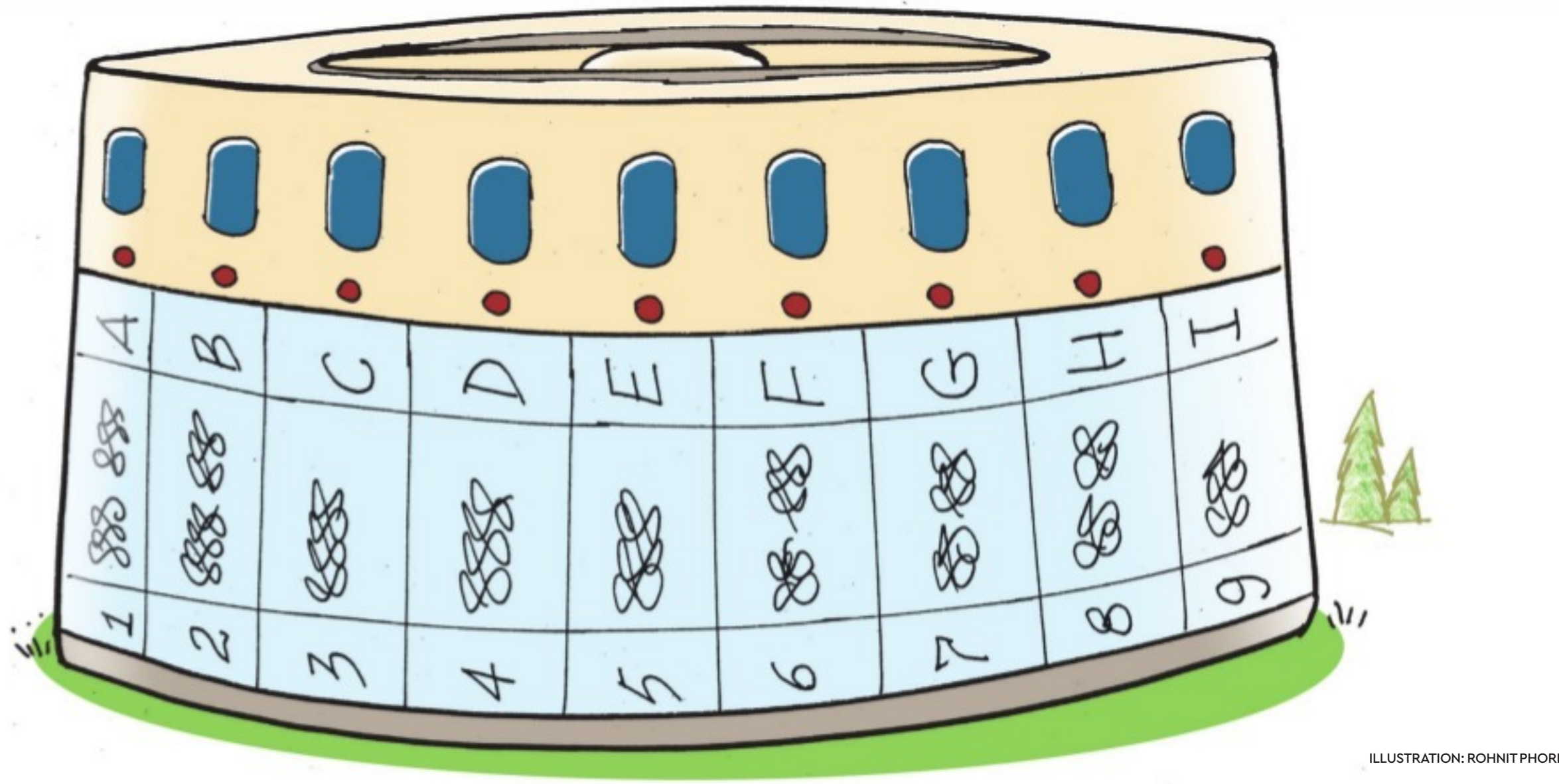


ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

The mantra for AI adoption

SYLVAIN DURANTON & SUMIT SARAWGI

Duranton is Sr Partner & leads BCG GAMMA globally Sarawgi is Partner and leads BCG GAMMA in India

Firms must follow the 10:20:70 rule

GETTING PALPABLE VALUE from artificial intelligence (AI) is at the top of the minds of business leaders. However, the widespread excitement does not always translate into a meaningful strategy focused on AI. Adoption of AI across industries from manufacturing to services is imminent. The success of companies will be dependent on the scale at which they adopt AI, and how successfully they are able to transform the business to leverage its benefits. Now the economic activity of most nations is driven by corporates; hence, successful AI adoption by companies will be a critical driver of competitiveness of nations.

The findings of an Artificial Intelligence Global Executive Study conducted by BCG and MIT Sloan Management Review involving 3,000 executives may be pertinent for India. Twenty per cent of the companies in this survey may be called 'pioneers'; they are companies who have significant understanding of AI and have successfully adopted it. Over a period of time 'pioneers' are likely to increase the gap over the next group of companies termed as 'investigators'. Investigators are companies who understand AI but have limited adoption. Other groups of companies, classified as 'experimenters' and 'passives', have limited understanding or adoption of AI. Globally, Chinese companies lead the pack, with 32% of Chinese companies having adopted AI compared to around 20% in the US, France and Germany. While the proportion of Indian companies actively adopting AI may be less than the top ranking countries, India has not been passive about AI. India is among just 20 countries which have a national AI policy. Thanks to Government initiatives, India is among the most data-rich countries in the world. The data and technical infrastructure around biometric identifiers (Aadhaar) and digital payment capability (UPI) are global benchmarks. Select Indian companies in financial services and telecom, and a more limited set of companies in manufacturing, are likely to quality as AI 'pioneers'. But this number could have been higher.

Unfortunately, certain companies try to 'signal' their AI adoption without making any meaningful investment or commitment to AI. The high-point of AI adoption should not be seen as the presence of robots to greet visitors. Many 'serious' players are opening labs and hiring data scientists; but business use cases of AI come to some as an afterthought. Often these use cases are not scalable, or form only a peripheral part of an existing process. Some companies busy themselves with an ever-expanding list of Proof of Concepts (POCs). The POCs make for excellent talking points in showcasing AI forums, but very few of them are meaningfully scaled up. In one of our recent studies we found that 75% of the companies failed to scale up post POC. Such approaches are hardly useful.

To be successful in AI adoption, companies have to respect the golden rule: 10/20/70. BCG GAMMA has continuously tried and tested this law in its missions. Ten per cent of the work involves building the algorithm. But this 10% is critical because the algorithm determines the success of the initiative. The next 20% involves implementation of the algorithm and development of the user-interface. The final 70% consists of structured support and facilitation from the business organization. Under this, work processes may need to be redesigned, teams should be designated to maintain and manage the solution, and measure the adoption rate and the results.

Post the initial excitement of algorithm development, some companies are simply unable to deploy resources for implementation. If the use case is very narrow or peripheral, the benefits don't justify the implementation cost; sometimes the priority for implementation is lost as the team chases yet another shiny-new-POCs. Even when companies complete stage two, few actually dare to disrupt existing work habits and silos. They attempt to force-fit the new solution to the older process or organization structure, thereby reducing the efficacy of the AI outcome. Such situations lead to disillusionment with AI.

AI pioneers understand that AI is a mission of business transformation. They tend to focus more on leveraging AI to create newer ways of earning revenue, and not just on cost reduction. Senior management should concentrate on two or three high-potential areas such as personalization engine, pricing, and supply chain optimization that are core to their business; and provide support throughout all three phases.

Deceptively prudent strategies such as 'wait and watch' may increase the gap between early adopters and late entrants, to the extent that catching up may become difficult. In matters of AI, one needs to dare to have a big vision, take risks and allocate the required resources. Brave and tough decisions will have to be taken. This is the 'AI or die' imperative.

BHAMY V SHENOY

Views are personal



LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

The greatest dance of democracy in the world

How will voters decide which is the critical factor for India's national interest while casting their votes? Is it the need for a stable government, as voters had realised in 1980, or is it other important factors like inclusion, pluralism, secularism, freedom, equality and tolerance, as argued by most thinkers and writers? If all the pluses and negatives of the NDA are weighed against the opposition, voters are likely to elect Modi, though with less majority, to give a stable government

The month of March have shown that the NDA may succeed in securing enough seats to form the next government. In the Indian context where caste, religion, money and muscle power, regional affinity, dynasty-oriented politics, celebrity status, etc, often seem to decide the election results, polls have not been reliable.

Many political 'pundits' have written erudite articles discussing why the NDA may not come to power. Demonetisation and GST are the two factors often mentioned to support their argument. In the recent months, the failure to create new jobs by the NDA is another factor highlighted in the media.

Love Jihad, mob lynching and cow vigilantism are the factors that have been discussed regularly since Modi came to power, to point out the glaring failures of the BJP. According to an analysis by the home ministry, there has been 28% rise in communal incidents under NDA watch. As a result of sustained attacks, there has been erosion in the autonomy of institutions in the education space, courts and investigating agencies, and even RBI.

On the other hand, NDA supporters have not been successful in highlighting several good things the government has done. Without doubt, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, although it has not been a great success, has made millions aware of the need to keep our cities and towns clean—the need to keep our environment clean is definitely on the national agenda now. Open defecation has come down with the construction of millions of toilets. Thanks to the direct benefit of subsidies, corruption in residential LPG has been more or less eliminated. But for the Rafale deal controversy, we have not heard of any other mega corrupt deals, unlike in the case of the UPA government.

In the energy sector, even though much needs to be done, the NDA has done much better job than the UPA did. The NDA had set an ambitious target of 1.75 lakh MW of renewable energy by 2020, which earlier looked impossible to meet. However, based on the performance so far, India may achieve it in good measure. Although millions in rural areas still do not have electricity connection, electricity has reached all the villages. Thanks to the Ujjwala scheme, LPG coverage has increased from 45% to 90% in five years under the NDA, helping the poor.

The NDA has been able to tame inflation (consumer price index was 5% during the NDA versus 8.1% during the UPA rule), and also the management of fiscal deficit is better under the NDA rule. Thanks to a new law to deal with bankruptcy, banks are able to improve their financial position considerably. Of

course, non-performing assets of banks are still precarious, but this was mostly because of corrupt banking practices under the UPA.

With much fanfare, Rahul Gandhi, the president of the Congress party, has announced a minimum income plan and assured an annual payment of Rs 72,000 to each poor family, benefitting 50 million families. Will this help the UPA?

If we compare the overall contribution of the NDA against the UPA in India's economic sector, the NDA will score higher. Where it is in the treatment of minorities where the NDA has failed miserably. They should have controlled cow vigilantism and mob lynching better and not given any scope for criticism. On the other hand, the opposition has not been all that lily white. They have also been guilty of exploiting communal issues to create their vote banks.

Just about every political party, with the exception of Communist and Aam Aadmi Party, has tried to demoralise banks based on caste and communalism—to give two illustrative examples. Despite the well-known corrupt practices of Mayawati and Deve Gowda families, both the leaders have been successful in creating vote banks of Dalits and Vokkaligas to gain political influence purely based on caste consideration.

The air strike by the government to destroy terrorist training grounds in Balakot, in Pakistan, after a terrorist attack in Pulwama (Jammu and Kashmir) has certainly helped the NDA. India's successful conduct of the anti-satellite missile test and thus becoming the fourth global power to have such a capability may also marginally help the NDA. If the Election Commission does not object to the release of the biopic on Modi on April 5, it will definitely help the NDA.

How will voters decide which is the critical factor for India's national interest while casting their votes? Is it the need for a stable government, as voters had realised in 1980, or is it other important factors like inclusion, pluralism, secularism, freedom, equality and tolerance, as argued by most thinkers and writers? If all the pluses and negatives of the NDA are weighed against the opposition, voters are likely to elect Modi, though with less majority, to give a stable government.

Let me hasten to state that my prediction is not any more reliable than revealed by the recent poll surveys. It is my hope that voters will send a strong message to all the political parties to uphold India's civilisational values of 'simple living and high thinking' and the constitutional mandate of secularism. Then the time of election will be truly the dance of democracy to celebrate.

It is hoped voters will send a strong message to all the political parties to uphold India's civilisational values of "simple living and high thinking" and the constitutional mandate of

ity to the BJP after suffering from the corrupt rule of the UPA-1 and UPA-2.

The current general elections are often mentioned as the most important one. We have heard such things before also. However, this time, some argue that there is greater compulsion to vote wisely since the future of India depends on the outcome of the election. Is it really true?

After the loss of the NDA last December in three major states and as a result of different political parties making plans to form coalitions with the single objective of defeating the NDA, it looked as though Narendra Modi did not have any chance of becoming the Prime Minister again. However, after a mini Mahagathabandhan in Uttar Pradesh, there has not been any successful effort to form a coalition at the national level.

Some polls taken during the middle of

A STUDY WAS CARRIED ON by the Reputation Institute (RI) in 170,000 companies from 15 countries to find out how customers perceive governance of products and services. It was found that consumers prefer companies who work towards achievement of a social cause. Also, how companies treat their employees matters consumers' impression about a company. RI is a global business consulting firm that helps big organisations to build their credibility with their people worldwide. The result of the study was that the world watches organisations closely on their CSR theme. People are concerned whether organisations think of CSR as just a giveaway, or are they really concerned. Consumers watch organisations closely on whether they treat their employees respectfully, how ethical they are in operations, and whether the company respects the ecosystem. Consumers prefer companies with a cause.

Businesses have to handle societal changes by recognising its magnitude in effect of its responsibilities for the future of civilization. Businesses do not exist in vacuum. Social responsibility has become increasingly important for companies over the last several years. Whether it is by empowering women, serving the environment, trying to end poverty, towards the cause of education, towards improving healthcare facilities, etc. We are seeing more and more companies incorporating social

Brand and values

For developing an authentic CSR programme, it is important for organisations to engage their employees

VIDYA HATTANGADI

Management thinker and blogger



responsibility into their overall business strategy. The social issues may be local, national, or global, but a concern for the health and wellness of others in society cannot be ignored.

For aligning the cause of the CSR, organisations need to match their brand with a cause. A strong alignment between organizational brand's goals and the cause it wishes to support is very critical to the success of its CSR initiative. If the match is poor, the CSR programme ends up confusing consumers and it makes them feel disconnected. It sometimes even results into the brand's values slowly falling off the radar. If companies want to look at how to get good value from investing in CSR they should look at aligning it with their brand.

A strong brand offers many different business benefits ranging from the ease of acquiring good talent at reasonable costs and often earning customer loyalty in enhancing their business. All these benefits translate into improving the brand equity. The Coca-Cola Company's global commitment is to enable the economic empowerment of 5 million women entrepreneurs across the company's value chain by 2020. It has given a facelift to brand Coca-Cola.

An easy way to ensure that CSR matches the company's vision is to check if there is a logical tie between operations of business and the cause. For instance, Lifebuoy soap and hand wash aims to improve health through better hygiene. This daily-use product helps prevent disease and improve peo-



ple's health and well-being; ultimately, helping save lives. This product of HUL enjoys a robust market share. In another example, two divisions of ITC, namely, foods and greeting, gifting and stationary work with a strong CSR message. On purchase of Aashirwad, Sunfeast or Kitchens of India products, consumers invariably support issues such as water conservation and tree plantation. How does this happen? A percentage of the sales proceeds get channelised into these areas. Similarly, the sale of ITC's Expressions Greeting Cards helps the cause of SOS Villages that look after orphan children in India. Again, on the purchase of ITC's Classmate notebooks, ₹1 is donated for the cause of rural development and children's education.

P&G has been championing the cause

of gender equality both inside and outside the company. P&G will expand its supplier development and sourcing from women owned businesses across the world. This initiative of P&G has given boost to millions of women in world. In India, P&G hires 50% women into entry level management roles and they get promoted in their next assessments at the same progression as men. P&G was the also the first consumer goods company with a license to employ women in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It employs 15% women managers in KSA across all commercial divisions, including HR, finance, operations and IT.

Global consumers expect companies to do more than make a profit, but also operate responsibly to address social and envi-

ronmental issues. For developing an authentic CSR programme, it is important for organisations to engage their employees in the ideation process. This is helpful in boosting employee engagement and thus helping retention. Some employees at American Express Corporation initiated CSR with the issue of restoration of Statue of Liberty. American Express is known for their smart marketing ideas.

Consumers like companies that make the world a better place. Millennials are 66% more likely to buy from a company that not just sells a quality product but also gives back to society. Companies use social media platforms to create awareness for an effective cause and for attracting donations. It's been observed when companies are not honest to their cause and not regular in their efforts, consumers overlook their products.

Partnering with organisations for the CSR cause enhances the achievements of organisations especially when CSR is aligned with the brand's vision and goals. It is the fastest way to generate more results and goodwill. However, it requires a clear intent and budget in mind to make it work. The process of choosing an NGO partner typically involves a screening process. This includes a credibility test, a field visit, and background checks. It also requires regular assessment from the NGO.

Gradually, organisations all over world are aligning their brand to a worthy cause.

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA
BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

MGNREGA TO NYAY

Congress manifesto should have promised better implementation of MGNREGA instead of another scheme

IN ITS PREVIOUS ruling stint in New Delhi, the Congress's flagship social welfare programme was MGNREGA, which provides 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. For its next shot at power, the grand old party is promising to implement a minimum income support programme called NYAY. For all its drawbacks — from the quality of assets built to not providing work when needed and delayed wage payments — MGNREGA's inherent appeal has been its self-targeting mechanism of beneficiary selection. Since the better-off would ordinarily refrain from participating, the programme has largely benefited the needy. MGNREGA's utility was demonstrated in 2009-10, a drought year, when 283.59 crore person-days of employment was generated and the average household got 53.91 days of work. Those numbers dropped to 166.21 crore person-days and 40.17 days in 2014-15, the first year of the Narendra Modi government. But to the latter's credit, both asset quality (usefulness and durability) and money reaching the intended beneficiaries (through electronic transfer of wages into their Aadhaar-seeded bank accounts) have improved significantly under it.

NYAY, by contrast, offers no advantage of self-targeting. The Congress manifesto has, instead, promised to transfer Rs 72,000 every year to the country's 5 crore poorest families constituting a fifth of its population. The eligibility of beneficiaries here will ostensibly be based on administrative targeting, which is prone to both exclusion and inclusion errors. Moreover, the poor may not always remain poor, just as the person who isn't in the bottom 20 per cent today could well slip into that tomorrow. These issues aren't there in MGNREGA, where the person ceasing to be needy will simply stop seeking work under the programme. Given that the Congress can lay claim to MGNREGA as its baby, the focus ought to have been more on making it a genuinely demand-driven scheme. On paper, beneficiaries are to get work within 15 days of application, failing which they are entitled to an unemployment allowance. Disbursement of wages, too, is supposed to happen within 15 days of the work getting done. Rather than promising to implement these already-existing operational guidelines and providing sufficient budgetary resources for MGNREGA, the manifesto has committed to yet another entitlement scheme.

Identification complications and associated scope for corruption apart, NYAY is going to be fiscal challenging: No Congress leader has given a credible answer to how, and from where, the Rs 3,60,000-crore annual fund requirement for it will come. More persuasive would have been a pledge to secure "nyay" (justice) for MGNREGA by ensuring that it is not underfunded.

TIMED OUT

TikTok causes concern with familiar social media problem of promoting extreme behaviour. Answer is oversight, not a ban

THE MADRAS HIGH Court has asked the government to ban the video-sharing platform, TikTok, for encouraging pornography and possibly exposing children to predators. They're late to the party. Indonesia banned the platform for precisely the same reasons last year, plus blasphemy, but revoked it when TikTok instituted a team to screen Indonesian content. About the same time, Bangladesh blocked access to the service. Chinese media watchdogs took it to task for "unacceptable" content and this year, they threatened to punish the promoter, ByteDance, for violating guidelines. A survey in the UK had suggested that one in 10 children on TikTok had faced inappropriate behaviour. And this year, the Madras High Court has been approached with concerns of cyberbullying, explicit content and deepfakes. Despite the bad press, TikTok is one of the most popular social apps, offering the curious attraction of being able to perform for strangers.

TikTok is to video what Twitter is to text. Users compose 15-second acts instead of 280-character messages, and post in search of world fame. Therein lies both the utility and the weakness of such networks. Like its text equivalent, TikTok is a great equaliser, allowing talents without access to traditional networks to break the surface, and amplifying voices disadvantaged by history, geography or economics. But being focused on younger people, including schoolchildren, TikTok is perceived to bear more moral liability than Twitter or Instagram. The fault lies with the business model driving all of social media, which rewards controversial behaviour and exhibitionism with digital clicks, likes and follows which translate into real power and money. Extreme behaviour is rewarded, and children are generally less cautious than adults. And it is not only a question of the content that children are exposed to, but also the purchasing choices that they are nudged towards, an important issue as younger people are beginning to buy directly off social network promotions.

TikTok's little setback in India is a sliver of a larger issue: The double-edged nature of social media. Twitter and Facebook powered both the hope represented by the Arab Spring and the betrayal of democracy in the Cambridge Analytica scandal. The answer to TikTok is not the ban that the Madras High Court has called for, but the Indonesian strategy of nudging the company to institute an effective screening mechanism. As social media companies flounder to contain problematic content, governments should insist that they screen user content more diligently.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT

Targeting facts

Ignorance of history and disinformation campaigns shrink the possibilities of genuine debate ahead of polls

TRUTH USED TO be a major concern in India's public sphere. The word was part of ideological "brands", ranging from the title of the book by Swami Dayananda Saraswati (founder of the Arya Samaj), Satyarth Prakash (The Light of Truth), to the name of Jyotirao Phule's Satyashodhak Samaj (The Truth Seekers Society) and the title of another book, Mahatma Gandhi's "The Story of My Experiments with Truth". One hundred years later, untruth has become pervasive, banal and the new normal. Last month, a Microsoft report revealed that "India has more fake news than any other country in the world". The ruling party, whose responsibility it is to be a role model, contributes to this state of things, by action or omission.

By omission, because the propagation of wrong information sometimes reflects a lack of historical culture. Recently, for instance, it was claimed (1) that the UPA was responsible for the liberation of Masood Azhar, who, in fact, was handed over to the Pakistani authorities by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, (2) that Jawaharlal Nehru was PM when Pakistan attacked in 1965, whereas Lal Bahadur Shastri was at the helm of government and (3) that, according to Arun Jaitley, Nehru initiated political dynasticism by appointing Indira to the same position, whereas Nehru had made it clear, long before he died, that the Congress would decide who takes over from him — and that was Shastri.

But ignorance of history is not the only reason why wrong pieces of information are circulating. Disinformation is also a way to discredit opponents. For at least five years, trolls have spread canards, including photoshopped pictures, (1) of Rajiv and Rahul Gandhi at the funeral of Abdul Ghaffar Khan in Kabul in 1988, claiming that they were burying Indira Gandhi the Muslim way, (2) of Ashok Gehlot waving Pakistan's flag, (3) of "Rohingya eating Hindus"... The list is so long that websites have specialised in exposing this travesty of reality. Attempts at controlling communication have resulted in a record number of internet shutdowns in 2018, with Rajasthan being second only to J&K, where security reasons have been invoked for these suspensions.

Thirdly, truth sometimes cannot prevail because data are doctored or concealed. Besides the controversy about the growth rate of India under the Manmohan Singh govern-

ment compared to the present one, the evaluation of joblessness is a case in point. Two months ago, a NSSO report was revealed by the media, showing that the unemployment rate, at more than 6 per cent, was the highest since 1972-73. The NITI Aayog vice-chairman contested these figures which were not released officially. The government's decision not to publish the job data led the acting chief of the National Statistical Commission to resign. Incidentally, the most reliable source, the NSSO Employment-Unemployment Survey, supposed to take place every five years, was postponed in 2016 and the Labour Bureau Survey is not available beyond this date either. It is not as rich as the National Sample Survey anyway. For instance, religion and caste are not systematically factored in. These variables are also missing, now, in other statistical compilations. In 2015, the Modi government decided to no longer make public the percentage of Muslims in the Indian police, which amounted to rescinding an innovation introduced by the Vajpayee government in 1999. Similarly, since 2014, the National Crime Records Bureau is not taking the caste and religion of the jail inmates into account — the 2013 data, the last available, showed a substantial over-representation of SCs/STs and Muslims in Indian prisons.

Sometimes, independent sources tell the truth, like the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy. In its last report on unemployment in India, the CMIE showed that if the unemployed who are "willing to work but inactive in seeking jobs" are taken into account, the unemployment rate is 7.87 per cent, if they are not, 5.67 per cent. While these data are in tune with the NSSO's, the CMIE shows more, that the last rate — the one we will retain — conceals immense variations. In terms of education, the more educated are more badly affected by unemployment. The rate increases from 1.27 per cent for the uneducated, to 3.39 per cent for the 6th-9th standard pass, to 8.89 per cent for the 10th-12th standard and 12 per cent for the graduates and post-graduates. Similarly, there are huge disparities age-wise: The unemployment rate peaks at 38.34 per cent for the 15-19 year-olds and reaches 27.27 per cent for the 20-24 year-olds. These two categories are even more badly affected in the urban context where the respective rates are 43.17 per cent

and 32.59 per cent. Last but not least, while some regional variations are spectacular, many rich states are below average, including Haryana, where the urban youth is dramatically affected by joblessness: 67 per cent of the 20-24 year-olds are looking for a job in this state where the unemployment rate among urbanites is above 17 per cent. In Gujarat, where the average unemployment rate is low (4.8 per cent), the young people are also struggling: 22 per cent of them are job-seekers.

These data reflect a degradation of the job market that is especially disturbing so far as young Indians are concerned. This trend is partly explained by another set of data about investment, independently provided by the CMIE. This organisation has shown that investments, in 2018, in the "ended December quarter fell to a 14-year-low". A very telling graph shows "private sector investment stalling near all-time high". What went wrong? An election campaign is the right time for reviewing policies and mechanisms of accountability.

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Five years ago, a famous line was "The Nation Wants to Know". Today, it seems that, even if it wanted to know, it cannot. In a parliamentary democracy, statutory committees may be alternative channels of communication — especially when press conferences are out of question. The Estimates Committee and the Public Accounts Committee, which should be accountable only to parliament, may recover some room for manoeuvre and freedom of expression after the Lok Sabha elections. For the moment, some academics and some media try to make a genuine debate happen, besides the Opposition whose agenda is inevitably more politics — than policy-oriented. But can such a debate take place in an atmosphere of general disinformation where facts are systematically targeted?

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IN GOOD FAITH
KHALID ALVI

COLOURS OF POETRY

From Mughals to Sufi poets, Holi has been part of Muslim culture, literature

WHILE MOST associate Holi with a Hindu ethos, even a cursory glance through the pages of history reveals otherwise. Holi always falls in the month of March, which in the Mughal era fell close on the heels of another significant festival, Navroz. Over time, both the festivals became twins.

The Mughals were known to be liberal and openly enjoyed celebrating Indian festivals. Historian Zakaullah writes that Babur was so wonderstruck when he saw Holi celebrations where people were splashing around in a pool of coloured water that he followed suit and filled a pool with his favourite coloured liquid — wine. Abul Fazal writes in *Ain-e-Akbari* that Akbar used to start collecting beautiful squirts and syringes of different sizes throughout the year in anticipation. This was one of the rare occasions when Akbar would come out from his fort and play Holi with even the commoners. *Tuzk-e-Jahangir* mentions that Jahangir played Holi actively and organised musical gatherings.

Shajahan would watch the Holi celebrations from the *Jharoka* of Red Fort. He also gave it the name *Eid-e-Gulabi* (the festival of colour), *Jashn-e-Aab-Pashi* (the festival of spraying water). During Shahjahan's rule, a Holi fair was organised near what is today Rajghat which included pantomimes in

which jesters would imitate the king and princes and nobody took offence. Bahadur Shah Zafar went as far as making Holi the official festival of the Red Fort and patronised a new genre of Urdu poetry called Hori, which was sung on the day of Holi.

Before the Mughals, even Muslim Sufi poets had used this festive opportunity to propagate the message of brotherhood. Holi was celebrated at most Sufi monasteries. Nizamuddin Auliya, who is considered to be among the first secular theorists, advocated love for people of all faiths. He also directed his protégée to compose poetry in the language of the commoners and started celebrating Holi at his monastery. Khusrav was not only an enthusiastic Holi player but also composed verse for the occasion: *Aaj rang hai, maa ri aaj rang hai/Morey khwaja ke ghar aaj rang hai/Mohey peer payo Nijamuddin aulia/Des bides mien phiri ri, tera rang bhayo nijamuddin aulia/Aaj sajan mila morey aangan mien (Its colour today, my mother its colour today, My beloved is found in my own yard).*

This tradition of celebrating Holi became such an integral part of Sufi culture that even today, a ritual "rang" is observed on the last day of the annual celebrations at every shrine. The tales of elaborate Holi celebrations abound as much in Lucknow as they do in Delhi. Nawab Saadat Ali Khan and Asifuddaula would spend crores on Holi celebrations. The participating nautch girls, singers, prostitutes

and courtiers were famously rewarded with gold coins and velvet cloth.

The references to Holi are innumerable in Urdu poetry. Almost no important Urdu poet, from Khusrav to Sahir Ludhyanvi, left this topic untouched. Nazeer Akbarabadi, who is hailed as an enthusiastic ambassador of Hindu culture, composed eight long poems about Holi. Shah Niaz, a Sufi and a poet, was a contemporary of Nazeer. He wrote: *Hori hoye rahi hai Ahmad geo ke duwar/ Hazrat Ali ke rang bano hai Hasan Husain khilar. Shah Niaz* (Holi is being played at the gate of Prophet Mohammad, Ali has brought colours, Husain and Hasan are playing).

Qayam, an 18th century poet, has famously depicted the real naughtiness of Holi. His importance can be understood through Ghalib's acknowledgement of Qayam as his *Ustad*. In his long poem *Chandpur ki Holi*, Qayam paints a scene of an inebriated Maulvi who has forgotten his way to the mosque. This is the state of people on Holi. People from all spheres of life whether pious or habitual drinkers, celebrate together and indulge in mud-slinging. It makes everyone equal and free. Qayam ends his poem with a prayer: *Ilahihai jab takke ye shor ho alam mien/Holi seybaqasar* (O God let the festivity of Holi survive till the world does).

The writer teaches Urdu literature at Zakir Hussain College, Delhi University

APRIL 8, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO



BILLA, RANGA TO DIE
JASBIR SINGH ALIAS Billa and Kuljit Singh alias Ranga were sentenced to death by hanging for the murder of Geeta Chopra, 17 and Sanjay Chopra, 15 Chopra on August 26 last year. The overcrowded courtroom cheered as soon as the additional district and sessions judge, MK Chawla, announced the death sentence. Shouts of "phansi ho gai" rang through the crowded corridors of the first floor court room as the message was passed from person to person till even the huge crowd collected outside the court was aware of it. Pronouncing the sentence, the judge said the "ends of justice would only be met if the two accused are put to

eternal sleep, thereby allowing the others in peace".
IRAN EX-PM SHOT
THE FORMER IRANIAN prime minister, Amir Abbas Hoveida, was executed by an Islamic firing squad in Teheran. An Islamic court found Hoveida guilty of all charges of being "a corrupt element on earth, responsible for spreading corruption, and treason to Iran". The firing squad immediately carried out the death sentence after the revolutionary court passed its verdict. Hoveida, in his last defence, reportedly said he was "used as a front" by the deposed Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and requested forgiveness from

all those prosecuted as political prisoners during his 13-year prime ministership.
BHUTTO AFTERMATH
ONE DEATH was confirmed as rioting and arson to protest the hanging of former prime minister Z A Bhutto continued for the second day in Pakistan. Unconfirmed reports said two to four others might have died. The police appeared to have the situation under control in Islamabad but was pressed hard in Lahore. Rioters set fire to 17 vehicles, four gasoline stations and at least three public buildings. Disturbances were reported in more than a dozen neighbourhoods of Karachi.

THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Just when it seemed that democracy was all but dead in Turkey, voters delivered a sharp electoral rebuke to their authoritarian president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan."
— THE NEW YORK TIMES

Digital is no panacea

We are asking students to eat digital cake in lieu of the unavailable basic bread



ANURAG MEHRA

POLICY MAKERS seem to be drowning in a sea of buzzwords. This tendency seems particularly marked in "digital" initiatives. Digital, it seems, is the ultimate panacea for every problem. Our classrooms — in schools and universities — will soon be adorned with "digital boards". These boards "will work on emerging technologies including Machine Learning (ML), Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data Analytics and provide 'Intelligent Tutoring' to students based on their personal requirements." ("Over 1.5 lakh schools to get digital boards under scheme," IE, February 20) The deployment of this technology is expected to improve the quality of teaching-learning and also ensure that graduates are no longer "unsuitable for the requirements of the society and market". That sounds quite a lot for a digital board to achieve.

It is not even clear what this technology is because another report on "Operation Digital Board" says that these "digital or smart boards will be in the form of TV monitors, computers or projectors with user interfaces." An estimated 7,000 to 1,00,000 crore will be needed over three years, and apparently, all blackboards, in government and government-aided institutions, will be replaced by 2022.

On the face of it, why would one not welcome electronic infrastructure into educational institutions? But questions do need to be asked: Is this money well spent? Do these digital boards address some outstanding bottleneck that is affecting teaching and learning in our schools and universities? The answer to both questions is a clear no.

Consider, first, the actual problem plaguing schools. A walk through any of the Kendriya Vidyalayas (Central Schools) — which represent a segment that is "decently funded" by the central government — will reveal poor quality civil infrastructure, collapsing and in need of dire repairs. This includes rickety chairs and desks, falling and missing windows and cupboards, seeping walls and cracked floors, and often, broken blackboards. The existing state of electronic infrastructure — computers, a lone projector, a few printers — remains persistently pathetic on account of poor or zero maintenance. Even internet availability is intermittent and usually of poor quality. Then comes the problem of teacher shortage even in these schools. The data, reported publicly, indicates the severity of the problem — in some areas, the shortage is more than 50 per cent of what is sanctioned.

The state of elementary schools is even more worrisome. There are over 1 lakh schools with just one teacher. We need not even think of the state of these issues in poorer schools in urban and, of course, rural areas. These schools would be better served if their blackboards were repaired and the huge amounts of money sanc-

tioned for digital boards be channelled into developing and repairing existing infrastructure, as well as on maintaining the sparse electronic resources already available so that these do not just rot away. In this scenario, any talk of personalised adaptive learning or the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning to provide intelligent tutoring sounds somewhat like asking students to eat digital cake in lieu of the unavailable basic bread. We are still grappling with regulations that should govern digital spaces, data privacy and security — what kind of student data will be captured, who will own and regulate it? It is very likely that these devices will fall into the same state of disrepair and disuse as many of the items currently deployed in schools.

In the case of institutions of higher learning what demands is it fulfilling? The state of infrastructure in public institutions — except the top tier institutions (which already have enough digital infrastructure) — is also usually lamentable. Poorly maintained hardware, used occasionally when functional, lies around everywhere. The alleged problems of these institutions, such as outdated curricula, indifferent faculty, poor learning outcomes, lack of meaningful pedagogies, or unemployable graduates have nothing to do with digital technology bottlenecks. Faculty shortages are crippling the publicly-funded higher educational system, as well. The lack of interest, among students, in academic work arising from a conditioning produced by a combination of poor schooling, aggressive coaching and lack of appropriate jobs cannot be treated with any digital medicine.

The digital fixation now pervades so much of public policy recommendations. Witness the brouhaha over how the Aakash tablet was to revolutionise learning, and more currently, how online courses will take care of all the problems linked to outdated syllabi as well as faculty shortages. And then of course there is the constant discourse on e-learning, smart tutorials and the like, that will breathe a new life into India's educational systems. Education is not just about acquiring more and more information. What we need is more teachers and more institutions, everything else is just a supplement.

Perhaps, a culture of consultation with stakeholders can help us to get over unrealistic fixations. Evgeny Morozov, in a critique of technological solutionism, in his book, *To Save Everything, Click Here*, warns us that, "the quick fixes it peddles do not exist in a political vacuum. In promising almost immediate and much cheaper results, they can easily undermine support for the more ambitious, more intellectually stimulating, but also more demanding reform projects". For policy-makers, the most important question that must always be answered for such projects — it was asked in the context of the One-Laptop-Per-Child project — remains: "The real question isn't whether laptop programmes help students, but whether they're more effective than other programmes competing for the same money." Are we, therefore, hurting learning and teaching by diverting funds from blackboards to digital boards?

The writer is an Institute Chair Professor at IIT Bombay, and teaches policy as well as engineering

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

CHICAGO'S EXAMPLE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Lighting it up' (IE, April 5). Lori Lightfoot has been elected as Chicago's first gay African-American mayor by defeating Toni Preckwinkle, another African-American veteran Democratic politician. This is a particularly historic win, given that the voters are disillusioned with President Donald Trump's anti-black, anti-LGBTQ and anti-women rhetoric.

Sauro Dasgupta, Kolkata

SOPS AND DOLES

THIS REFERS TO the article 'More fiscal imprudence' (IE, April 4). The propensity of political parties to offer sops and doles on the eve of elections only shows that they have no stamina or ability to search for permanent solutions to the problems faced by people. Unfortunately we have got used to this tendency of our political class and do not raise our voices against them.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

KNEE-JERK MEASURES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A dead end' (IE, April 5). Knee-jerk measures like shutting down a highway in Kashmir shall exacerbate the problem in the area and cause more anguish

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.

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among the inhabitants. The main objective of deploying security forces is to provide safety and promote trust and create a semblance of peace. Creating a hostile environment and a fostering an atmosphere of fear mongering has led to immense damage to the state.

Deepak Singhal, Noida

C R Sasikumar

The poverty of pedagogy

We need to question deletions and exclusions from school textbooks. We also need to see knowledge as an experience of enchantment, not an act of consumption



AVIJIT PATHAK

"SCHOOLS DO NOT merely 'process' people; they 'process' knowledge as well. They enhance and give legitimacy to particular types of cultural resources which are related to unequal economic forms" — Michael Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*

As the CBSE and the NCERT reportedly decide to delete three substantial chapters pertaining to caste from their Class IX history textbooks, it has become clear once again that it is difficult to be free from the politics of knowledge — and the construction of the "official" curriculum. Even though we are told that this deletion is aimed at doing good for the children — reducing the heavy burden of syllabus that, needless to add, causes severe stress and anxiety — the facts are not as simple as they are made out to be. Do you reduce the burden of the "high status" knowledge streams of mathematics and physics with an equally intense zeal? Or, is this yet another attempt to trivialise what is often seen as "irrelevant" in the age of techno-science and commerce — history, literature and social science?

To begin with, I must acknowledge that the NCERT textbooks which have emerged out of a critically and creatively nuanced endeavour — initiated by a team of great scholars, educationists and concerned teachers — indicate the possibility of a new beginning. Indeed, in an environment invaded by guide books and coaching centre "notes", the NCERT "project" — which follows as an outcome of the 2005 National Curriculum Framework — is a refreshing departure. The books, as I see, are written in a form that seeks to activate the imagination of the young learner, and aims at nurturing what Paulo Freire would have regarded as a "problem-posing education".

Furthermore, the chapters that have been deleted, I have no hesitation in saying, are beautiful for their ability to blend bundles of information with a conceptual/theoretical perspective. They encourage the reader to see history through, say, the eyes of the wheat farmers of the US or the opium farmers of Bengal. They also, for instance, help to understand the political history of cricket in the context of colonialism, or, for that matter, probe into the dynamics of caste, class and gender through the history of clothing. In a way, far from being a chronicle of wars and treaties, and the rise and fall of empires, history becomes the people's history. And it is always a great endeavour that evokes a sense of history among children.

However, I insist that we need to raise yet another critical question which we — leftists as well as rightists — often miss out because of our preoccupation. The preoccupation is primarily to do with the content of school knowledge rather than the actual process of dissemination and reception of these texts in the classrooms. It is in this context that I wish to make two significant points. First, I do believe it to be unfortunate that we love to equate knowledge with information: We are in a hurry, and, as a result, we burden the child with all sorts of things — mathematics, computer, history (ancient/medieval/modern), geography, physics, moral studies and even yoga. Even play, for a small child, has lost its spontaneity. We are eager to teach her counting and the alphabet through what the gift industry regards as "play".

This is like seeing knowledge as an act of consumption rather than an experience of enchantment or creative engagement with the self and the world; and it is dangerous. It kills the joy of learning. Hence, to take a hypothetical situation, even if you want to inform the child through a series of textbooks of everything that is politically correct and sanctified by the subaltern scholars, it may prove to be counterproductive — it may be felt as a "burden". Let learning be a continual process of exploration and self-discovery. There is no harm if, at the tender age of 12 or 13, the child doesn't know about Ranajit Guha or Uma Chakrabarty, so long as she is encouraged to cultivate all the faculties of learning: Reason and intuition, observation

and experience, besides a sense of wonder and the urge to question. Eventually, she would discover Birsā Munda and Savitribai Phule.

My second point is about the absolute asymmetry that prevails between these otherwise well-meaning texts and the actual practice of examinations and evaluation, that has a strong impact on the way books are read and received. For instance, the narratives implicit in these texts and the creative use of cartoons, poetry and even cinematic imageries, are ruthlessly murdered in our classrooms because the prevailing pattern of examinations compels them to glean only the "hard facts" (or bullet points) from the chapters. There is a need to evolve an instrumental/strategic relationship with the books. And, barring exceptions, the teachers, too, see these narratives (say, a story of M S Sathyu's *Garam Hawa*, or a brilliant black-and-white picture of the traumatic movement of the people during the Partition in a chapter on the making of the new nation) as just "deviations". Filling the mind of the student with mere "facts", making them hyper-conscious of "performance" that is purely quantified, and, disciplining them through a cycle of weekly tests and home assignments — all this ensures our children grow up in an environment that is pedagogically impoverished and aesthetically insensitive. Neither Gandhi's pilgrimage to Noakhali nor Pablo Neruda's poetry, nothing leaves a lasting imprint. Everything is just a piece of information to be remembered, and then forgotten after the examinations. My anxiety is that if we do nothing about the poverty of pedagogy, even the most radical texts will be destroyed in our classrooms.

It is high time we took the debate beyond merely the content of knowledge — Aurangzeb or Shivaji, Savarkar or Ambedkar, Vedic rites or Nizamuddin Auliya's verses. It is time we gave equal importance to the practice of liberating pedagogy that deconditions the mind, arouses creative imagination and cultivates a rhythmic/relaxed mode of learning.

The writer is professor of sociology at JNU, Delhi

VIEW FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



A weekly look at the public conversations shaping ideas beyond borders — in the Subcontinent. Curated by Aakash Joshi

WAR AND LIES

"AMIDST THE FOG of war," begins *Dawn's* editorial on April 7, "the truth is often lost as propaganda is trotted out by the belligerents to confuse and demoralise their opponent." The editorial talks of the "particularly vitriolic" role the media played in whipping up jingoism and "war hysteria" in both India and Pakistan.

In the context of misinformation during the post-Pulwama crisis a report in the US publication, *Foreign Policy*, is brought up by the editorial: "Basing this claim on sources within the US defence establishment, the publication has said that all of Pakistan's F-16s were 'present and accounted for'." This admission should be sobering for the ultra-nationalist hawks in the Indian establishment as well as elements within the Indian media. It shows jingoism and war hysteria cannot always cover up the facts, which often emerge sooner or later."

The editorial, however, does not tom-tom the report and accuse India of spreading lies, etc. It does draw lessons from it: "Perhaps the lesson to be learnt from the whole post-Pulwama crisis in general, and the tale of the F-16 in particular, is that when disinformation is spread and promoted in such a toxic manner, it feeds into the larger narrative and

ends up vitiating the atmosphere. This can have grave consequences, such as dragging two nuclear-armed states close to war. Moreover, when disinformation becomes the norm, even after the crisis abates, the road towards normalisation is all the more difficult. The war clouds may have dissipated over South Asia for the moment, but the mistrust between India and Pakistan currently is at extremely high levels."

NEPAL AND CITIZENSHIP

IN NEPAL, LIKE in India, citizenship, its acquisition and the legal provisions around it seem to be a matter of much debate and contention. According to the April 5 editorial in *The Himalayan Times*, "Citizenship has always been a highly complicated issue in the country. People who have migrated to Nepal and have been living here permanently for many years find it hard to obtain citizenship due to the complicated legal provisions. The new constitution, promulgated in 2015, has clearly stated that no citizen shall be deprived of Nepali citizenship. It means all people living in Nepal have the right to acquire citizenship paper. However, the Federal Parliament, which is the sole authority to make a law on this issue, is taking much time to make the first amendment to the

Citizenship Act." Because of the gaping legal lacunae still unaddressed by the government, "thousands of bona fide Nepali children born to parents who had obtained Nepali citizenship by birth have been deprived of the official paper essential to get enrolled in college, open a bank account, get employment, purchase land or enjoy the government services they are entitled to."

Currently, notifications by the home ministry of Nepal provide some succour. But now, according to the editorial, "the Supreme Court had also told the ministry not to execute it until a law to this effect was enacted. Hence, this circular will not wholly address the hardships faced by those children due to the absence of a law in line with the constitutional provision. The Federal Parliament must enact the law at the earliest to see that those people can acquire citizenship without any legal hurdles."

BANGLADESH RISING

THE EDITORIAL IN *The Dhaka Tribune* on April 4 asserts, in a somewhat patriotic manner, that "the number don't lie". Bangladesh's "Bangladesh's economic growth in these last few years have shown tremendous dynamism, and we could be well on our way to

becoming a powerhouse of Asia. In its latest economic report, Manila-based Asian Development Bank has assessed Bangladesh to be the fastest growing economy in the Asia-Pacific region, forecasting a robust 8% GDP growth rate for the current fiscal year," it says.

However, the editorial warns against complacency and exhorts the government and other economic actors to "keep their eye on the ball". Its advice is: "Our growth is largely attributable to strong private consumption as well as public investment in infrastructural projects, and it is important that these large-scale projects are seen through to completion without unnecessary delays. Diversifying our export basket further will increase the resilience of our exporting sector, which has been reliant mostly on our high-performing ready-made garments industry; and we should be branching out and looking more closely to the potential of leather, jute, IT, electronic goods, and other products. This comes hand in hand with training in the right skills, because Bangladesh is a country with a very large youth population, and in order to remain competitive as the world moves into a technology-based future, the government must invest in a forward-thinking, future-oriented education."

TELLING NUMBERS

Women outlive men, maternal deaths a concern: WHO report

WOMEN OUTLIVE men everywhere, the World Health Organization (WHO) said recently while releasing its World Health Statistics Overview 2019. "Whether it's homicide, road accidents, suicide, cardiovascular disease — time and time again, men are doing worse than women," the United Nations quoted the WHO report's main author, Dr Richard Ciburkiss, as saying.

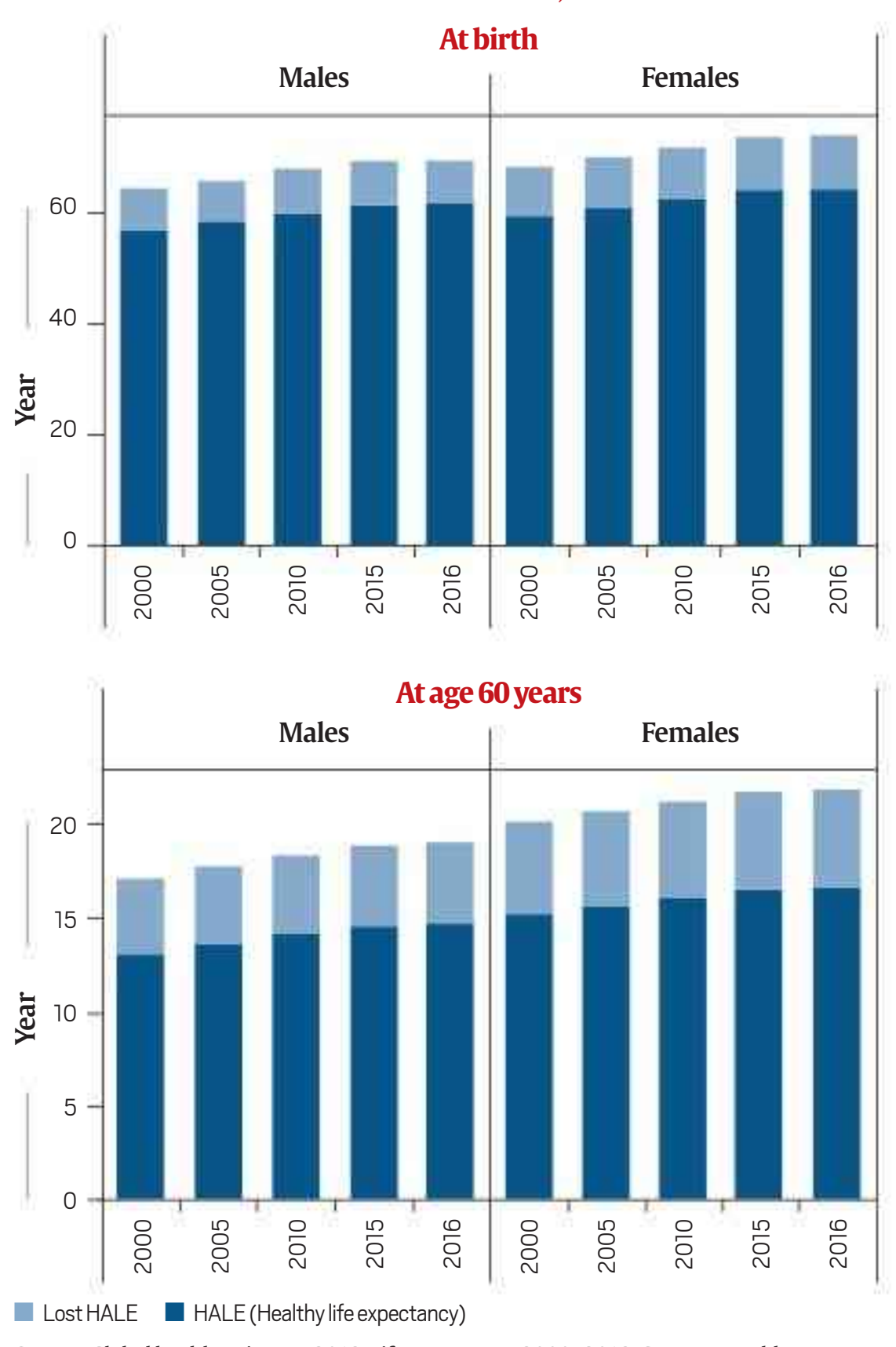
For men and women combined, average life-expectancy has increased by 5½ years since the turn of the century — from 66.5 years in 2000 to 72 years in 2016 — while "healthy" life expectancy (the number of years lived in full health) increased from 58.5 years in 2000, to 63.3 years in 2016. In 2019, the WHO report said, more than 141 million children will be born: 73 million boys and 68 million girls. Based on recent mortality risks the boys will live, on average, 69.8 years and the girls 74.2 years — a difference of 4.4 years. Life expectancy at age 60 years is also greater for women than men: 21.9 versus 19.0 years, it said.

The report attributes the discrepancy to differing attitudes to health-care between men and women. In countries with generalised HIV epidemics, for example, men "are less likely than women to take an HIV test, less likely to access antiretroviral therapy and more likely to die of AIDS-related illnesses than women", the study finds. The same principle applies for tuberculosis sufferers, with male patients less likely to seek care than women.

On the other hand, the study also indicates that the life expectancy gap is narrowest where women lack access to health services. Maternal deaths contribute "more than any other cause" to reducing female life expectancy, the UN statement quoted Dr Samira Asma, WHO Assistant Director General for Data, Analytics and Delivery, as saying. The risk of maternal death is hugely different between high-income and low-income countries. Data indicate that one in 41 women dies from a maternal cause in a low-income country, compared with one in 3,300 in a high-income setting, the report found.

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GLOBAL LIFE EXPECTANCY AND HEALTHY LIFE EXPECTANCY, 2000-2016



Source: Global health estimates 2016: Life expectancy, 2000–2016. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018 (https://www.who.int/gho/mortality_burden_disease/life_tables/en/, accessed 21 March 2019) via World Health Statistics Overview 2019.

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

How EC runs poll machinery

Mamata has questioned police officers' transfer, Election Commission has said it acted within its rights. How does EC draw manpower for polls, and what disciplinary control does it exercise over these officers?

RITIKA CHOPRA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 7

A WAR of words has broken out between West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the Election Commission, with Mamata questioning the latter's decision to transfer four senior police officers in her state, and the EC responding that it is within its rights to act against police officers on poll duty. It brings into focus the Commission's remit when it comes to exercising disciplinary control over the election machinery:

Does the EC have its own team for conducting an election?

The EC has a separate secretariat headquartered in Delhi, but this set-up is not enough to conduct elections, especially on the scale of the Lok Sabha polls. The EC secretariat has roughly 400 officers at the level of deputy election commissioners, director general, director, senior principal secretary, principal secretary, under secretary and section officers, among others. While officers at the level of deputy election commissioner, director general and director are normally appointed on deputation from civil services, other positions are occupied by the permanent staff of the Commission.

So, how does the Commission get the manpower to conduct elections?

The EC headquarters in Delhi essentially monitors the conduct of elections. The bulk of the work, such as preparation and revision of the voters' list and the actual conduct of polls, is executed on the ground and for that the Commission needs the help of the state machinery. Article 324 of the Constitution provides that the President or the Governor of a state is obliged to provide all "such staff as may be necessary" for the EC to conduct elections, not just in the state concerned, but outside as well. The electoral machinery in the field is headed by the Chief Electoral Officer (a senior government official) and consists mainly of district election officers (usually a district magistrate), electoral registration officers (sub-divisional magistrate), assistant electoral registration officers (tehsildar), returning officers (district magistrate), assistant returning officers (additional magistrate) and booth-level officers (government schoolteachers, anganwadi workers,



Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora with Election Commissioners Ashok Lavasa, Sunil Chandra in March. Express Archive

postmen etc). Closer to an election, when the electoral roll is prepared, hundreds of thousands of government workers are drafted in to perform duties as enumerators, presiding officers, polling officers and counting assistants, and others. During the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, nearly one crore people, including local police and central paramilitary forces, helped in the conduct of elections.

The expression "such staff as may be necessary" under Article 324 was at the centre of a controversy in 1993 when the EC sought a certain number of senior officers from the Union government to be deployed as observers for some Assembly elections. While the Commission maintained it has the prerogative to determine the number of staff required to conduct free and fair elections, the Centre felt it was for the government to decide how much staff it could spare. The Commission petitioned the Supreme Court, which decided that the EC and the government should jointly decide the staff and paramilitary forces required for conduct of elections. Since then, it has always been done through mutual consultation.

Are there exceptions to who can be drafted for making poll arrangements?

There are 10 categories of government officers and employees that are exempted from election duty. These are senior officers of the Indian Forest Service; doctors and compounders working in veterinary hospitals; Grade B officers of veterinary hospitals; medical staff including doctors and nurses; territorial staff of the forest departments; All India Radio employees; Doordarshan employees, operational/technical staff of UPSC, BSNL and educational institutions; officers/staff of commercial banks located in rural areas which happen to be a single-officer branch; and a person retiring in six months.

What is the EC's disciplinary control over the electoral machinery?

Under the Representation of the People Act, all staff roped in for making election arrangements in their respective states and outside are deemed to be on deputation to the EC and are subject to its control and discipline. For instance, a state police officer drafted for poll duty will be under the EC's control from the date elections are notified till the results are announced. State Chief Secretaries, Home Secretaries and Directors-General of Police are also understood to be under the Commission's disciplinary control during poll season.

In 2000, at the Supreme Court's behest, the EC and the Centre mutually agreed on the former's disciplinary control over the election machinery. The agreed terms are: "The disciplinary functions of the Election Commission of India over officers, staff and police deputed to perform election duty during election period shall extend to: (a) suspending any officer/police personnel for insubordination or dereliction of duty; (b) substituting any officer/official/police personnel by another such person, and returning the substituted individual to the cadre to

which he belongs, with appropriate report on his conduct; (c) making recommendation to the competent authority for taking disciplinary action for any act of insubordination or dereliction of duty while on election duty, with such recommendation being promptly acted upon by the disciplinary authority. Such action taken will be communicated to the Election Commission within six months from the date of the EC's recommendations; (d) the Government of India will advise the State governments that they too should follow the above principles and decisions, since a large number of election officials are under their administrative control."

How many times has the EC initiated disciplinary action during the current Lok Sabha elections?

Since March 10, apart from the transfer of the four police officers in West Bengal, high-profile cases include the EC's removal of Andhra Pradesh Chief Secretary Anil Chandra Punetha for defying its orders on the transfer of Director-General of Intelligence A B Venkateswara Rao, Kadapa SP Rahul Dev Sharma, and Srikakulam SP V Ratnam. The three officers were transferred on a complaint by the YSR Congress Party, which had accused them of helping the ruling TDP. Also, the Additional Director General of Police, Special Branch, in Jharkhand was moved to the state Resident Commissioner's office in New Delhi on the direction of the EC after it had received complaints alleging bias on the officer's part.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 7

OVER THE last several days, US President Donald Trump has threatened to close the Mexico border as a measure to check illegal immigration. Last week, he tweeted: "... If for any reason Mexico stops apprehending and bringing the illegals back to where they came from, the U.S. will be forced to tariff at 25% all cars made in Mexico and shipped over the Border to us. If that doesn't work, which it will, I will close the Border."

While Trump has projected this as a punishment for Mexico, economists have warned that any such move would be disastrous for the US economy. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) facilitates trade by cutting tariffs and streamlining regulations. Reports citing figures from the US Chamber of Commerce said nearly \$1.7 billion of goods and services flow across the Mexico border daily. These include jeans, cars, flat-screen TVs — and avocados, beloved to many Americans. "... What Trump is talking about now, shutting the southern border, would be catastrophic. It's just absurd," *The New York Times* quoted Gary Hufbauer of the Peterson Institute for International Economics as saying.

Overall, *The NYT* said, top multinational companies would be affected — including Ford, Toyota, Boeing — and so would countless small- and medium-size businesses.

Cars, TVs & hardware

The NYT report listed US manufacture as among the biggest victims of a border shutdown. US industries rely on Mexico, either by selling goods and services into Mexico or by using Mexican materials in their products. Mexico is the United States' third largest trading partner, with the latter importing \$349.6 billion from Mexico in 2018, and exporting \$265 billion, *The NYT* said citing statistics from the Union Nations' International Trade Center.

Among those affected would be automobile makers, with supply chains disrupted, as would those manufacturers of flat-screen TVs, computer hardware and medical devices, besides the apparel industry that sources raw materials from the US and makes finished products in Mexico. Mexico also depends on the US for natural gas through cross-border pipelines, while hundreds of thousands of US jobs are tied to transportation to and from Mexico.

Avocados & other food

The US depends on Mexico for fresh fruit and vegetables like avocados — Mexico supplies 80% of the avocados eaten in the US — as well as tomatoes, strawberries, grapes and mangoes, while Mexico relies on US soybeans, corn, dairy products, *The NYT* said. Shutting the border would most likely lead to dwindling of supplies, a spike in prices of food items imported from Mexico, and a drop in prices of US crops besides a loss of market.

Lance Jungmeyer, president of the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas, told *The NYT* that Mexico supplies more than 60% of all US produce in the winter and early spring, and that a shutdown could result in immediate and uncontrollable spikes in prices for items like squash, tomatoes, cucumbers, melons — and the beloved avocado.

Business at home & away

The US Chamber of Commerce said in a

statement: "Closing the US-Mexico border would inflict severe economic harm on American families, workers, farmers and manufacturers across the United States." *The NYT* said this would likely prompt a drop in the stock market, denting the retirement savings of many Americans, as well as affect the ability of companies to raise money in the capital markets. It added that if business relations with Mexico are strained, border communities in the US would most likely suffer, from decreased economic activity as well as potentially higher costs from crime and migration.

More migration?

While Trump's threat to close the border is meant to be a measure to contain migration, *The NYT* suggests that it could actually end up increasing migration — with mass unemployment a likely outcome in Northern Mexican cities that depend on trade with the US, it could prompt more attempts to cross the US border. The newspaper quoted Hufbauer, of the Peterson Institute, as saying: "If anything, it would promote more poverty in Mexico, which would then turn into more pressure on immigration in the US."

Pak F-16 controversy: 3 key questions, evidence on the ground and in the air

SUSHANT SINGH
NEW DELHI, APRIL 7

THE AIR action on February 27 — which took place the day after the Indian airstrike on the Jaish-e-Mohammad camp in Balakot in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province — in Nowshera sector near the Line of Control (LoC) remains mired in controversy. There are three major questions — first, whether the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) used an American F-16 fighter jet during the air action; second, whether this usage amounted to a violation of American sale conditions for the F-16 aircraft; and third, whether Pakistan lost an F-16 in the dogfight.

Use of F-16 Although the director-general of Pakistan's Inter Services Public Relations had initially said that Pakistan did not use the F-16 in the air action, it has now been established that the PAF did, in fact, use the American-made warjet that morning. India had presented evidence that included the wreckage of a fired AIM-120 AMRAAM missile that fell on the Indian side of the LoC that shows the use of F-16 aircraft. Among

all the aircraft in PAF's inventory, only the F-16 is capable of firing the beyond-visual-range air-to-air missile, which was supplied to it by the US in 2011.

The IAF also had electronic signatures and radio intercepts which proved that F-16s were part of the big package of PAF fighter jets that bombed military installations in Rajouri sector. Faced with overwhelming evidence, Pakistan issued a long-winded statement last month, indirectly conceding that it had used the F-16 during that air action.

Sale condition

The PAF's use of the F-16 in the attack is contentious because certain restrictions were imposed on the use of these aircraft when they were sold by the US to Pakistan. Those conditions, which are part of the End User Monitoring Agreement (EUMA) or Extended End User Monitoring Agreement (EEUMA) signed at the time of the sale of the aircraft, have not been made public.

There were few restrictions on the F-16 sold in the late 1980s to Pakistan, but it is believed that once they were upgraded in Turkey a few years ago, certain conditions may have been imposed on them. As far as the F-16 C/D Block 52 fighter received by



Joint briefing by armed forces on February 28, when India presented parts of a missile that could only have been fired from a F-16. Express Archive

Pakistan during the Global War on Terror are concerned, these were paid for with American money and the sale conditions were extensively debated in the US Congress.

It is believed that certain restrictions were imposed on their use, including on modifying them for the delivery of nuclear weapons. US sources have said that the American

sale conditions specify that the use of the F-16s must be limited to self-defence. However, such terms, unless explicitly and clearly defined, are vague and open to interpretation. Pakistan could argue that it used the F-16 in a self-defence role after India launched the airstrike on Balakot, or that even when employed in the aerial attack on Rajouri, the F-16s were used only for self-defence. Such a claim would make it very difficult for the US to impose a penalty on Pakistan.

Jet downed?

The final question is about the IAF claim that the Wing Commander Abhinandan shot down an F-16 before he was himself shot down and taken captive. India has officially claimed this "kill" while Pakistan has denied it from the day of the air action. India's claim is based on circumstantial evidence, which includes contradictory official Pakistani statements, the electronic signature of the PAF aircraft, images from Electronic Support Measures of AWACS, crash site debris which showed parts that did not belong to the Mig-21 Bison that Wg Cdr Abhinandan was flying, radio telephony intercepts which showed that one aircraft did not return, and wireless intercepts of Pakistani army units

by the Army. Any conclusive proof that a F-16 was shot down — the camera and radar image — was lost with the crash of Wg Cdr Abhinandan's Mig-21 Bison that crashed on the Pakistani side of the LoC.

An article published in *Foreign Policy* magazine Friday claimed that the US had counted the F-16 aircraft with the PAF and found none of these jets in its inventory missing. The report cited unnamed Pentagon officials as saying that the counting was done on Pakistan's request as part of the end user agreement, and took some time as the aircraft were deployed. The report also quoted US officials as saying Pakistan did not violate any sale conditions of the F-16 by using them against India on February 27.

But on Saturday, a Pentagon spokesperson was quoted as having said that the US Defence Department "weren't aware of any investigation like that", while referring the query to the US State Department. The State Department, however, was quoted as having said that "As a matter of policy, the Department does not publicly comment on details of government-to-government agreements on end-use monitoring of US-origin defence articles."



Capital high

To retain the confidence of foreign investors, macroeconomic management is key

Foreign investors appear to have rediscovered India. The inflow of foreign capital into India's stock market in the month of March hit a high of \$4.89 billion, the biggest foreign inflow into Indian stocks since February 2012. As a result, the stock market rose a solid 8% in March. Foreign investment in Indian equities stood at \$2.42 billion in February, as against a net outflow of \$4.4 billion during the same month a year earlier, and is expected to be strong in April as well. Both cyclical and structural factors are behind this sudden uptick in foreign investment that has helped the rupee make an impressive comeback. The rupee has appreciated by about 7% since early October, when it was reeling at around 74 against the dollar. Last year, India received more foreign direct investment than China for the first time in two decades. While the Chinese economy has been slowing down considerably in the last one year, India has emerged as the fastest-growing major economy. Doubts over the robustness of the GDP calculation method notwithstanding, it is clear that investors expect India to be a major source of global growth in the coming years. Other short-term reasons may also be behind some of the recent inflow of capital into the country. For one, there is a sense among a section of investors that their fears of political instability are misplaced. More important, there are clear signs that western central banks have turned dovish. Both the Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank, for instance, have promised to keep interest rates low for longer. This has caused investors to turn towards relatively high-yielding emerging market debt. Indian mid-cap stocks, which suffered a deep rout last year, are now too attractive to ignore for many foreign investors.

The return of foreign capital is obviously a good sign for the Indian economy. But policymakers need to be careful not to take foreign investors for granted. Other emerging Asian economies will be competing hard to attract foreign capital, which is extremely nimble. Any mistake by policymakers will affect India's image as an investment destination. To retain investor confidence, whichever government comes to power after the general election this summer will need to increase the pace of structural reforms and also ensure proper macroeconomic management with the help of the Reserve Bank of India. Long-pending reforms to the labour and land markets are the most pressing structural changes that will affect India's long-term growth trajectory. The high fiscal deficit of both the Centre and the State governments and the disruptive outflow of foreign capital are the other macroeconomic challenges. These are some issues that need to be solved sooner rather than later.

The heat is on

Local administrations must draw up plans to address heat stress and possible water scarcity

A forecast of a below average monsoon in 2019, after last year's erratic rainfall that flooded Kerala and crippled agriculture in eastern and western States, is a cause for worry. If the assessment from one agency, Skymet, is any indication, there is a prospect of an El Niño, often associated with drought conditions, taking hold. This must, of course, be considered along with other factors that seem to weaken the El Niño link, such as a dipole weather phenomenon in the Indian Ocean. Should the monsoon, which normally sets in between June 1 and July 15 across the country, turn out to be deficient, it will add to the pressures on rural employment and the economy as a whole. Things may become clearer when the India Meteorological Department also issues its forecast, although error margins and the erratic nature of rainfall in different regions render the exercise fraught with uncertainty. Last year, for instance, the realisation of rainfall was 91% of the long-term average, while the prediction was for 97%. More immediately, India will go to the polls in the peak of summer after an intensive campaign. It is the responsibility of State administrations to prepare for the likelihood of a heat spike, particularly during April and May, to prevent loss of life and extreme distress to communities. Official agencies and NGOs should start adopting the drill on this, using the template drawn up by the National Disaster Management Authority.

The key elements of protection in a heat wave are avoiding exposure during the hottest part of the day around noon, especially in the case of senior citizens, staying adequately hydrated, wearing suitable clothing including headgear, and creating shade in public places. These messages and weather alerts can be disseminated through television, mobile phone messaging and social media platforms. Urban local bodies in particular have a responsibility to care for the large number of vulnerable city dwellers. Yet, few cities have drawn up proper heat action plans to respond to extreme weather or made them public. During the current year, there is apprehension that the focus of administrators will mainly be on the conduct of the elections, relegating the public health risk of heat waves to the backburner. With the availability of advance weather alerts, there is no reason why local bodies cannot institute remedial measures. Mitigating the effect of heat waves is vital to ensuring a high turnout in the elections by making it safe for voters. India is looking at another uncertain monsoon, bringing into sharp relief the neglected potential of decentralised water-harvesting. It is more than a decade since the National Commission on Farmers suggested the wider adoption of both rainwater harvesting and aquifer recharge, in order to provide irrigation for small farmers. It is time to take measures that will help communities achieve resilience.

The governance dashboard

The current regime has failed to deliver on its promises of development and clean government



VAMSI VAKULABHARANAM & SRIPAD MOTIRAM

Towards the end of the second term of the United Progressive Alliance government (UPA-II), from 2009 to 2014, the corporate sector (captains of industry) had become thoroughly disappointed with the slow rate of "progress" being made. The reputation of UPA-II had been tarnished by several high-profile corruption scandals. Significant sections of the Indian elite, both urban and rural, were also upset about the government's modest welfare schemes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) and also rights and entitlements such as the Right to Information, Right to Education and the Land Acquisition Act, 2013.

The elites and upper middle-income groups were ready to strike back and found in Narendra Modi an able politician who could spearhead their agenda. He was the vikas purush who would restore high profitability for the corporate sector and provide a clean government. There was also a populist appeal of "development for all".

However, the true meaning and significance of Mr. Modi's ascent to power was not lost on those who had deep knowledge of India. Writing shortly after the 2014 general election, eminent economist and historian Amiya Kumar Bagchi remarked: "The corporate sector has now secured undisputed control of the commanding heights of the Indian economy and has succeeded in installing a prime minister, of whom they had been vocal supporters." We are now at the cusp of another national election,

so it is pertinent to ask what Mr. Modi has been able to achieve in the last five years.

It has become common now in some circles to describe the world that we live in as "post-truth". Populism and the rise to prominence of leaders such as Donald Trump (U.S.), Jair Bolsonaro (Brazil), and Viktor Orbán (Hungary) have exposed us to a radically new vocabulary consisting of terms like "alternative facts" and "fake news". It seems like evidence is far less relevant in influencing opinion than factors like sentiments, emotions or beliefs.

Backdrop of scarce data

While we understand the limits of claims made on behalf of "objectivity", it is very difficult to imagine how a reasoned debate can occur without adequate evidence. Since Independence, India has carefully built an enviable reputation in terms of the integrity of its statistical organisations and the quality of its economic data. It is perhaps the most remarkable "achievement" of the present government that it has virtually destroyed this reputation by meddling in the work of statistical organisations, changing the methodology of computation of key figures (such as GDP), and by suppressing important data.

Given this, it is a major challenge to evaluate the performance of the present government. Of the various attempts that have been made to put together scarce evidence, a notable one is the very well-researched edited volume, *A Quantum Leap in the Wrong Direction?* It was Nobel laureate Amartya Sen who used the term "quantum leap" to critically describe the current regime, and the volume does justice to this loaded metaphor. It examines important dimensions of the present National Democratic Alliance government (NDA-II) and the past two regimes, UPA-I and -II, grouping them



broadly under the subjects 'Economy', 'Socioeconomic Indicators' and 'Governance'.

Key parameters

Two issues that are important in evaluating any regime are economic growth and distribution. India, of course, has been celebrated along with China as the growth engine of the world in recent decades. Has the economy under NDA-II outperformed in comparison to previous governments? Recent changes in methodology by the Central Statistics Office have rendered such comparisons very difficult. From the data in this volume, it is clear that NDA-II has underperformed in comparison with UPA-I and is broadly comparable to UPA-II. Average annual growth rates of GDP under NDA-II are estimated at 7.4% (the corresponding figures for UPA-I and UPA-II are 8.4% and 7.2%, respectively).

In terms of distribution, our own research (for the period 1991-2011) indicates that the Indian economy, after economic liberalisation, was largely driven by inequality-heightening rapid urban growth. Farmers and informal workers in the urban areas have faced acute distress and witnessed losses in their income shares. What has happened to inequality under the Narendra Modi government? This question cannot be easily answered because the latest survey data have not been released. Given this, the volume

draws upon other sources of data such as income taxes and the Credit Suisse Global Wealth Database to make a persuasive case that Indian inequality has continued to rise.

The share of the top 10% of income-tax payers has increased at the expense of the bottom half. The wealthiest group (top 1%) owns more than half the nation's wealth today and has consolidated itself during 2014-2018. What happened to the economic status of the most marginalised social groups, i.e. Muslims, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes? Unfortunately, relevant survey data have not been released. However, one gets a harrowing picture from the volume from other data. Crimes against Scheduled Castes have increased during the period 2014-16. What is noteworthy is that both overall crimes and crimes registered under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act have increased in the Bharatiya Janata Party-governed States such as Gujarat, and Haryana. The media is rife with accounts of cow-vigilantism; but to give a statistical picture, Muslims comprised 84% of those killed during 2010-17 across the country. Almost all such attacks (97%) occurred under the present government.

Impact of signature policies

The two major signature policies that the government undertook – demonetisation (ostensibly to root out corruption) and the goods and services tax (GST) – have proved to be colossal disasters for the economy and the vast majority of Indians. Any doubts about the adverse impact of these policies is dispelled by the analysis in the volume. Comparing the periods before and after demonetisation, while the world economy witnessed improved growth (2.6% to 3.1%), the Indian economy suffered a growth decline from 7.8%

to 6.8%. We believe that these two policies were launched to serve the long-term interests of the corporate sector at the expense of the vast majority of Indians who reside in cash-dependent informal and agrarian economies. It is unsurprising to read in news reports that the Indian unemployment rate is at a 45-year high (2017-18).

While it is amply clear that the current regime has failed to deliver on its promises of development and clean government, its true objective has always been to usher in a different kind of an economy and polity than the one that the UPA espoused – one that is more corporate and rural elite-friendly. The welfare orientation of the UPA-I (although it did not go far enough in our view) was quite unpalatable to the Indian elites.

A correction and reversal were asked for, and duly executed. It was also widely expected that the Modi regime would use a majoritarian nationalist mobilisation strategy (especially if economic gains were not forthcoming for the masses). This is exactly what has been delivered during the Modi years – a combination of elite-oriented growth and a majoritarian nationalism/Hindutva. Perhaps, in this sense, Mr. Modi's government has succeeded exactly in what it set out to do.

Several people who voted for Mr. Modi inspired by his promise of development and a corruption-free India must now see the failure of his regime clearly on these fronts. As Rabinranath Tagore reflected, if the choice is between a nation that is fundamentally exclusionary, and a society that stands for basic human values and espouses tolerance among a multiplicity of cultures and identities, the path forward is clear.

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When a new era dawns, what's in a name?

As Japan's Emperor Akihito prepares to abdicate, the country gears up for the Reiwa era



PALLAVI AIYAR

On April 30, Japanese Emperor Akihito will abdicate, literally ending an era. For in Japan the years are counted not just using the internationally standard, Gregorian calendar, but by *genjo*, or 'era name', that counts up from the coronation of a new emperor until his death, or as in the current circumstance, abdication.

The Heisei era

Akihito's coronation in January 1989 had marked the beginning of what is known as the Heisei era, and the end of the 'Showa' period of his predecessor, Emperor Hirohito. This year, 2019, will be split between Heisei 31, the 31st year of Akihito's reign until the end of April, after which it will become Reiwa 1, the first year of the Emperor elect, Naruhito's rule.

But *genjo* are not just ways of counting years. They also encapsulate a national mood, the zeitgeist. A new era name stops the clock for the nation psychologically, allowing an opportunity for tak-

ing stock and recalibrating.

The Meiji era (literally: enlightened rule), January 1868-July 1912, is best remembered as a period of Western-inspired modernisation, while the Showa *genjo* (literally: enlightened harmony), December 1926-January 1989, is associated with both Japan's rapid post-war economic development, but also the militarism of the Second World War.

It is Heisei, however, that is on the nation's mind currently. In the dying days of the era, there is an ongoing attempt to grapple with how best to define the essence of the last three decades. Heisei is composed of two *kanji* (Chinese characters used in the Japanese language) that taken together mean 'achieving peace'.

On the surface, the *genjo* would appear apposite. Through the Heisei decades Japan has eschewed war and continued to be among the world's more pacifist nations. Emperor Akihito himself worked hard to confront Japan's past military expansionism, including several expressions of remorse and apology for his country's wartime actions.

And yet, Heisei has also been characterised by unfulfilled potential and a spate of natural disasters. In 1989, when the era began, Japan was at the pinnacle of its economic might. That same year,



Sony acquired Hollywood's Columbia Pictures and Mitsubishi Estate bought New York's iconic Rockefeller Center. Japan appeared poised for global domination.

Instead, the 'bubble economy' collapsed, leading to 'lost decades' of economic stagnation and deflation. And while the meteoric rise of China dwarfed Japan's regional and international heft, earthquakes and tsunamis ravaged the archipelago. For many, Heisei conjures up the horrors of the 1995 Hanshin earthquake that destroyed Kobe city, and the 2011 East Japan earthquake and tsunami that killed over 20,000 people and triggered one of the world's worst nuclear disasters.

Consequently, the commencement of the new era, recently announced after months of deliberation as Reiwa, is widely seen as a chance to put some of these traumas behind and to define new hopes for a new epoch.

Reiwa can be interpreted to mean 'auspicious' (*rei*) 'harmony'

(*wa*). But, given that *kanji* can often be understood in multiple ways, it is also possible to read *rei* as 'orderly' and *wa* as 'Japanese'. The latter reading has some Japanese uncomfortable with its authoritative nuance, particularly within the context of the current, right-wing government's emphasis on nationalism as a cornerstone of policy.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was open in disclosing the fact that the choice of era name was made to reflect pride in Japan's ostensible uniqueness. For the first time in history the two *kanji* comprising the *genjo* were taken from Japanese classical literature, rather than Chinese classics, the traditional source for era names.

The new *genjo* is derived from an ancient collection of Japanese poetry called *Manyōshū* (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves) that feature poems composed between 600 CE and 759 CE. Commentators have been quick to draw a link between this decision to distance the *genjo* from Chinese literature and Japan's contemporary rivalry with China.

Name notwithstanding, Emperor-elect Naruhito's Reiwa era will face a formidable set of challenges. The country's rapidly ageing society and declining population mean that economic growth will require either a huge increase in

the number of immigrants or a major technological breakthrough. Japan will also need to innovate to ensure it is not left out of the high-tech race for leadership at a time when artificial intelligence and robotics are reshaping the manufacturing ecosystem. Moreover, China's dominance in both the economic and strategic realms, coupled with the growing unpredictability of the U.S.'s commitment to Japan's defence will test Tokyo's strategic thinking, forcing it to seek out new allies and accommodations.

Logistical challenges

But first, the dawn of Reiwa will necessitate a series of more immediate, logistical changes. Government documents, stamps, newspapers, driving licences, and calendars will all need to switch to the new *genjo* from the Heisei system that's been in use for the last three decades. Computer systems across the archipelago are hurriedly being updated for the May 1 handover in what some fear might prove to be Japan's Y2K moment.

In his play *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare famously asked, "What's in a Name?" In Japan at least, the answer would appear to be: A Lot.

Pallavi Aiyar is an author and journalist based in Tokyo

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.

Voter holds the key

In a sort of farewell blog, BJP veteran L.K. Advani has said, "those who disagree with us are not our enemies". For the BJP, strident denigration of opponents and self-praise populism are two sides of the same coin that it put in circulation ever since it began facing flak for its failures on the socio-economic front. The party, led by the Prime Minister, mounts severe and personal attacks on rival leaders even as the Opposition (for example, the Congress's leader) says it has quarrels with policies and not persons. The BJP built up a narrative on a "corrupt Opposition" that has since been undone by Rafale as the game of perception can be played by others too. It is strange that the BJP, having come to

power solely on the development plank, should now rely largely on rabble-rousing, and the Congress on an inclusive manifesto. In 2019, the Indian voter must yet rely on his instincts to seek his destiny.

R. NARAYANAN,
Navi Mumbai

Claims and the truth

A U.S.-based magazine has cited American personnel as having counted the number of F-16 fighter aircraft with the Pakistan Air Force and found none to be missing ("Imran accuses BJP of whipping up war hysteria", April 7). This report has confused many of us who were led to believe that India shot down an F-16. India, meanwhile, has stuck to its stand saying it has conclusive evidence that the aircraft was shot down.

We need to know the truth. Is it so difficult to verify?

K.V. SEETHARAMAIAH,
Hassan, Karnataka

A page in history

Many historical events lose their sheen over a period of time except when marked by occasional references by academicians of history ('Magazine' section, "The many meanings of Jallianwala Bagh", April 7). But Jallianwala Bagh will go down in the annals of history as one of the darkest chapters in Indian colonial history. It sowed the seeds for the ultimate expulsion of the British. But India paid a heavy price. Unfortunately, Britain never showed any signs of remorse, with successive Prime Ministers not even inclined to offer an apology, the least one could have expected from the British.

Hundred years is no doubt a very long period to harp on an issue any further when political equations have changed diametrically in the international arena. It is better to leave bygones as bygones and instead dedicate the occasion to living life in a more harmonious, civilised and tolerant way cutting across borders. That is the best tribute one can offer to the hundreds who lost their lives.

V. SUBRAMANIAN
Chennai

That the British government has been dilly-dallying to apologise for its many errors speaks volumes about the impact of colonialism. I am reminded of several instances of such internal colonialism in India, an example being the Telangana movement in the

1960s. The message is simple and clear: one should learn from the past.

A. VISHWESHWARA SHARMA,
Sangareddy, Telangana

Odd question

Not all public service commission examinations have serious questions. A few of them are quite funny. For example, an objective-type question paper set for

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

In his response to a question on rating the performance of the BJP-led government at the Centre (Interview, "Is the Army a tool for fighting an election, asks Navjot Singh Sidhu" (April 7, 2019) the Congress party's campaigner was reported to have said that the "unemployment in the country is at the lowest level in 45 years, as per the NSSO figures." It should have been the highest level.

In the story titled "At the international border, a 'Modi wave' flies above BJP flags" (April 7, 2019), the names of the BJP and Congress candidates had been wrongly given as Raman Bhalla and Jugal Kishore Sharma respectively. Actually, Raman Bhalla is the Congress candidate and Jugal Kishore Sharma is the BJP candidate.

In the Ground Zero page story "Encroachers on their own lands" (April 6, 2019), the name of the Gond Adivasi had been misspelt as "Kureti" instead of "Kumeti".

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If Gandhi were alive today

Considering his view of politics, he would have privileged civic virtue in elections



RAMIN JAHANBEGLOO

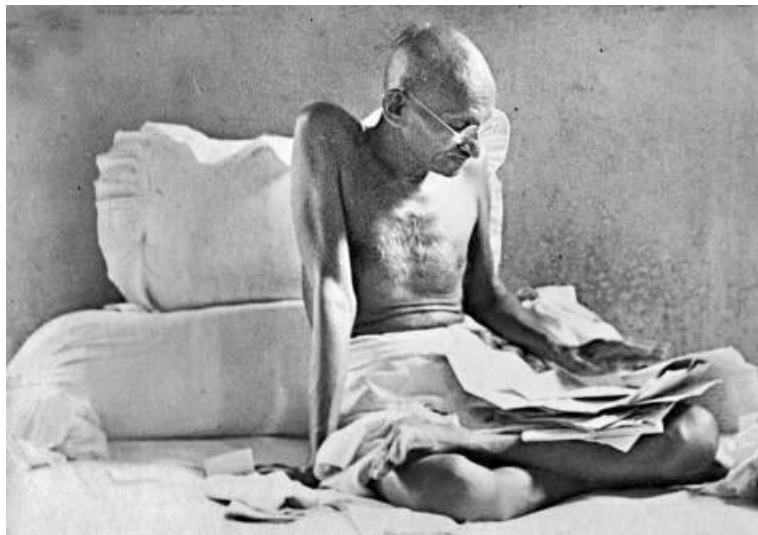
With the election season getting all the attention, I wonder whether Mahatma Gandhi would have participated in the election had he been alive. One thing is evident today: while Gandhi is hailed as the founding father of the Indian republic and one of the architects of democratic politics in modern India, it is not recognised equally well today that we can draw valuable lessons of political action and democracy from him. However, it goes without saying that Gandhi is perhaps more relevant now than ever before for our understanding of elections, at a time when India finds itself at a crossroads between a hope for civic republicanism and a practice of demagogic populism.

The need for moral leaders

It is no secret to anyone who lives in India and shares time and passion with Indians from different walks of life that the small cast of politicians and their supporters are not engaged in what Gandhi called "an experiment with Truth". This is perhaps because politics in contemporary India, as everywhere else in the world, finds itself prisoner of the administrative system and the corporate mindset, both of which suffer from a severe absence of self-examination. Indeed, what India needs most at this time of elections is not mass mobilisers but moral leaders.

Considering the profound spiritual nature of Gandhi's personality and his deep ethical view of politics, we could say that if he was among us today, he would have certainly boycotted the elections. He would have been troubled by the Machiavellian essence of Indian politics and its populist and demagogic end results. Assuredly, it is important to grasp Gandhi's character above all as a man who remained all through his life as a person truthful to the ethical.

In a sense, then, Gandhi's view of politics starts where party politics ends. What Gandhi understands by politics is the art of organising society, not the technique of power making and party organising. That is why



"Gandhi is perhaps more relevant now than ever before for our understanding of elections." File photo of Gandhi at Mani Bhavan, Bombay. • THE HINDU ARCHIVES

Gandhian politics is at the same time anti-populist and anti-elitist.

Democracy and mobocracy

Gandhi has always been considered as a charismatic leader, but his unmediated appeal to the citizens was based neither on a Manichaean friend-enemy distinction, nor on the supreme will of the masses. As the history of modern India shows us, while political parties have been subservient to the masses and the masses have followed party leaders without questioning, some political figures like Gandhi or Ambedkar had the courage to turn against mobs. Gandhi considered democracy and mobocracy as opposite forms of conducting politics and organising Indian society. Gandhi affirmed: "Those who claim to lead the masses must resolutely refuse to be led by them, if we want to avoid mob law and desire ordered progress for the country. I believe that mere protestation of one's opinion and surrender to the mass opinion is not only not enough, but in matters of vital importance, leaders must act contrary to the mass opinion if it does not commend itself to their reason."

In other words, Gandhi considered contempt for civic virtue as a betrayal of the spirit of democracy. For him, democratic governance, unlike party politics, which always tends towards unexamined and obedient masses, was based on the maturity of citizens. Gandhi's sharp reaction against the Chauri Chaura incident was an expression of his re-

jection of mobocracy. After this incident, Gandhi revoked his plans for launching mass civil disobedience at Bardoli on the ground that the masses were not morally prepared for a non-violent struggle against the British. But it is also worth mentioning that Gandhi considered masses guilty of what politicians became. As he put it: "We the people make the rulers what they are." Moreover, Gandhi insisted on the twin concepts of self-transformation and civic maturity. As a matter of fact, he underlined: "If we reform ourselves, the rulers will automatically do so."

Gandhi, therefore, approached pragmatic politics as a form of character-building and not necessarily organising a political party and winning seats in Parliament. He called it "a capacity to regulate national life". However, inspired by the American Transcendentalist, Henry David Thoreau, he underlined, "If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary. There is then a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a state everyone is his own ruler. In the ideal state therefore, there is no political power because there is no state. But the ideal is never fully realised in life. Hence the classical statement of Thoreau that the government is best which governs the least."

Undoubtedly, Gandhi, the moral leader, was not a pure idealist. He was a pragmatic practitioner, who wanted to apply ethical values and civilisational criteria to the political or-

ganisation of Indian society and beyond. Strangely, the Gandhian common sense is considered as an irrelevant and insignificant matter to the eyes of those who are ruling India and the world today. Unfortunately, in today's world, political circumstances and temperaments do not allow politicians to concentrate any more on the education and duty of citizens. That is why, while uncritical and utilitarian minds are shaped and formed in universities in India and around the world, originality and exemplarity of future Mahatma Gandhis are killed in the embryo.

But what if Gandhi were alive? He would have certainly tried to create awareness in the minds of the younger generation. Let us also agree that he would have had a strong intervention (example, fasting unto death) in relation with the cases of corruption, sexual harassment and populist demagoguery in everyday politics.

When power politics took over

However, this would have been too much for those who are involved today in politics. Frankly, despite the symbolic devotion which is shown to Gandhi by political leaders, there is a feeling of comfort that a stubborn and critical veteran of democratic action like him is no more around.

In a more sinister manner, we even find strong reasons of rejecting a national figure like Gandhi in Nathuram Godse's analysis of his assassination: "I foresaw that I shall be totally ruined and the only thing that I could expect from the people would be nothing but hatred and that I shall have lost all my honour, even more valuable than my life, if I were to kill Gandhiji. But at the same time I felt that Indian politics in the absence of Gandhiji would be more practical, able to retaliate, and would be powerful with armed forces." Godse was right. Once Gandhi was eliminated, power politics could take over. India has been independent for 71 years based on electoral liberalism in the name of Gandhi. But for more than 71 years, politicians have distanced themselves from Gandhi's legacy. Unsurprisingly, once again Indians will go to the polls without having the Mahatma on their minds.

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FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Retaining the ability to question

If journalism has to survive, it should maintain critical distance from official propaganda



A.S. PANNEERSELVAM

It may sound unreal. But how do I explain receiving two contradictory mails within a span of 20 minutes on the role of journalism? One reader wanted to know the Indian parallel to the exclusive investigation by *The New York Times* into Rupert Murdoch, the founder of a global media empire that includes Fox News, and its disturbing hold on political outcomes. Each of the media outlets in that empire has destabilised democracy in North America, Europe and Australia. The reader wanted to know whether the broadcast of NaMo TV shows India as moving in the same worrying direction.

Claims and counter-claims

At the same time, I got a mail from a reader from Uttarakhand, who questioned this newspaper's reportage on the U.S.'s count of Pakistan's F-16 fighter jets. *Foreign Policy* reported a few days ago that it spoke to two senior U.S. defence officials, who told the magazine that U.S. personnel recently counted Pakistan's F-16s and found none missing. The reader from Uttarakhand was certain that since the report in the magazine was not issued by an official channel, it was unverified and aimed at hurting the electoral prospects of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This reader refuses to see the overt politicisation of security measures and the use of the armed forces for political ends.

How did *The Hindu* report this story? Headlined "U.S. count of Pakistan's F-16 fighter jets found none missing, claims American magazine", the report from Washington, DC by the newspaper's U.S. correspondent quotes the magazine as meticulously listing out the contradictions in the claims made by the Indian security establishment since the aerial engagement between India and Pakistan in February this year.

Various Indian agencies suggested that Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman had downed an F-16, based on his debriefing. Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also repeated the claim that an F-16 was downed. *The Hindu* report documents the fact that India had asked the U.S. to investigate whether

Pakistan had breached the terms of its F-16 deal with the Americans. The count had now been completed and the U.S. said that "all aircraft were present and accounted for".

How can a report based on information in a respectable magazine be seen as an attempt to play politics? In its response, the Indian Air Force reiterated that the aircraft shot down in a dogfight by a MiG-21 in Nowshera sector on February 27 was an F-16. It rejected the claim in the *Foreign Policy* report that none of the Pakistan Air Force's U.S.-supplied jets was found missing after a recent count. It is crucial to note that authorities tend to hide behind anonymity. The Indian Air Force's version was circulated through the news agency IANS.

The U.S. magazine report, in the opinion of the foreign policy writer of this newspaper, Stanly Johny, confirmed that India lost a jet and a chopper, that an Indian pilot was captured by Pakistan and paraded before camera, and that there was no evidence that India's strike in Balakot had hit the actual target and killed terrorists. In a sense, the facts negate the narrative that has been flowing from the political establishment. A close reading of the facts raises many questions.

Serving the public good

Elections do generate pressure on journalists to deviate from the core values of journalism. War has the potential to generate passion that sways both the electorate and the media. It becomes a deadly combination when war machines and the electoral processes are permitted to intertwine. If journalism has to survive and serve the public good, it should maintain its critical distance from official propaganda. It needs to retain its ability to pose questions. *The New York Times* story has come up with some crucial takeaways in its investigation into Mr. Murdoch's media industry and the central lesson is that his family sits at the centre of global upheaval.

What *The Hindu* did in reporting about the F-16 numbering is a part of the essential elements of journalism. George Orwell once said, "In a time of deceit telling the truth is a revolutionary act." Taking about the military and its claims in a dispassionate manner is central to democracy. It is an attempt to retain journalism within the spirit of public inquiry and not reduce it to a force multiplier for electoral gains.

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SINGLE FILE

Cleaning up the mess

India needs a waste management policy that stresses the need for decentralised garbage disposal practices

MADHURIKA SANKAR



Hyperconsumption is a curse of our modern times. Humans generate monumental amounts of waste, a sizeable portion of which is disposed in landfills and through waste-to-energy incinerators. However, billions of tonnes of garbage, including microplastics, never make it to landfills or incinerators and end up in the oceans. This garbage chokes marine life and disturbs zooplankton, which are vital to the elimination of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Landfills are seedbeds of methane and other greenhouse gases, which contribute to global warming. These toxic chemicals poison the soil and their leached run-off makes its way into the oceans. And while they do generate energy, waste incinerators cause health issues such as cancer. In India, nearly 60% of the household waste is wet organic waste, with low calorific value. This makes options such as waste-to-energy incinerators inefficient. We need to design incinerators that are suited to Indian conditions.

It does seem overwhelming, but there are solutions to the garbage pandemic through the crucial processes of material recycling and composting. Efficient composting is possible through an optimal combination of microbes and temperature to produce a nutrient-dense soil conditioner.

Mathangi Swaminathan, in her article in *Economic and Political Weekly*, sheds light on India's broken waste management system. In India, less than 60% of waste is collected from households and only 15% of urban waste is processed.

There are several problems in India in how waste is treated. First, segregation of waste into organic, recyclable and hazardous categories is not enforced at source. As a result, mixed waste lands up in the landfills, where waste-pickers, in hazardous conditions, try to salvage the recyclables, which are of poor quality and quantity by then. Second, ideally, waste management should not be offered free of cost to residents. Only if residents pay will they realise the importance of segregation and recycling. Third, there is the issue of logistical contractors who are motivated to dump more garbage in landfills as their compensation is proportional to the tonnage of waste. They are also prone to illegally dump waste at unauthorised sites to reduce transportation costs. Fourth, and importantly, organic farming and composting are not economically attractive to the Indian farmer, as chemical pesticides are heavily subsidised, and the compost is not efficiently marketed.

We need a comprehensive waste management policy that stresses the need for decentralised garbage disposal practices. This will incentivise private players to participate. Unless these concerns are addressed, what will we tell our children who inherit this planet? That our greatest existential challenge, climate change, was also facilitated by garbage?

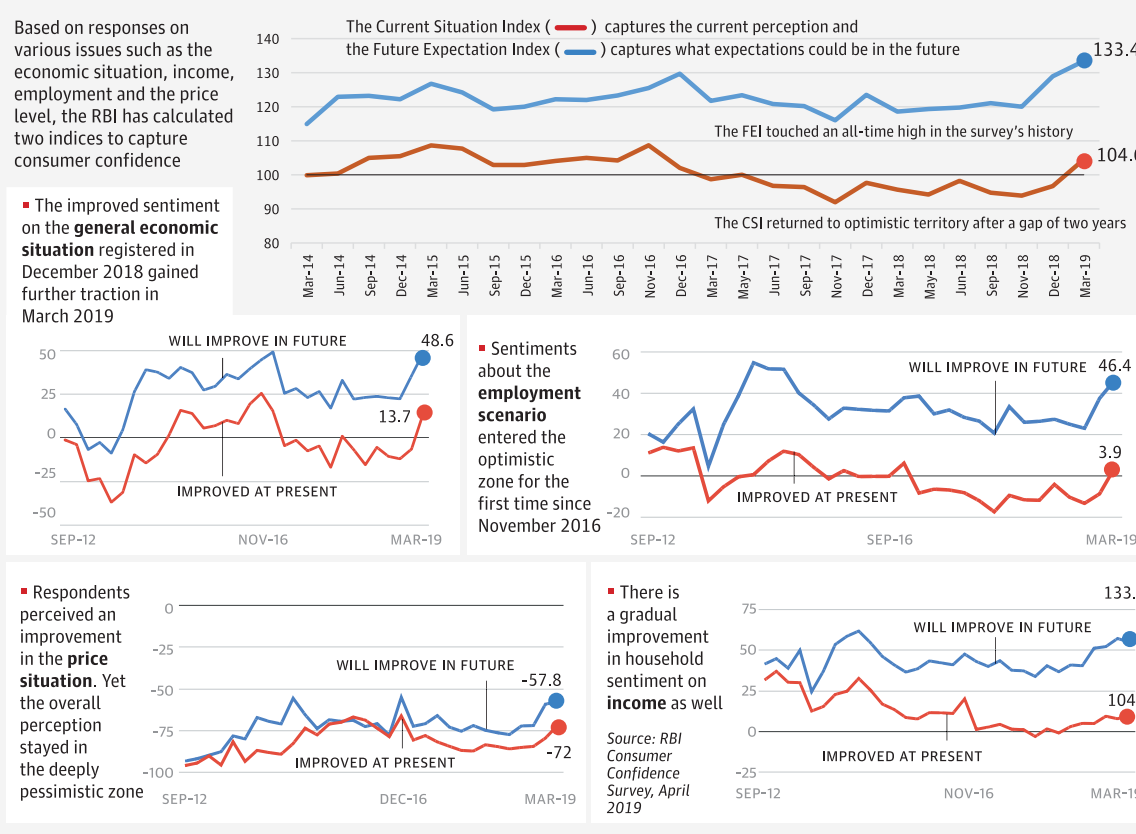
The writer is based in Chennai



DATA POINT

Positive SENTIMENT

According to an RBI survey done in 13 cities, consumer confidence has improved for the second consecutive quarter ending March 2019, following recent upticks in people's optimism about the economic situation and the employment scenario in those places. Indicators on current perceptions and future expectations about the economy, which had hit their lowest levels after demonetisation, have returned to levels seen before the economic decision



FROM THE HINDU ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 8, 1969

Talks to be held with Kenya on Indians' assets

The Deputy Minister of External Affairs, Mr. Surendra Pal Singh, disclosed in the Lok Sabha to-day [April 7, New Delhi] that India proposed to hold talks with the Kenya Government on the question of repatriation of assets of Indian citizens and Indians holding British passports. He said that the talks were contemplated to see that these people did not suffer untold difficulties. Mr. Singh was intervening in the debate on the budget demands of the Ministry of External Affairs. The debate was inconclusive. The need for filling the "power vacuum" in the Indian Ocean that would arise from the withdrawal of Britain was one of the points raised.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 8, 1919.

Civil disobedience. Mr. Gandhi Leads.

The Satyagraha Committee advised [in Bombay] that for the time being laws regarding prohibited literature and registration of newspapers may civilly disobeyed. Accordingly, a number of copies of Hind Swarajya, the Sarvodaya or Universal Dawn, the Story of a Satyagrahi, all by Mr. M.K. Gandhi, and life and addresses of Mustafa Kamel Pasha, were publicly offered for sale this evening [April 7] and found some ready buyers. The hawkers were all prominent Satyagrahis among whom were Mr. Gandhi, Mrs. Naidu, Mr. Sobani, Mr. Lakhimdas Tairsee and others. All books sold contained the signature of the hawkers. A number of unregistered newspapers, mostly resembling ordinary posters and leaflets both in Print and Handwriting in Guzerathi were also sold.

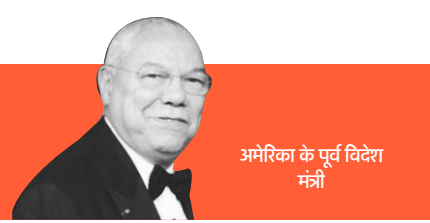
POLL CALL Bicameral legislature

Bicameralism is the practice of having two Houses of Parliament. At the State level, the equivalent of the Lok Sabha is the Vidhan Sabha (Legislative Assembly), and that of the Rajya Sabha is the Vidhan Parishad (Legislative Council). A so-called Upper House is considered important in the parliamentary system, as only a third of the seats are filled every two years and it therefore acts as a check against potential impetuosity of electoral majorities in the Lower House. With members mostly indirectly elected, the Upper House also ensures that individuals who might not be cut out for the rough-and-tumble of direct elections too are able to contribute to the legislative process. Under Article 169, Parliament may by law create or abolish the second chamber in a State if the Legislative Assembly of that State passes a resolution to that effect by a special majority. At present, seven Indian States have bicameral legislatures. Some argue that unlike the Rajya Sabha, the Vidhan Parishad does not serve must purpose and poses a strain on States' finances.

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साहित्य को कमाई का साधन नहीं बनाना चाहिए

अपने बचपन और नौजवानी के दिनों का मानसिक वातावरण देखकर यह तो कह सकता हूँ कि अमुक-अमुक परिस्थितियों ने मुझे लेखक बना दिया, परंतु यह अब भी नहीं कह सकता कि मैं लेखक ही क्यों बना। हमारे घर में सरस्वती और गृहलक्ष्मी नामक दो मासिक पत्रिकाएँ नियमित रूप से आती थीं। हिंदी रंगमंच के उन्नायक राष्ट्रीय कवि पं. माधव शुक्ल लखनऊ आने पर मेरे ही घर पर उठते थे। मुझे उनका बड़ा स्नेह प्राप्त हुआ। आचार्य श्यामसुंदरदास उन दिनों स्थानीय कालीचरण हाई स्कूल के हेडमास्टर थे। उनका एक चित्र मेरे मन में आज तक स्पष्ट है- सुबह-सुबह नीम की दातुन चबाते हुए मेरे घर पर आना। वहीं हाथ-मुँह धोते



फिर चांदी के वर्क में लिपटे हुए आँवले आते, दुग्धपान होता। उर्दू के सुप्रसिद्ध कवि पं. बृजनाथराय चक्रवर्त के दर्शन भी मैंने अपने यहाँ ही तीन-चार बार पाए। 1929 में निराला जी से परिचय हुआ, जो दिनोंदिन घनिष्ठतम होता ही चला गया। निराला जी के व्यक्तित्व ने मुझे बहुत अधिक प्रभावित किया। यदा-कदा दुलारेलालजी भागवत के सुधा कार्यालय में भी जाया-आया करता था। रावराजा पंडित श्यामबिहारी मिश्र का एक उपदेश भी उन दिनों मेरे मन में घर कर गया था। उन्होंने कहा था, साहित्य को टके कमाने का साधन कभी नहीं बनाना चाहिए। चूँकि मैं खाते-पीते खुशहाल घर का लड़का था, इसलिए इस सिद्धांत ने मेरे मन पर बड़ी छाप छोड़ी। इस तरह सन 29-30 तक मेरे मन में यह बात एकदम स्पष्ट हो चुकी थी कि मैं लेखक ही बनूँगा। काशी में उन दिनों अनेक महान साहित्यिक रहा करते थे। शरतचंद्र चट्टोपाध्याय के दर्शन पाकर मैं स्फूर्ति से भर जाता था। शरत बाबू हिंदी मजे की बोल लेते थे। मुझसे कहने लगे, पहले यह निश्चय करो कि तुम आजन्म लेखक ही बने रहोगे। मैंने सोसाहा हामी भरी।

-दिवंगत हिंदी लेखक

सिविल सेवा की परीक्षा में सफल हुए युवा हमारे देश की विविधता का ही प्रतिनिधित्व करते हैं। उम्मीद करनी चाहिए कि परिश्रम और जज्बे के कारण शीर्ष नौकरशाही के लिए चुने गए ये युवा देश को आगे बढ़ाने में अपनी मौलिक सोच का परिचय देंगे।

मेधा और विविधता

हार की तरह इस बार भी सिविल सेवा के परिणाम ने हाल में उभरे कुछ निष्कर्षों को बरकरार रखा है, और भले यह किसी नई प्रवृत्ति की ओर संकेत नहीं करता, पर इसका कुल विश्लेषण विचारोत्तेजक जरूर है। मसलन, नौकरशाही के सर्वोच्च पदों के लिए हुई इस परीक्षा में विज्ञान की पृष्ठभूमि के छात्रों का वर्चस्व इस बार भी बरकरार रहा। सिविल सेवा के टॉपर कनिष्क कटारिया आईआईटी, बॉम्बे से बी.टेक. हैं, तो द्वितीय रहे अक्षत जैन आईआईटी, गुवाहाटी से इंजीनियरिंग में स्नातक हैं। ऐसे ही महिलाओं में पहला स्थान और कुल मिलाकर पाँचवाँ रैंकिंग हासिल करने वाली सुष्टि जयंत देशमुख ने राजीव गांधी प्रौद्योगिकी विश्वविद्यालय, भोपाल से केमिकल इंजीनियरिंग में

बी. ई. किया है। ऐसा नहीं है कि ह्यूमैनिटीज या मानविकी के छात्रों के लिए इसमें पहले जैसी सफलता नहीं मिलती। पर पिछले कुछ वर्षों से विज्ञान के छात्र इसकी शीर्ष रैंकिंग में आने लगे हैं, जिससे एक अलग बहस शुरू हुई है। सिविल सेवा में दक्षिण यानी भूगोल का वर्चस्व तो टूट चुका है-हिंदी पट्टी के अभ्यर्थी अब शीर्ष रैंकिंग में होते हैं-सामाजिक वर्चस्व भी ध्वस्त हो चुका है। इस बार के टॉपर अनुसूचित जाति से हैं, तो शीर्ष 25 सफल प्रतिभागियों में 15 पुरुष और 10 महिलाएँ हैं। इसमें सफल होने का कोई एक पैमाना पहले भी नहीं था, अब भी नहीं है। किसी ने लंबे समय तक अनुशासन के साथ पढ़ाई की, तो किसी ने कुछ घंटों तक पढ़ाई की। अलबत्ता इसमें ऑनलाइन पढ़ाई कर सफलता हासिल करने का सिलसिला जिस तरह बढ़

रहा है, वह जरूर ध्यान देने की मांग करता है। व्यावहारिक धरातल पर शीर्ष नौकरशाही की देश में आज चाहे जो भी स्थिति हो, पर इससे इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता कि इसके प्रति अब भी समाज में पहले जैसा ही आकर्षण है। बल्कि यह आकर्षण ही कई बार सामान्य और असामान्य युवाओं को भी इसमें सफल होने के लिए प्रेरित करता है, जैसे कि इस बार भी महाराष्ट्र में पालघर के एक किसान के बेटे ने यह उपलब्धि हासिल की है, तो दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय के एक दृष्टिबाधित प्रोफेसर ने इसमें सफलता पाई है। ऐसे और भी अनेक उदाहरण हैं। कामना करनी चाहिए कि परिश्रम और जज्बे के बूते देश की शीर्ष नौकरशाही के लिए चुने गए ये युवा कार्यक्षेत्र में भी मौलिकता और नवाचार का परिचय देते हुए देश को आगे ले जाने का काम करेंगे।

चुनाव और जंग में सब जायज



आज की प्रतिस्पर्धी राजनीति में विनम्रता की जगह नहीं है, हर कोई अपने किए का ढिंढोरा पीटा है और दूसरों के किए का भी श्रेय लेता है। हम क्यों नहीं स्वीकारते कि राष्ट्र निर्माण एक सतत प्रक्रिया है, जो लगातार चल रही है?



सुरेंद्र कुमार, पूर्व राजदूत

राजनीति का पहला हथियार है अपने विरोधियों को बुरा और खतरनाक बनाना, अतीत में या वर्तमान में देश में जो कुछ भी गलत हुआ है, उसका दोष अपने विरोधियों पर मढ़ना और खुद को ईश्वर के भेजे दूत के रूप में पेश करना, जो सभी गड़बड़ियाँ ठीक करेगा और एक सुरक्षित, मजबूत, आत्मविश्वास से भरे, सुखी और वैश्विक स्तर पर सम्मानित नए भारत का निर्माण करेगा। आज सारा दोष नेहरू को दिया जाता है। उन्होंने

जो भी किया, वह गलत था! अगर वह देश के पहले प्रधानमंत्री नहीं होते, तो भारत कितना महान बन जाता! मैं जो करता हूँ, वह सही है और आप जो करते हैं, वह गलत है। यदि लोगों ने आपको वोट देकर जितया, तो आप देश को आपदा में धकेल देंगे, जबकि मेरे हाथ में देश सुरक्षित है। विकास का एजेंडा कहाँ है? क्या चुनावी बॉन्ड-ने चुनावी चंदे में अस्पष्टता को शुरू नहीं किया है? क्या अब भी जाति महत्वपूर्ण नहीं है? मोदी का

कुछ नहीं है, जबकि वह देश बचाने के लिए प्रतिबद्ध हैं।

न रोम एक दिन में बना था, न ही भारत! इसे बनाने में वर्षों तक लाखों लोगों ने खून-पसीना बहाया है। सभी नेताओं ने अपने कार्यकाल में अपने-अपने तरीके से राष्ट्र निर्माण की पूरी कोशिश की। अगर इंदिरा गांधी के समय 1974 में परमाणु परीक्षण नहीं होता, तो अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी के नेतृत्व में 1998 में परमाणु परीक्षण नहीं होता। और इन परीक्षणों के बिना जॉर्ज बुश और डॉ. मनमोहन सिंह के बीच अस्थायी परमाणु समझौता नहीं हुआ होता। कांग्रेस सरकार द्वारा 1991 में पेश किए गए आर्थिक सुधारों ने भारत के आर्थिक पुनरुत्थान की प्रक्रिया को गति दी; वर्ष 2006-2007 में हमारी विकास दर 9.6 फीसदी थी। कांग्रेस के काम और योगदान के बिना परमाणु रिपेक्टर, डीआरडीओ, इसरो, चंद्रयान, सूचना का अधिकार, आधार और मनरेगा की कामना नहीं की जा सकती थी। इसी तरह जीएसटी, बैंकिंग ऐंड इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर ऐक्ट, व्यापार सुगमता की सूची में भारत की छलंग, स्वच्छ भारत, जन धन, सौभाग्य, उज्ज्वला और दर्जनों अन्य समावेशी योजनाएँ प्रधानमंत्री मोदी के नेतृत्व में शुरू हुईं। यहां तक कि मनरेगा और आधार जैदा कुशलता के साथ चल रहे हैं। 2013 की तरह दिल्ली की सड़कों पर भ्रष्टाचार विरोधी आंदोलन क्यों नहीं हो रहे?

इसलिए जैसे यह कहना बेइमानी है कि कांग्रेस सरकारों के समय कुछ नहीं हुआ, वैसे ही यह कहना भी गलत होगा कि मोदी के शासन में कुछ नहीं हुआ। यह सही नहीं है। हम यह क्यों नहीं स्वीकार करते कि राष्ट्र निर्माण एक सतत प्रक्रिया है, जो लगातार चल रही है। दूसरे को बुरा बताने के बजाय उनके योगदान को स्वीकार करने में क्या समस्या है?

इस

स बार के लोकसभा चुनाव को भारत के चुनावी इतिहास में सबसे आक्रामक चुनाव अभियान के रूप में याद रखा जाएगा, जिसमें किसी तरह का कोई अंकुश नहीं है। उत्तर-आधुनिक युग में प्यार और चुनाव में सब कुछ जायज है! महाभारत के अर्जुन की तरह राजनेताओं का एक ही लक्ष्य है-चुनाव में जीत। चुनावी अर्जुन जीतने के लिए साम, दाम, दंड, भेद का इस्तेमाल कर रहे हैं। गांधी की धरती पर गांधी को ही अप्रासंगिक कर दिया गया है। उम्मीदवारों के लिए सत्य ईश्वर का पर्याय नहीं है, यह परिवर्तनशील है! सत्य वही है, जो हम कहते हैं, बाकी सब झूठ है, विरोधियों का छल-कपट है, सफेद झूठ है! गांधी को छोड़ विभिन्न विचारधाराओं के हमारे राजनेताओं ने चीनी दिग्गज दंग श्याओ पिंग को गले लगा लिया है, जिनकी यह उक्ति बेहद लोकप्रिय है कि जब तक बिल्ली चूहे पकड़ती रहती है, तब तक इसका कोई मतलब नहीं कि वह सफेद है या काली!

माना यह जाता है कि प्रतिस्पर्धा उत्कृष्टता की ओर ले जाती है। पर जब प्रतिस्पर्धा झूठ बोलने, झूठ का प्रचार करने, निराधार अफवाह फैलाने और चरित्र हनन की हो, तो क्या उससे उत्कृष्टता बढ़ती है? प्रतिस्पर्धी राजनीति में विनम्रता की जगह नहीं है, हर कोई अपने किए का ढिंढोरा पीटा है और दूसरों के किए का भी श्रेय लेता है। मुद्दों का हल होगा या नहीं, यह बाद की बात है, जनता को यह भी याद नहीं रहता कि क्या वादा किया गया था। सबसे अहम है एक विश्वसनीय कहानी गढ़ना, जिस पर भरोसा किया जा सके। चुनावी नतीजों ने अक्सर साबित किया है कि जमीनी स्तर के कठोर यथार्थ के बजाय लहर पैदा करने में धारणाएँ अधिक महत्वपूर्ण होती हैं। इस

मंजिलें और भी हैं

>> डॉ. चित्तरंजन जेना

हैजे से हुई मौतों ने मुझे बदलाव के लिए प्रेरित किया

मैं एक डॉक्टर हूँ और शुरू से ही अपने क्षेत्र के गरीब आदिवासी मरीजों के हित में काम करना मेरा लक्ष्य रहा है। दरअसल ओडिशा के कोरापुट और आसपास के इलाकों में भयानक गरीबी और इसी कारण छोटी-मोटी बीमारियों में लोगों को मारते हुए देखा है। इसी कारण बचपन में ही मैंने डॉक्टर बनने के बारे में सोचा था। वर्ष 2007 में कोरापुट जिले के दसतनपुर ब्लॉक में हैजे के कारण हुई कई आदिवासियों की मौत ने मुझे स्तब्ध कर दिया था। अगर मैं वहाँ होता, तो उन गरीबों की जान बचाने की पूरी कोशिश करता। वर्ष 2016 में मैं कोरापुट जिले में मेडिकल ऑफिसर बनकर आया, और तभी से मैंने इस पूरे जिले में, जिसे देश के सबसे निम्नतम इलाकों में से माना जाता है, आदिवासियों के हित में काम करना शुरू किया। सबसे पहले मैंने अपनी तरह की सोच रखने वाले कुछ साथी डॉक्टरों के साथ मिलकर गांवकू चला कमेटी का गठन किया। इस कमेटी में डॉक्टरों के अलावा वॉलंटियर्स भी होते हैं। कमेटी को कई अलग-अलग टीम में बाँट दिया गया है। हर टीम में एक डॉक्टर और कुछ वॉलंटियर्स होते हैं। हमारी कमेटी ने जिले के आठ ऐसे गांव चिह्नित किए हैं, जहाँ साप्ताहिक दौरा अनिवार्य है।



हमारी पहल से आदिवासियों में चेतना आई है, उनकी शिकायतों की अनदेखी अब संभव नहीं है।

मैं अब पहले जैसी स्थिति नहीं है, इसके बावजूद लोगों को जागरूक करना आवश्यक है, क्योंकि जागरूकता के अभाव में ही बीमारियाँ होती हैं। ऐसे ही कुछ खाने से पहले हाथ धोने और महिलाओं को मासिक धर्म के दौरान पूरी साफ-सफाई बरतने आदि के बारे में हम बताते हैं। मलेरिया से बचने के लिए लोगों को मच्छरदानी का नियमित इस्तेमाल करने, गांव और घर के आसपास कहीं भी पानी इकट्ठा न होने देने और माताओं को पहले छह महीने तक बच्चे को स्तनपान कराने की सलाह हम देते हैं। कई बार जरूरत पड़ने पर वॉलंटियर्स भी साफ-सफाई का काम करते हैं। साफ-सफाई के प्रति जागरूकता पैदा करने के लिए हमने स्वास्थ्य सहायक वाहिनी का भी गठन किया है, जिसमें स्थानीय लोग ही होते हैं। इसका काम लोगों को सजग करना तो है ही, इसके अलावा यह संस्था किसी तरह की समस्या या अव्यवस्था की स्थिति में स्थानीय अधिकारियों को इसकी सूचना देती है। चूँकि पिछले करीब दो-दो साल में हमारी पहल से आदिवासियों में चेतना आई है, इसलिए उनकी तरफ से मिलने वाली शिकायतों की प्रशासनिक स्तर पर अनदेखी करना भी अब पहले की तरह संभव नहीं है। पहले की तुलना में इन गांवों में आए बदलाव को अब साफ-साफ देखा जा सकता है। लोग पहले की तुलना में स्वस्थ रहने लगे हैं। अगर कोरापुट जैसी पहल देश के दूसरे पिछड़े इलाकों में भी की जाए, तो उसका जमीनी स्तर पर बहुत फायदा मिलेगा।

-विभिन्न साक्षात्कारों पर आधारित।

फिर से गरीबी हटाओ

राहुल गांधी के हाल के भाषणों पर आपने ध्यान दिया हो, तो आपको इनमें सामंतवाद की झलक दिखी होगी। ध्यान दीजिए, किस तरह उन्होंने न्यूनतम आय योजना भारत के गरीबों को देने की बातें की हैं। सामंतवाद दशकों से कांग्रेस की परंपरा में रहा है।



तवलीन सिंह

हैं कि उनका 'ब्रह्मास्त्र' प्रियंका गांधी हैं। सो नरेंद्र मोदी को हराने के लिए कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष ने परिवारवाद का यह ब्रह्मास्त्र निकाला है।

लेकिन हम पत्रकार चूँकि कांग्रेस के 'सेक्यूलर' चरित्र को भाजपा के 'सांप्रदायिक' चरित्र से ज्यादा पसंद करते हैं, ऐसे में बहुत कम पंडित हैं, जिन्होंने कांग्रेस को सामंतवादी कहा है। कांग्रेस के मौजूदा सांसदों में से हर दूसरा सांसद किसी राजनेता का वारिस है, लेकिन सेक्यूलरिज्म के बहाने हम इस पर भी ध्यान आकर्षित करने से कतराते हैं।

भारत को शर्मिंदा होना चाहिए कि स्वतंत्रता के लगभग सत्तर वर्षों में से पचपन वर्ष हम पर एक ही परिवार ने राज किया है। भारत को शर्मिंदा होना

स सप्ताह जब लोकसभा चुनाव के लिए मतदान की प्रक्रिया शुरू होगी, तब वह मुद्दा शायद मुद्दा भी नहीं होगा, जो मेरी राय में सबसे बड़ा मुद्दा होना चाहिए। यह मुद्दा है सामंतवाद, जो दशकों से कांग्रेस की परंपरा में रहा है। सामंतवाद को बेशक समाजवाद का चोला पहनाया गया है, लेकिन राहुल गांधी के हाल में दिए भाषणों पर आपने थोड़ा ध्यान दिया हो, तो आपको इनमें सामंतवाद की झलक दिखी होगी। ध्यान दीजिए, किस तरह उन्होंने न्यूनतम आय योजना भारत के गरीबों को देने की बातें की हैं।

कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष ने अपनी इस नई गरीबी हटाओ योजना का जिक्र ऐसे किया, जैसे हर वर्ष गरीबों को 72,000 रुपये अपनी जेब से निकाल कर देने वाले हैं। यह पैसा इस देश के करदाताओं का है, लेकिन इसको हम चूँकि 'सरकारी' पैसा कहते हैं, इसलिए अक्सर भूल जाते हैं कि यह पैसा किसका है। जनता भी यह भूल जाती है, क्योंकि वह सदियों से गरीब, अशिक्षित रही है।

सो उसको दिखता नहीं है कि जिस तरह राजा-महाराजा अकाल या किसी अन्य संकट के समय अपनी तिजोरियाँ खोलकर इस बहाने नए महल बनवाया करते थे कि वह अकाल के समय किसको को रोगाणु देने का अच्छा साधन होता था, वैसे ही आज के लोकतांत्रिक दौर में कांग्रेस के नेता सत्ता में रहने (या लौटने) के लिए गरीबों को तुलाने के वास्ते कात्यानिक तिजोरियाँ खोलते हैं।

कांग्रेस के सामंतवादी चरित्र का एक उदाहरण यह भी है कि इस दल के समर्थक यह कहते आए

खुली खिड़की

जिन्हें सर्वाधिक पसंद है चॉकलेट

भले ही वैश्विक चॉकलेट उपभोग में अमेरिका की हिस्सेदारी 18 फीसदी है, लेकिन प्रति व्यक्ति वार्षिक खपत सबसे ज्यादा स्विट्जरलैंड में है।

8.8 किग्रा. स्विट्जरलैंड

8.1 किग्रा. ऑस्ट्रिया

7.9 किग्रा. जर्मनी

7.9 किग्रा. आयरलैंड

4.4 किग्रा. अमेरिका

आंकड़े- 2017 के



भारत-स्टाटिस्टिक्स



सत्संग

कमल कम है। इससे उनका संकल्प टूटता-सा दिखाई पड़ा। तत्काल कमल के एक और फूल की व्यवस्था करना असंभव था और इसके बिना देवी नाराज हो सकती थीं। सहसा उन्हें याद आया कि मां उन्हें राजीव लोचन कहती थीं, इसलिए उन्होंने तीर से तत्काल अपनी एक आंख निकालकर देवी को समर्पित करने का निश्चय किया। वह पैसा करने जा ही रहे थे कि देवी चंडी प्रकट हुईं और उनका हाथ पकड़ते हुए कहा, मैं तुमसे प्रसन्न हूँ। उन्होंने श्रीराम को विजयश्री का आशीर्वाद भी दिया।

-संकलित

हरियाली और रास्ता

अंश, निबंध और सपना

अंश की कहानी, जिसने टीचर को बताया कि उसे बड़े सपने देखने से बंचित नहीं किया जा सकता।



अंश रोज स्कूल से छुट्टी के बाद पैसे कमाने के लिए एक अरतबल में घोड़ों की सफाई करता था, और रात में एक दाब पर वेटर की नौकरी करता था। एक बार उसकी क्लास टीचर ने सभी बच्चों को 'मेरा सपना' विषय पर निबंध लिखने को कहा। उसने लिखा कि वह 200 एकड़ में घोड़ों का एक फार्म बनाना चाहता है, जिसमें उसका अपना एक घर होगा, और 50 घोड़े होंगे। यह निबंध लिखने के लिए उसने बहुत मेहनत की थी। उसे उम्मीद थी कि उसका निबंध क्लास में सबसे अलग होगा। पर दो दिन बाद अंश को पता चला कि टीचर ने उसे फेल कर दिया था। थोड़ी देर रोने के बाद वह टीचर के पास फेल करने की वजह पूछने गया। टीचर ने कहा, 'तुम एक गरीब परिवार से आए हो, रात की रोटी का टिकाना नहीं होता, दो-दो नौकरी करने के बाद भी अगले महीने की स्कूल की फीस जमा कर पाओगे या नहीं, यह तुम्हें पता नहीं। तुम कैसे घोड़ों के इतने बड़े फार्म के बारे में सोच सकते हो? मैं तुम्हें एक और मौका देती हूँ। कल फिर से अपना निबंध लिखकर लाना। पर इस बार कुछ ऐसा लिखना, जो तुम सच में हासिल कर पाओ। ऐसे सपने नहीं देखने चाहिए, जिन्हें हासिल न कर सकें।' अंश उस दिन काम पर नहीं जा सका। उसके पिता ने उसे समझाया, 'बेटा, तुम्हारे सपने सिर्फ तुम्हारे हैं। किसी को तुम्हारे सपनों को तय करने का कोई हक नहीं। अपने अंदर सपनों को साकार करने का माद्दा होना चाहिए।' आगे दिन अंश फिर वही निबंध लेकर टीचर के पास जाकर बोला, 'आपने जो अंक दिए, वह मुझे मंजूर है, पर अपने सपने से समझौता करना मुझे मंजूर नहीं। सपने अमीरी-गरीबी के आधार पर नहीं देखे जाते। जो अपनी काबिलियत से समझौता कर लेगा, वह अपने सपने साकार नहीं कर सकेगा।

कोई दूसरा कभी यह तय नहीं कर सकता कि हमारी काबिलियत क्या है।

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 43

प्रतिगामी कदम

सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने केरल उच्च न्यायालय द्वारा कर्मचारी भविष्य निधि संगठन (ईपीएफओ) के खिलाफ दिए गए निर्णय को बरकरार रखा है। इस निर्णय के फलस्वरूप पेंशन के आकलन से संबंधित कुछ संशोधन को निरस्त कर दिया गया था। इससे ऐसी स्थिति निर्मित होगी जिसके तहत उन लोगों की पेंशन में 1000 प्रतिशत तक का इजाफा हो सकता

है जो अपेक्षाकृत अच्छा वेतन पाने वाले हैं और जिन्होंने कई वर्षों तक नौकरी की है। जाहिर सी बात है कि यह भविष्य निधि की उस प्रकृति के विरुद्ध है जिसके तहत उसने हमेशा उन लोगों की बचत और सेवानिवृत्ति में मदद की है जो संगठित क्षेत्र के निचले दायरे से आते हैं। अदालत ने भले ही इस प्रतिगामी आदेश को बरकरार रखा हो लेकिन सवाल यह है कि

इस भारी-भरकम पेंशन के भुगतान के लिए धन कहाँ से आएगा। अदालत ने इस सवाल पर कतई ध्यान नहीं दिया है। यह विधायी हस्तक्षेप के बड़ने का उदाहरण है। पेंशन योजना का ढाँचा ऐसा है कि योजना का मुनाफा और उसका स्थायित्व आदि ऐसे प्रश्न हैं जिनका निर्धारण कार्यपालिका द्वारा किया जाता है। कार्यपालिका को ही यह तय करना होता है कि सब्सिडी और करों का समुचित वितरण हो। राज्य द्वारा गारंटी प्राप्त पेंशन फंड कुछ और नहीं बल्कि राजकोपीय निर्णयों का ही एक उपवर्ग है और इसे तमाम देशों में कार्यपालिका के पास ही रहने देना चाहिए। न्यायपालिका नहीं बल्कि कार्यपालिका वह जगह है जहाँ यह निर्णय होना चाहिए कि गारंटी वाली पेंशन योजना से किसे लाभ मिलना

चाहिए। उदाहरण के लिए ईपीएफओ की व्यवस्था अनिवार्य तौर पर संगठित क्षेत्र के कामगारों तक सीमित है और संगठित क्षेत्र के रोजगार के छोटे आकार और मोलतोल की उसकी विसंगतिपूर्ण क्षमता के साथ उसे बचत का सर्वश्रेष्ठ स्वरूप नहीं माना जा सकता है। जब तक कि मूल अधिकारों की अनदेखी नहीं की जा रही हो, कर राजस्व का प्रयोग सर्वोत्कृष्ट न्याय सुनिश्चित करने में किस प्रकार किया जाए यह तय करने का निर्णय भी पूरी तरह कार्यपालिका का ही होना चाहिए। उदाहरण के लिए अगर कार्यपालिका को यह प्रतीत होता है कि स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं की तुलना में पेंशन कर राजस्व का कम प्रभावी इस्तेमाल है तो यह उसका विशेषाधिकार है। संगठित क्षेत्र के लिए वैसे भी देश में कई बचत

योजनाएं संचालित हैं। वहाँ दूसरी ओर स्वास्थ्य सुविधा क्षेत्र संसाधनों की कमी से जुड़ा रहा है, और यह बात कई उम्रदराज लोगों को भारी पड़ती है। जो कर्मचारी संगठित अर्थव्यवस्था से बाहर हैं, उन्हें समुचित बचत योजनाओं तक पहुंच बनाने के लिए भी संघर्ष करना पड़ता है। जबकि ये योजनाएं राज्य द्वारा गारंटीड भी हैं और वे एक न्यूनतम प्रतिफल सुनिश्चित करती हैं। देश में पिरामिड बचत योजनाओं को चिटफंड योजनाओं की लोकप्रियता की एक वजह यह भी है। न्यायपालिका स्वाभाविक तौर पर इन महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्नों में से किसी को उठा नहीं सकता। यही वजह है कि कार्यपालिका को ऐसे निर्णय लेने देना उचित है। यह बात भी ध्यान देने वाली है कि सरकार ने पहले ही ईपीएफओ का एक बेहतर विकल्प

सुझाया है जो उच्च बचत वालों के लिए है। इस योजना का नाम राष्ट्रीय पेंशन योजना (एनपीएस) है। ईपीएफओ खातों को एनपीएस में स्थानांतरित कर दिया जाना चाहिए था। पेंशन योजनाओं को समय पर भुगतान हो सके, इसके लिए व्यक्तिगत भुगतान पर आधारित पात्रता योजनाओं का विचार अच्छा है लेकिन इन्हें सेवानिवृत्ति खातों के इर्दगिर्द तैयार किया जाना चाहिए। बहरहाल, अगर अदालतों को यह लगता रहेगा कि वे हस्तक्षेप करके इन सुधारों को रोक सकते हैं तो सरकार ऐसे जरूरी सुधारों के साथ आगे कैसे बढ़ पाएगी? किसी कर्मचारी की आय का कितना हिस्सा अनिवार्य तौर पर बचत में जाना चाहिए, इसका निर्धारण अदालतों के मनमाने निर्णय से नहीं बल्कि तार्किक विश्लेषण से किया जाना चाहिए।



अजय मोहंती

राज्यों के नेताओं का है यह राष्ट्रीय चुनाव

आज देश में करीब 20 मजबूत क्षेत्रीय नेता हैं। कोई भी ऐसा राष्ट्रीय नेता नहीं है जो उनके मत छीन सके। मोदी सात राज्यों से ज्यादा में भाजपा को बढ़त नहीं दिला सकते।

अगर आप समझना चाहते हैं कि भारत को दो तरह से देखा जा सकता है तो आपको दिल्ली से बाहर जाना होगा। एक तरीका है दिल्ली और अन्य हृदय प्रदेशों में बैठकर देश के बाकी हिस्सों को देखना और दूसरा बाहरी हिस्सों से दिल्ली तथा देश के अन्य अंदरूनी हिस्सों को देखना।

अगर आप भीतर से बाहर की ओर देखेंगे तो आपको निश्चित तौर पर तस्वीर पूरी तरह राष्ट्रीय पार्टी और राष्ट्रीय नेताओं से संदर्भित दिखेगी। अगर आप खुले दिमाग से और दूर से देखेंगे तो आपको इस नए भारत में बदलाव दिखेगा। राष्ट्रीय पार्टियों का पराभव हो रहा है। देशव्यापी राष्ट्रीय नेता की अवधारणा इंदिरा गांधी के साथ समाप्त हो गई है।

भारतीय राजनीति की इस मुखर हकीकत को पिछले दिनों दो सबसे मजबूत क्षेत्रीय क्षत्रपों तेलंगाना के चंद्रशेखर राव (केसीआर) और वाईएस जगनमोहन रेड्डी ने अपने-अपने ढंग से दोहराया। उनका कहना था कि देश में अब राष्ट्रीय पार्टी जैसी कोई चीज नहीं है। जिन्हें राष्ट्रीय दल कहा जाता है यानी भाजपा और कांग्रेस, वे भी क्षेत्रीय हैं बस उनका विस्तार एकाधिक राज्यों में है। राष्ट्रीय दल के रूप में कांग्रेस के पराभव को समझा जा सकता है लेकिन भाजपा को राष्ट्रीय दल क्यों नहीं कहा जा सकता? सन 2014 में उसने पूर्ण बहुमत भी हासिल किया था। इसे समझने के लिए दिल्ली से बाहर जाना होगा।

दिल्ली में रहकर हम हिंदी प्रदेश को ही देश समझ लेते हैं। भाजपा ने 2014 में जो 282 सीट हासिल की थीं उनमें से अधिकांश उत्तर प्रदेश, बिहार, मध्य प्रदेश, राजस्थान, छत्तीसगढ़, झारखंड, हरियाणा, दिल्ली, हिमाचल प्रदेश और उत्तराखंड (कुल 190) से हासिल की थीं। बाकी की सीटों में से 49 महाराष्ट्र और गुजरात जैसे पश्चिमी राज्यों में मिली थीं। यानी इन राज्यों की 299 में से 239 सीट पर भाजपा जीती थी देश के शेष हिस्से यानी समूचे दक्षिण (कर्नाटक, केरल,

आंध्र प्रदेश, तेलंगाना और तमिलनाडु), पूर्व (पूर्वोत्तर के राज्य, पश्चिम बंगाल और ओडिशा) और यहाँ तक कि सुदूर उत्तर में जम्मू कश्मीर तथा पंजाब की कुल मिलाकर 244 में से भाजपा को केवल 43 सीटों पर जीत मिली। यह परिदृश्य किसी राष्ट्रीय दल का तो नहीं है। यह 10 राज्यों वाला दल है जो इन राज्यों में अधिकतम सीट जीतकर बहुमत हासिल कर पाया।

राष्ट्रीय नेताओं की बात करें तो आज केवल मोदी ही इसका दावा कर सकते हैं। उन्हें सब जानते हैं लेकिन क्या वह इन 10 राज्यों के बाहर अपने लिए वोट जुटा सकते हैं? इन 10 राज्यों में भी अधिकांश प्रमुख राज्यों में उनको स्थानीय दलों और नेताओं से चुनौती मिल रही है। उत्तर प्रदेश में मायावती और अखिलेश यादव के साथ वह आर-पार की लड़ाई लड़ रहे हैं।

बिहार में लालू प्रसाद और नीतीश कुमार इन नेताओं के समकक्ष हैं। कांग्रेस और भाजपा दोनों ने इनमें से एक-एक के साथ कनिष्ठ सहयोगी के रूप में गठबंधन किया है। पंजाब में भाजपा अकाली दल के साथ है, हरियाणा में भाजपा और कांग्रेस दोनों साझेदार तलाश रही हैं। भाषण कला में निपुण होने के बावजूद मोदी काल्पनिक तौर पर भी सात राज्यों से ज्यादा में अपनी पार्टी को जीत दिलाने की स्थिति में नहीं हैं। काल्पनिक इसलिए क्योंकि इनमें उत्तर प्रदेश शामिल है।

अगर भाजपा सात से नौ राज्यों वाला राष्ट्रीय दल है तो कांग्रेस के पास छह राज्य हैं। मध्य प्रदेश, राजस्थान, छत्तीसगढ़, केरल, पंजाब और कर्नाटक। पश्चिम बंगाल, ओडिशा, आंध्र प्रदेश, तेलंगाना, उत्तर प्रदेश और बिहार में पार्टी अस्तित्व के लिए संघर्षरत है। यही कारण है कि एकदम बेहतरीन किस्मत होने पर भी कांग्रेस 150 से अधिक सीट नहीं जीत सकती। मुझे पता है कि यह

संभव नहीं लगता और शायद 100 सीटों का अनुमान भी आशावादी होगा। परंतु इससे यह साबित करने का लक्ष्य पूरा नहीं होता कि भाजपा 50 प्रतिशत तो कांग्रेस बहुशिकल एक तिहाई राष्ट्रीय पार्टी है। क्या आप किसी राज्य का नाम ले सकते हैं जहाँ राहुल गांधी अपने दम पर लोकसभा चुनाव का रुख बदलने की काबिलियत रखते हों।

सच यह है कि इंदिरा गांधी आखिरी राष्ट्रीय नेता थीं जो सभी राज्यों में जीत सकती थीं। उनके निधन के बाद दिसंबर 1984 के आम चुनाव को छोड़ दें तो कोई राष्ट्रीय नेता या राष्ट्रीय दल नहीं उभरा है। अब उनकी जगह ताकतवर और करिश्माई क्षेत्रीय और जातीय नेताओं ने ले ली है। इनमें से किसी को क्षेत्रीय नेता कहना भी एक छलावा होगा। उनको मिलने वाले वोट इसके गवाह हैं।

सन 1952 से 1977 के बीच मत हिस्सेदारी में 4 फीसदी से बढ़ते हुए क्षेत्रीय दल 2002-2018 के बीच 34 फीसदी तक आ गए। इन गर्मियों में इसमें और इजाफा होगा। चूंकि ये पार्टियाँ एक खास क्षेत्र में सीमित होती हैं इसलिए उन्हें मत प्रतिशत के हिसाब से सीट भी अधिक मिलती हैं। आज 34 फीसदी मतों के साथ ये पार्टियाँ 34 प्रतिशत लोकसभा सीट जीती हैं। हर बढ़ते प्रतिशत के साथ उन्हें 11 और सीटें मिलेंगी जबकि राष्ट्रीय दलों को केवल सात। मैंने ये आंकड़े प्रणय रॉय और दोराब सुपारीवाला की किताब द वरिडिक्ट से लिए हैं।

अविभाजित आंध्र प्रदेश में कांग्रेस की मत हिस्सेदारी पारंपरिक रूप से 40 फीसदी के करीब रही है। नए बने राज्य में घटकर 3 फीसदी रह गई। भाजपा के पश्चिम बंगाल और ओडिशा में बढ़ते प्रभाव के दावों की परीक्षा जल्दी हो जाएगी। असम और त्रिपुरा को छोड़कर उसने कोई नया

राज्य नहीं जीता है, भले ही बहुमत मोदी के साथ हो और भाजपा के पास 10 करोड़ से अधिक सदस्य हों।

भारत में आज करीब 20 ऐसे नेता हैं जो सीमित भौगोलिक या राजनीतिक क्षेत्र में इतने ताकतवर हैं कि मोदी समेत कोई उनके वोट छीन नहीं सकता। उनमें से अधिकांश के पास प्रशासनिक और राजनीतिक अनुभव है और विभिन्न क्षेत्रों तक उनका नेटवर्क फैला है। उनकी चिंताएं और विचारधारा अलग हो सकती हैं लेकिन राष्ट्रीय दलों का वर्चस्व खत्म करने के नाम पर वह एकजुट हैं।

दिल्ली और हिंदी प्रदेश के बाहर एक प्रगतिशील दुनिया है जो हमारे बुर्जुआ वर्ग की उस असुरक्षा से दूर है कि अगर मोदी नहीं जीते तो देश में खिचड़ी सरकार बनेगी। दक्षिण और पूर्वी भारत में आपको यह चिंता सुनने को नहीं मिलेगी कि मोदी नहीं तो कौन? बीते तीन दशक में कांग्रेस कमजोर हुई है और भारत सही अर्थों में एक संघीय गणराज्य बना है। राष्ट्रीय चुनाव का स्थान राज्यों में होने वाले 30 चुनावों ने ले लिया है। कोई ऐसा दल नहीं है जिसका इनमें से कम से कम एक तिहाई राज्यों में दबदबा हो। भाजपा और कांग्रेस मिलकर आधे राज्यों में भी दबदबा नहीं रखते।

हिंदी प्रदेश की राजनीति में टीना (कोई विकल्प नहीं) तत्व क्यों हावी है और इसके बाहर यह निष्पत्ती क्यों है? एक अहम वजह यह है कि जिन राज्यों में कांग्रेस और भाजपा अपने रसूख के लिए लड़ रही हैं वहाँ कोई सच्चा क्षेत्रीय नेता नहीं उभरा है। बिहार और उत्तर प्रदेश में लालू, नीतीश, मायावती और अखिलेश बड़े नेता हैं लेकिन उनकी अपनी सीमाएँ हैं। भाजपा उन्हें चुनौती देती है या साथ आने को मजबूर करती है। महाराष्ट्र, गुजरात, मध्य प्रदेश और राजस्थान जैसे बड़े राज्यों में अभी भी बड़े दल प्रभावी हैं। कुछ हद तक कर्नाटक में भी।

दूसरी वजह यह कि राष्ट्रीय दल मजबूत क्षेत्रीय नेतृत्व तैयार करना पसंद नहीं करते। कांग्रेस ने आंध्र प्रदेश में में स्वाभाविक उत्तराधिकारी को पनपने न देकर आत्महत्या कर ली। हेलीकाप्टर दुर्घटना में जगनमोहन रेड्डी के पिता के निधन के बाद पार्टी ने उन्हें सामान्य इज्जत भी नहीं दी। कांग्रेस में कैप्टन अमरिंदर सिंह के रूप में एक ही महत्वपूर्ण क्षेत्रीय नेता है। भाजपा के पास योगी आदित्यनाथ के रूप में एक अधूरा क्षेत्रीय नेता है। शिवराज सिंह चौहान, वसुंधरा राजे और रमन सिंह को दरकिनार कर दिया गया है। इमरान राजनीति दिलचस्प मोड़ पर है जहाँ कोई राष्ट्रीय नेता या दल नहीं है और हिंदी प्रदेश के बाहर गठबंधन को लेकर असुरक्षा कम हो रही है। जैसा हमने 2014 में देखा अगर कोई दल आपस में जुड़े राज्यों में 200 सीटें जीत लेता है तो वह अब भी बहुमत हासिल कर सकता है।

इन चुनावों में कोई हवा नहीं बह रही है। हम भरोसे के साथ यह कह सकते हैं कि यह चुनाव अलग-अलग राज्य के आधार पर लड़ा जाएगा, काफी हद तक 2004 की तरह। मुझे यह मत पछिए कि अगले गठबंधन का नेता कौन होगा। मैं बस यह कह सकता हूँ कि अगली सरकार का नेतृत्व कोई भी करे लेकिन यह ऐसा मंत्रिमंडल होगा जहाँ राम विलास पासवान भी अपनी बात कह सकेगा।

जीएसटी के बाद भी व्याख्या संबंधी कुछ मसले बाकी

वस्तु एवं सेवा कर (जीएसटी) के 1 जुलाई 2017 को लागू होने के पहले देश में केंद्रीय उत्पाद शुल्क में कर दरों की विविधता होती थी जिससे वर्गीकरण को लेकर बेहद विवादास्पद स्थिति पैदा हुई। इससे नियमों की व्याख्या करने की अक्सर जरूरत पड़ने लगी और मामले अदालतों तक जाने लगे। कर नियमों की व्याख्या से संबंधित तमाम अदालती फैसले कानूनी किताबों में दर्ज होने लगे। अब भारत में जीएसटी की केवल दो दरें-12 फीसदी और 18 फीसदी ही ऐसी हैं जिन्हें लेकर वर्गीकरण को समस्या पैदा होगी। ऐसा होने पर एक बार फिर नियमों की व्याख्या का मसला कुछ हद तक खड़ा होने के आसार बने हुए हैं।

यहां में व्याख्या से जुड़ी कुछ समस्याओं पर चर्चा कर रहा हूँ जो आगे नहीं भी जारी रह सकती हैं। हालांकि में यह दावा नहीं करता कि आगे चलकर व्याख्या से संबंधित ऐसे मामले सामने ही नहीं आएंगे जिन्हें अदालत में चुनौती दी जाए। हालांकि मध्यवर्ती उत्पादों की कराधान क्षमता के मामले में व्याख्या का मसला आगे भी जारी रहने के आसार नहीं हैं। पहले, एक मध्यवर्ती उत्पाद की श्रेणी निर्धारित करने का भी सवाल खड़ा होता था। इसमें यह तय करना होता था कि किसी कारखाने में तैयार होने वाले किसी उत्पाद के उत्पादन में लगने वाले कच्चे माल के तौर पर लगने वाला उत्पाद है या नहीं। हालांकि मध्यवर्ती उत्पाद कभी भी पूरी तरह तैयार अंतिम उत्पाद नहीं होता है।

इस सवाल पर विचार करते समय सबसे अहम बिंदु यह होता था कि कथित उत्पाद पर केंद्रीय उत्पाद शुल्क लगेगा या नहीं। इसके लिए उस उत्पाद को बेचने की क्षमता (मार्केटबिलिटी) अहम कारक होती थी। हालांकि मार्केटबिलिटी के मसले पर कई बार उच्चतम न्यायालय के निर्णय भी आ चुके हैं। इन फैसलों का सार यह था कि उत्पाद अगर बिक्री लायक होते हुए भी वास्तव में नहीं बेचे जा रहे हैं तो भी उन्हें बिक्री-योग्य माना जाएगा। यह स्थिति तलवार की धार पर चलने की तरह था। जीएसटी आने के बाद यह स्थिति सुधरी है क्योंकि अब विनिर्माता नहीं बल्कि आपूर्ति के स्तर पर करारोपण का प्रावधान है।



कराधान सुकुमार मुखोपाध्याय

मले ही जीएसटी ने कर नियमों की व्याख्या से संबंधित कई विवाद खत्म कर दिए हैं लेकिन कुछ मसले अब भी करदाताओं को प्रभावित कर रहे हैं।

शुल्क लगता भी है तो वे इनपुट क्रेडिट पाने के हकदार होंगे, लिहाजा उन पर राजस्व पहलू शामिल नहीं है। सिद्धांत तौर पर पुरानी स्थिति में कोई बदलाव नहीं आया है लेकिन इस पर विवाद होने की स्थिति खत्म कर दी गई है।

व्याख्या से संबंधित एक और विवादास्पद मुद्दा कई तरह के कार्यों से संबंधित है जो मशीनों के वर्गीकरण से संबंधित था। उच्चतम न्यायालय ने जेरोक्स इंडिया लिमिटेड बनाम सीमा-शुल्क आयुक्त मामले में इससे संबंधित फैसला सुनाया था। मामला एक मल्टी-फंक्शनल मशीन के वर्गीकरण से जुड़ा हुआ था जो प्रिंटर, फेक्स मशीन, कॉपीयर और स्कैनर के तौर पर भी काम कर सकती है। आयातक फर्म इस मशीन को उत्पाद समूह 8471 में शामिल करना चाहता

था जिस पर शून्य शुल्क लगाता है। इस उत्पाद में ऑटोमेटिक डेटा प्रोसेसिंग करने वाली मशीनें लगती हैं, लिहाजा मशीन में समेकित इनपुट और आउटपुट इकायां शामिल हैं। राजस्व विभाग इस मशीन को अवशिष्ट उत्पाद समूह 8479 में शामिल करना चाहता था जिसमें अन्यत्र निर्दिष्ट कार्य करने वाली मशीनें रखी जाती हैं। इस समूह के उत्पादों पर 7.5 फीसदी शुल्क लगाता है।

आयातक की दलील थी कि इस मशीन के साथ इनपुट और आउटपुट इकाई के तौर पर कंप्यूटर लगा होता है। उच्चतम न्यायालय ने इस बात को ध्यान में रखा कि इस मल्टी-फंक्शनल मशीन के कुल उपकरण एवं पुर्जों का करीब 85 फीसदी हिस्सा प्रिंटिंग में ही इस्तेमाल होता है। यह स्पष्ट रूप से बताता है कि मशीन का मुख्य कार्य प्रिंटिंग ही है और इससे उस मशीन के बुनियादी चरित्र का पता चलता है। सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने यह माना कि प्रिंटर के 8471 उत्पाद समूह में शामिल होने से जेरोक्स मशीन को प्रिंटर के मद में रखना न्यायोचित है।

इस तरह के विवाद खड़े होने की आशंका अब भी कायम है। खास तौर पर मशीनों के मामले में ऐसा होने की आशंका अधिक है। मशीनरी से संबंधित अध्यायों- 84 और 85 में 12 और 18 फीसदी की केवल दो दरें ही होने से विवाद की आशंका बरकरार है। इसका मतलब है कि जीएसटी आने पर भी कोई मदद नहीं मिलती है।

एक और मसला अवशिष्ट शुल्क से संबंधित था। उच्चतम न्यायालय ने इस विषय पर दिए गए अपने कई फैसलों में यही सिद्धांत रखा था कि किसी सीमा शुल्क इंटी में अगर कई सब-इंटी हैं तो वर्गीकरण उस सब-इंटी की ही होना चाहिए और केवल अंतिम विकल्प के ही तौर पर 'अन्य' श्रेणी में रखा जाना चाहिए। वह समस्या अब भी बरकरार है। निहितार्थ यह है कि बड़े ही जीएसटी ने कर नियमों की व्याख्या से संबंधित कई विवाद खत्म कर दिए हैं लेकिन कुछ मसले अब भी करदाताओं को प्रभावित कर रहे हैं।

(लेखक केंद्रीय उत्पाद एवं सीमा शुल्क बोर्ड के पूर्व सदस्य हैं)

कानाफूसी

अंत भला तो सब भला

पिछले दिनों कांग्रेस पार्टी का चुनावी घोषणापत्र जारी होने के बाद हर किसी ने उसके बारे में अपनी राय जाहिर की है। इस बीच एक बात जो सुर्खियों में रही वह थी कि संयुक्त प्रगतिशील गठबंधन (संग्रम) की अध्यक्ष सोनिया गांधी पार्टी के चुनावी घोषणापत्र से प्रसन्न नहीं थीं। कुछ ही दिनों में यह सच भी सामने आ गया कि उनकी नाराजगी की वास्तविक वजह क्या थी। दरअसल वह आवरण पृष्ठ के गहरे रंग को लेकर नाखुश थीं। जब उन्हें बताया गया कि इसे तैयार करने वाली टीम आवरण पृष्ठ पर आम जनता की तस्वीर शामिल करना चाहती थी तो भी वह इस स्पष्टीकरण से संतुष्ट नहीं नजर आईं। परंतु वहां से जाने से पहले उन्होंने टीम से क्षमा प्रार्थना की और कहा कि वह साल भर की कड़ी मेहनत से तैयार किए गए इस दस्तावेज की आलोचना करने के लिए माफी चाहती हैं। इसके बाद घोषणापत्र तैयार करने वाली टीम को कांग्रेस के राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी का लिखा हुआ एक नोट मिला। उन्होंने घोषणापत्र में झलक रही टीम की मेहनत की जमकर सराहना की थी। इस बात ने टीम को खुशियों से भर दिया।



आपका पक्ष

सभी को स्वास्थ्य सुविधा का लक्ष्य

विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन द्वारा हर वर्ष 7 अप्रैल को लोगों में स्वास्थ्य के प्रति जागरूकता के लिए विश्व स्वास्थ्य दिवस मनाया जाता है। इस वर्ष संगठन द्वारा यूनिवर्सल हेल्थ कवरेज का यह लक्ष्य रखा गया है कि दुनिया का हर व्यक्ति बिना किसी परेशानी के गुणवत्तापूर्ण स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं का लाभ उठा सके। विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन के मुताबिक आज भी लाखों लोग गुणवत्तापूर्ण स्वास्थ्य सेवा लेने से वंचित हैं। लाखों लोग स्वास्थ्य देखभाल और अन्य दैनिक खर्चों जैसे भोजन, कपड़े और एक घर के बीच चयन करने के लिए मजबूर हैं। इसलिए विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन ने इस वर्ष यूनिवर्सल हेल्थ कवरेज पर ध्यान केंद्रित किया है। इस अभियान के माध्यम से संगठन द्वारा यूनिवर्सल हेल्थ कवरेज का अर्थ लोगों को समझाया जाएगा। इसके तहत किस तरह की सेवा तथा कैसे सहायता, कहाँ मिलनी चाहिए



लोगों को इस बारे में बताया जाएगा। विश्व स्वास्थ्य दिवस के दिन विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन, स्वास्थ्य से संबंधित वार्षिक आंकड़ा जारी करती है जिससे स्वास्थ्य से संबंधित पहलुओं को समझने में आसानी होगी तथा स्वस्थ संबंधित नीतियां बनाने में यह रिपोर्ट सहायक होगी। इसमें नवजात शिशु और बाल स्वस्थ,

विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन द्वारा हर वर्ष 7 अप्रैल को विश्व स्वास्थ्य दिवस मनाया जाता है

गैर-संक्रामक रोगों, मानसिक स्वास्थ्य और पर्यावरणीय जोखिमों से संबंधित जानकारी शामिल है। इस रिपोर्ट में यूनिवर्सल हेल्थ कवरेज और स्वास्थ्य प्रणालियों

के आंकड़े भी शामिल हैं। यूनिवर्सल हेल्थ कवरेज को अच्छे तरीके से लागू करने के लिए सितंबर 2019 में संयुक्त राष्ट्र महासभा में उच्चस्तरीय बैठक भी होनी है। आज यूनिवर्सल हेल्थ कवरेज को व्यापक रूप से इसलिए भी लागू करना जरूरी है क्योंकि अधिकतर देशों के प्रति व्यक्ति आय मध्य और निम्न स्तर की है और वे गुणवत्तापूर्ण स्वास्थ्य सुविधाएं लेने में सक्षम नहीं हैं। इससे लोगों के जीवन पर ही नहीं बल्कि देश की अर्थव्यवस्था पर बुरा असर पड़ता है। एक बीमार व्यक्ति अपनी कार्यक्षमता के अनुरूप काम नहीं कर सकता। स्वास्थ्य का अधिकार यह प्रत्येक व्यक्ति का अधिकार है इसलिए यूनिवर्सल हेल्थ कवरेज को प्राथमिकता देकर इसे लागू करना जरूरी है।

निशांत महेश त्रिपाठी, नागपुर

बढ़ रही गर्मी, जल संरक्षण जरूरी

गर्मी का मौसम आ चुका है तथा हर साल गर्मियों में पानी की किल्लत हो जाती है। अभी से हमें जल संरक्षण पर ध्यान देना चाहिए। देश में सूखे की स्थिति बने से पहले ही हमें जल संचयन कर लेना चाहिए। हर साल गर्मी में टैंकरों से पानी की आपूर्ति की जाती है। सरकार इसका वैकल्पिक उपाय निकाल सकती है। पानी की कमी वाले क्षेत्रों में वॉटर हार्नेस्टिंग कर बोरवेल लगाया जा सकता है। इससे प्रचंड गर्मी पड़ने पर भी पानी की कमी नहीं होगी। लोगों को भी अभी से कम पानी खर्च करने की आदत डालनी चाहिए जिससे पानी का दुरुयोग्य रोक जा सके। विगत सालों में महाराष्ट्र के कुछ जिलों में पानी की कमी पड़ गई थी जिसके बाद ट्रेन से पानी पहुंचाया गया था। इस साल पानी की कमी से निपटने के लिए सरकार को पहले ही कमर कस लेनी चाहिए।

मोहित कुमार, नई दिल्ली

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



दैनिक जागरण

संयम से सभी समस्याओं का समाधान संभव है

चुनावी वादों की असलियत

कांग्रेस ने ‘अब होगा न्याय’ नारे को जारी करते हुए जिस तरह यह कहा कि उसका प्रचार अभियान न्याय पर केंद्रित होगा उससे यह और स्पष्ट हो गया कि वह इसी नाम से घोषित अपनी योजना पर खासा जोर देगी। इसका प्रमाण केवल यह नहीं है कि इस योजना पर आधारित गीत तैयार कर लिया गया है, बल्कि यह भी है कि कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी समेत सभी पार्टी नेता अपने इस चुनावी वादे को बड़ाए इतनी बड़ी राशि जुटाईं जा सकरे रूप में प्रचारित कर रहे हैं। कांग्रेस इस योजना के तहत 20 फीसद सबसे गरीब परिवारों को सालाना 72,000 रुपये देने का वादा कर रही है। उसका आकलन है कि इससे करीब पांच करोड़ परिवारों के 25 करोड़ लोग लाभान्वित होंगे। निःसंदेह ऐसा तभी होगा जब कांग्रेस अपने बलबूते सत्ता में आएगी और आर्थिक स्थिति उसे सालाना तीन लाख साठ हजार करोड़ रुपये इस योजना पर खर्च करने की इजाजत देगी। भले ही कांग्रेस यह दावा कर रही हो कि इतनी भारी-भरकम राशि का प्रबंध आसानी से हो जाएगा, लेकिन इसकी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती की एक बड़ी संख्या में आर्थिक मामलों के जानकार इस पर संदेह जता रहे हैं कि मौजूदा स्थितियों में बिना राजकोषीय घाटे को बढ़ाए इतनी बड़ी राशि जुटाई जा सकती है। इस संदेह का एक बड़ा कारण यह है कि कांग्रेस शिक्षा पर जीडीपी का छह प्रतिशत खर्च करने के साथ ही किसानों की कर्ज माफ़ी का वादा भी कर रही है। इसी के साथ यह यह भी भरोसा दिला रही है कि इससे मुद्रास्फीति में वृद्धि नहीं होगी। इन स्थितियों में आम जनता के लिए यह आवश्यक हो जाता है कि वह इस योजना की जांच-परख महनता के साथ करे।

इसमें दोराय नहीं कि न्याय नामक योजना गरीब तबके को आकर्षित करने वाली है, लेकिन विडंबना यह है कि इस तबके को कोई यह समझाने वाला नहीं कि यह अर्थव्यवस्था को नुकसान पहुंचाए बिना अमल में लाई जा सकने एक अच्छी योजना है या फिर महज एक जुमला ? चुनाव के दौरान जनता को लुभाने के लिए अब जैसी जुमलेबाजी होने लगी है और इस क्रम में कुछ दल जिस प्रकार चांद-सितारे तोड़कर लाने जैसे हवा-हवाई वादे करने लगे हैं उसे देखते हुए यह आवश्यक है कि ऐसी कोई व्यवस्था बने जिससे जनता राजनीतिक दलों के लोक-लुभावन वादों की असलियत से भली तरह परिचित हो सके। यह इसलिए जरूरी है, क्योंकि अब राजनीतिक दल लोक-लुभावन वादों के जरिये आम जनता और खासकर गरीब तबके को बहकाने में भी संकोच नहीं करते। हालांकि राजनीतिक दलों के लोक-लुभावन वादों पर मीडिया में चर्चा होती है, लेकिन कहना कठिन है कि उस चर्चा से गरीब तबके के लोग कितने लाभान्वित हो पाते हैं? बेहतर होगा कि चुनाव आयोग चुनावी वादों की पड़ताल खुद करे। अगर वह मतदान के लिए लोगों को जागरूक करने का काम कर सकता है तो फिर राजनीतिक दलों के लोक-लुभावन वादों के गुण-दोष को भी रेखांकित कर सकता है। जब तक राजनीतिक दलों के वादों के नीर-क्षीर परीक्षण की व्यवस्था नहीं बनती तब तक इसके अलावा और कोई उपाय नहीं कि आम जनता चुनावी वादों के नाम पर होने वाली जुमलेबाजी से सतर्क रहे।

स्वास्थ्य की चिंता

अच्छे स्वास्थ्य के मामले में झारखंड देश के पिछड़े राज्यों की कतार में 22वें स्थान पर है। अरुणाचल प्रदेश, मध्य प्रदेश, उत्तर प्रदेश, नागालैंड, असम और उत्तर प्रदेश ही ऐसे राज्य हैं, जो इस मामले में झारखंड से भी नीचे खड़े हैं। हाल ही में जारी एसडीजी इंडिया इंडेक्स 2018 में झारखंड के संदर्भ में ये बातें रेखांकित की गई हैं। राज्य के लिए यह चिंताजनक स्थिति है, जो यह दर्शाता है कि राज्य को स्वास्थ्य के राष्ट्रीय बेंचमार्क के करीब ले जाने के लिए अभी बहुत कुछ करना होगा। राज्य की मौजूदा स्वास्थ्य संरचनाओं की बात करें तो यहां की आबादी के अनुरूप राज्य में 7,267 स्वास्थ्य केंद्रों की आवश्यकता है। इससे इतर यहां इसकी उपलब्धता महज 4,476 है। चिकित्सकों की बात करें तो 20,378 की आबादी पर यहां एक चिकित्सक पदस्थापित हैं, जबकि राष्ट्रीय औसत की बात करें तो 11,897 लोगों पर एक चिकित्सक होने चाहिए। स्वास्थ्य उपकेंद्रों पर नजर डोड़ाएं तो 6060 केंद्रों के सापेक्ष इसकी उपलब्धता महज 3,958 हैं। इसी तरह 966 की आवश्यकता के विरुद्ध सिर्फ 330 प्राथमिक स्वास्थ्य केंद्र तथा 241 सामुदायिक स्वास्थ्य केंद्रों की जगह 188 ही संचालित हैं। यह स्थिति तब है, जबकि राज्य की लगभग 70 फीसद महिलाएं एमबीबीएस से पीछे हैं। कुपोषण की वजह से राज्य में प्रति वर्ष पांच साल आयु वर्ग के लगभग 23 लाख बच्चे असमय काल के गाल में समा रहे हैं। राज्य के लगभग पांच लाख बच्चे अंतिम कुपोषित हैं। तीन वर्ष से नीचे के 54.6 फीसद बच्चे कम वजन वाले हैं। जंगल, पहाड़ी और राज्य के सुदूर क्षेत्रों में रहने वाले अनुसूचित जनजाति समुदाय के 64.3 फीसद बच्चे कम वजन के पाए गए हैं। ऐसी स्थिति में चाहिए कि राज्य में बेहतर स्वास्थ्य सुविधा बहाल करने की दिशा में सरकार संजीदा हो। वह क्षेत्रवार जरूरतों के हिसाब से स्वास्थ्य नीति तैयार करे। मौजूदा संरचना और उपलब्ध मानव संसाधन का बेहतर प्रबंधन करे। भविष्य की आबादी और तब की आवश्यकताओं को केंद्र में रखकर अल्पकालीन तथा दीर्घकालीन स्वास्थ्य योजनाओं पर फोकस करे।

पकौड़ा और दिल्ली

कहавत है कि दिल्ली दिलवालों की है। ऐसे में चटपटी होना लाजमी है। चटपटी कहते ही चाट याद आती है और चाट के नाम से ही मुंह में पानी आता है। मुंह में पानी आता है मतलब आपकी स्वाद ग्रंथियां सक्रिय हो रही हैं। स्वाद ग्रंथियां सक्रिय होती है तो जो भी खाया जाते है उसका पाचन आसान हो जाता है। अब इतिहास देखते हैं-दिल्ली साठ बार उजड़ी और इतनी बार ही बसी। जब शाहजहां ने वापस दिल्ली को बसाया तो एक मंत्री ने उऊँ कह कि आपने दिल्ली को बसा तो दिया है, लेकिन यमुना का पानी तो पेट के लिए बहुत भारी है। अब ! कोई उपाय शेष नहीं था, दिल्ली तो बस चुकी थी, लोगों के पेट भी खराब होने लगे थे। तब अनुभवी लोगों ने कहा कि यमुना के पानी से बचाव का एक तरीका है, हमारे खाते में चटपटे मसालों का समावेश होना चाहिए। साथ में डेर सारा धी। बस फिर क्या था, खट्टी-मीठी चटनियां बनने लगीं, सब्जियां धी में बनने लगीं। धीरे-धीरे चाट का स्वाद दिल्लीवालों की जुबान पर चढ़ने लगा। पुरानी दिल्ली चाटवालों से भर गई, खोमचेवाले आवाद हो गए। यहां तक कि परांटेवाली गली तक बन गई। आलू के पकौड़े, गोभी के पकौड़े, प्याज के पकौड़े, पनीर के पकौड़े, बस पकौड़े ही पकौड़े!



हृदयनारायण दीक्षित

वैदिक काल से लेकर अब तक भारतीय राष्ट्रवाद ने कब और किस देश, समूह या सभ्यता पर आक्रामकता दिखाई? कुछ लोगों द्वारा इसे निशाना बनाना सही नहीं है

राष्ट्र सर्वोपरि निष्ठा है। भारतीय जनगणमन की सामूहिक अनुभूति है। इस अनुभूति का मूलाधार एक माता-भूमि, एक संस्कृति और भारत के सवा अरब समवेत एक जन हैं। इसी अनूभूति की अभिव्यक्ति राष्ट्रवाद है। राष्ट्रवाद भारत का स्वाभाविक विचार है, लेकिन आम चुनाव में इसे उग्र व आक्रामक बताया जा रहा है। ऐसा बताने वाले टिप्पणीकारों व नेताओं का निशाना प्रधानमंत्री मोदी हैं। राष्ट्रवाद सत्तारूढ़ भाजपा की घोषित विचारधारा है। उसे घेरने के लिए राष्ट्रवाद पर लौछान लगाया जा रहे हैं। सो राष्ट्रवाद राष्ट्रीय विमर्श के केंद्र में है। भारतीय राष्ट्रवाद और यूरोपीय नेशनलिज्म में बुनियादी अंतर है। यूरोपीय देशों में राष्ट्रवाद का जन्म मध्यकाल के बाद हुआ। राष्ट्रवाद के व्याख्याता इंएच कार ने लिखा है कि ‘सही अर्थों में राष्ट्रों का उदय मध्यकाल की समाप्ति के बाद हुआ।’ कार ने ‘सही अर्थों’ का अर्थ भी बताया था, ‘अतीत और वर्तमान में वास्तविकता, भविष्य की आकांक्षा के लिए सर्वनिष्ठ सरकार, सदस्यों के परस्पर संपर्क, साझा स्वार्थ, राष्ट्र की छवि के बारे में सदस्यों के मन में समवेत भाव।’ यूरोपीय देशों में मध्यकाल से पहले राष्ट्र निर्माण के ऐसे तत्व नहीं थे। वहां राष्ट्रों का जन्म युद्ध हालात में हुआ इसलिए भारतीय राष्ट्रवाद के विवेचन में यूरोपीय राष्ट्रवाद की प्रेरणा बकवास है।

यूरोप के देश आधुनिक काल में ‘नेशन’ कहे गए। भारत में मध्यकाल से बहुत पहले 321-298 ईसा पूर्व चंद्रगुप्त मौर्य के समय एक

केंद्रीय सत्ता वाला विशाल राष्ट्र है। कौटिल्य के ‘अर्थशास्त्र’ में राष्ट्र की चर्चा है। अशोक के शासनकाल में राष्ट्र और विस्तृत हुआ। यूरोपीय राष्ट्रवाद का उद्भव नवीं-दसवीं शताब्दी में हुआ। इंग्लैंड के एफकीकरण की प्रक्रिया किंग एगवर्ट (802-39) से किंग अल्फ्रेड (871-916) तक जारी थी। फ्रांस और जर्मनी में भी यही धारा थी। यूरोपीय राष्ट्रवाद का विकास सत्ताधीशों ने किया। मध्यकाल में इटली के लोगों ने तत्कालीन समय को ‘ला रिास्विता-जुनगरण’ कहा। अठारहवीं शताब्दी में फ्रांस के विद्वानों ने इसे ‘रिनेसां’ कहा। मार्क्सवादी विचारक डॉ. रामविलास शर्मा की टिप्पणी है कि ‘वास्तव में यह इटली, फ्रांस और इंग्लैंड के लिए जाति निर्माण और जातीय निर्माण का युग था।’ यूरोपीय देशों के सत्ताधीशों ने विस्तारवाद की नीति अपनाई। जर्मनी के सत्ताधीश हिटलर ने राष्ट्रवाद के नाम पर व्यापक हिंसा की। यूरोप के अन्य तमाम सत्ताधीशों ने भी हिंसा की। फ्रांस रोमन साम्राज्य से पीड़ित था। भाषा व सभ्यता के आधार पर एक समझौता हुआ। फ्रांस राष्ट्र कहलाया। यूरोप में राष्ट्रवाद को लेकर युद्ध हुए। ऐसी हिंसा भारतीय राष्ट्रवाद में कभी नहीं हुई।

भारतीय राष्ट्रवाद को आक्रामक बताने वाले टिप्पणीकार पश्चिमी राष्ट्रवाद से प्रभावित हैं। वे भारत को राष्ट्र बनाने का श्रेय ब्रिटिश सत्ता को देते हैं। यानी भारत में अंग्रेजों सत्ता न आती तो भारत राष्ट्र नहीं होता। गांधी जी ने ‘हिंद स्वराज’ में टिप्पणी की थी कि ‘आपको अंग्रेजों ने सिखाया है कि आप एक राष्ट्र नहीं थे। यह बात

खतरनाक है शिक्षा नीति में अस्पष्टता

महात्मा गांधी के अनुसार शिक्षा मनुष्य में अंतर्निहित स्वाभाविक गुणों और क्षमताओं की अभिव्यक्ति का माध्यम है। वह नैसर्गिक क्षमताओं के परफ्यूजन के लिए अवसर प्रदान करती है। यह विद्यार्थी को उसके अपने सामाजिक और भौतिक परिेश्वर में स्थापित करती है। वह एकांगी न होकर शिक्षार्थी के मन, बुद्धि और शरीर सबको उनकी जरूरत के मुताबिक आवश्यक खुराक देती है। गांधी जी ने शरीर श्रम को महत्ता को पहचान कर उस पर विशेष बल दिया था। उनकी ‘नई तालीम’ सिर्फ औपनिवेशिक पद्धति का विकल्प नहीं थी, अपितु ‘स्वराज’, ‘स्वदेशी’ और ‘स्वावलंबन’ जैसे विचारों को मूर्त आकार देने वाली भी थी। खालिस भारतीय दृष्टि वाली यह पद्धति सत्य और अहिंसा के आधारभूत विचारों पर निर्भर थी। इसमें शक्ति और सहअस्तित्व के बीच विकास की कल्पना की गई थी। समग्र शिक्षा की यह संकल्पना आदर्श से ज्यदा व्यावहारिक थी। इसमें कौशल विकास और सामर्थ्य के विकास जैसी अनेक कठिनाइयों के समाधान भी हैं।

गांधी जी की विचारधारा को आगे बढ़ाते हुए भारत में शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में कई प्रयोग भी शुरू हुए जिनमें से कुछ अभी भी चल रहे हैं। वघों के सेवा ग्राम में संचालित आर्नड निकेतन नामक विद्यालय हृदय, हाथ और मस्तिष्क के बीच सघन तालमेल बैठते हुए आगे बढ़ता है। विशेष रूप से इसमें शिल्प के लिए अग्रह स्वावलंबन के लिए तैयार करता है। मातृ भाषा का उपयोग करते हुए समाएत और सहअस्तित्व का पाठ विद्यालय के परिवेश में निःशब्द रूप से बिना किसी शोर के घुला-मिला है। पीपल और बरगद के तले मिट्टी और खपरैल से बने विद्यालय के भौतिक परिवेश में मन, वचन और कर्म का साथ देखा जा सकता है। अध्ययन विषयों में लोककला, संगीत की भी खास जगह है। खेत हो, खेल का मैदान हो या फिर पाठ शाला शिक्षक और शिक्षार्थी मिल कर काम करते हैं। आज के चकाचौंध वाले विद्यालयों को देखते हुए धूप, हवा, मिट्टी से जुड़े इस विद्यालय को कोई भी सहज ही पिछड़ा कह सकता है। विद्यालय में पहुंचने पर शिक्षक और शिक्षार्थी घर की ही तरह विद्यालय को सफाई करते हैं। प्रयोग में आने वाली चीजों की रिसाइक्लिंग भी की जाती है और कुछ नया सामने आता है। विद्यालय के प्रत्येक छात्र कृषि, सिराई और रसीदों के कार्यों में एक सा हाथ बंटते हैं। विद्यालय के जीवन परिवेश में शिक्षा का संयंदन होता है।

यह भी काबिले गौर है कि गांधीवादी शिक्षा को मुख्याधार ने नकार सा दिया। गांधी जी ने चंपारण में 1917 में विद्यालय शुरू किए थे। पर उनमें से अधिकांश अब खस्ताहाल है और उनका गांधी जी के विचारों और अभ्यासों से कोई विशेष



गिरिराजवर मिश्र



शिक्षा में अस्पष्टता और उदासीनता ऐसी पीढ़ी तैयार कर रही है जिसका देश, समाज और संस्कृति के साथ बड़ा दुर्बल संबंध है

दुर्बल होती चली जा रही है।

इसी तरह शैक्षिक मूल्यांकन और उसकी साख की मुश्किलें बढ़ती जा रही हैं। छात्र संख्या बढ़ी है और उनके मूल्यांकन को सुविधाजनक बनाने के लिए सारी परीक्षाएं वस्तुनिष्ठ होती जा रही हैं। इसमें सोचने-समझने की क्षमता, सृजनात्मकता, मौलिकता आदि गुणों के मूल्यांकन का अवसर लगभग समाप्त होता जा रहा है। जैसे राष्ट्रीय पात्रता परीक्षा (नेट) में सभी ऑब्जेक्टिव प्रश्न हो चुके हैं। यह परीक्षा भावी अध्यापक देते हैं। अब अध्यापक को लिखना भी आता है कि भी नहीं, उसकी अभिरुचि क्या है इत्यादि जानने का कोई सवाल नहीं है। लगभग ऐसी ही स्थिति अन्य परीक्षाओं की भी है। गुणवत्तापूर्वक शिक्षा के कितने केंद्र हैं और लालच डिग्री देने वाले संस्थान कितनी भयानक गति से बढ़ रहे हैं यह किसी से छिपा नहीं है। सुविधा, संख्या और साख इन तीनों के बीच संतुलन कैसे बनाए जाएं यह जटिल चुनौती हो रही है। आज न पयांपन विद्यालय खड़े हैं, न अपेक्षित मात्रा में अध्यापक हैं, न विषय के लिए हम सामग्री तैयार कर पा रहे हैं। आज थोड़े से अच्छे विद्यालय, महाविद्यालय और विश्वविद्यालय के विभाग बचे हैं, परंतु अधिकांश अस्तित्व को लड़ाई लड़ रहे हैं।

अस्पष्ट नीतियां और लचर कार्यान्वयन संस्थाओं की बलि ले रहा है। सरकारी आदेश के तहत लगभग साल भर से नियुक्ति पर रोक लगी है। अध्यापकों की कमी का दूरगामी असर पड़ रहा है। यदि शीघ्र हस्तक्षेप नहीं हुआ तो सरकारी विश्वविद्यालय बंद होने के कगार पर पहुंच जाएंगे और निजी संस्थान जो धन उठाही के चंत्र सरीखे हैं आगे बढ़ेंगे, यद्यपि उन पर गुणवत्ता का कमजोर नियंत्रण होता है। आज भारतीय समाज बदल रहा है। उसकी जरूरतें बदल रही हैं और महत्वाकांक्षाएं नए आयामों को छू रही हैं। इसे ध्यान में रखकर शिक्षा की समाज के साथ लय स्थापित करने पर विचार करने की जरूरत है। इस संतुलन को स्थापित करने के लिए बापू की समग्र शिक्षा की दृष्टि को सामने रखना होगा। ऐसे शिक्षा केंद्र निर्मित करने होंगे जहां शिक्षा को मानवीय मूल्यों से अलोकित किया सके। साथ ही इस प्रश्न पर भी गंभीरता से विचार करने की जरूरत है कि हम किस तरह शिक्षा के विविध अवसर पैदा करें तथा कुशलताओं का विकास करें। क्योंकि एक ही तरह की शिक्षा विभिन्न प्रकार की क्षमताओं के अनुसार उपयुक्त नहीं हो सकती। गांधी जी की शिक्षा दृष्टि के समय में विकल्प प्रस्तुत करती हैं।

(लेखक महात्मा गांधी अंतरराष्ट्रीय हिंदी विवि के कुलपति हैं)

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आत्मसुझाव

एक-दूसरे को सुझाव देना लोग अपना हक समझते हैं, वहीं खुद को सुझाव देना वे जरूरी नहीं समझते। जबकि व्यक्ति की सफलता और प्रगति का सूचक आत्मसुझाव ही है। आत्मसुझाव यानी खुद को किसी निश्चित और विशिष्ट बात का सुझाव देना। व्यक्ति बन परिशानी, पीड़ा और तनाव के दौर से गुजर रहा होता है तो उस समय वह अपनी चेतना खो देता है। डॉ. जोसेफ मर्फी ने लिखा है कि चिंतन, असफलता और तनाव के समय आत्मसुझाव व्यक्ति को हर परिेश्वर से उभारने में सहयोग करता है। ऐसे समय शरीर को ढीला छोड़ आंखें बंद कर लें और स्वयं से कहें कि आप असफलता को जल्दी ही सफलता में बदल देंगे। जब वह आत्मसुझाव व्यक्ति के अचेतन मन में छज जाएगा तो कुछ ही समय में सफलता व्यक्ति की दासी बन जाएगी। यह ध्यान अक्षय रखें कि आत्मसुझाव सदैव सकारात्मक हो। यदि सकारात्मक आत्मसुझाव को व्यक्ति अपने जीवन का एक अंग बना ले तो उसके अचेतन मन की शक्तियां सुझाव की प्रकृति के अनुरूप काम करने लगती हैं।

असफलता तभी मिलती है जब व्यक्ति यह सोचता है कि पता नहीं वह काम कर पाएगा अथवा नहीं या कहीं वह फेल तो नहीं हो जाएगा। इन बातों को मन में सोचने से पहले व्यक्ति को यह जानना चाहिए कि अनचाहे ही ऐसा करके वह अपने अचेतन मन में नकारात्मक आत्मसुझाव बो देता है जिसका परिणाम उस असफलता के रूप में मिलता है। लिहाजा अपने अचेतन मन में हमेशा सकारात्मक और अच्छी भावनाओं का विकास करें। जैसे भी रिचर्ड ह्यूजर कहते हैं कि ईसान तब टूटता है, जब वह खुद से हार जाता है। इसलिए हमेशा अपनी हिम्मत बनाए रखें। कई बार हम सभी दूसरे लोगों को बड़ी बेसब्री से सुझाव देने को तैयार रहते हैं, वहीं अपने कार्य को करते समय हम यह सोचते हैं कि हम तो सदैव सही हैं। यही भावना गलती कराती है, उसी भावना को आत्मसुझाव में परिवर्तित करने की आवश्यकता है। जब हम कोई भी कार्य करें, किसी भी समस्या का सामना करें तो ऐसे में जरूरी है कि दूसरों के सुझावों को जानने और सुनने के साथ अपने आत्मसुझाव का भी आंकलन करें। आत्मसुझाव करके व्यक्ति न सिर्फ समस्या का समाधान श्रेष्ठ तरीके से कर सकता है, बल्कि वह कार्य को भी सफलतापूर्वक पूर्ण कर सकता है।

रू नू सैनी

धार्मिक भावनाओं में आस्था रखते हुए लोगों को भी स्वयं साफ-सफाई का ध्यान रखना होगा। साथ ही प्रशासन की भी आयोजकों की सूचना पर अपने कर्मचारी भेजकर आरंभिक सफाई व्यवस्था ठीक रखने की जरूरत है।

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ऑनलाइन गेम पर लगे प्रतिबंध

पबजी और इससे मिलते-जुलते अन्य ऑनलाइन गेम पर संपूर्ण देश में प्रतिबंध लगा देना चाहिए। ये गेम वक्त की बर्बादी के साधन मात्र हैं। इनकी लेत के कारण व्यक्ति अनिद्रा, चिड़चिड़ापन, आक्रामकता, हिंसक प्रवृत्ति के शिकार हो जाते हैं। ये कुछ राज्यों में प्रतिबंधित है, किंतु ये बात समझ से परे है कि प्रतिबंध की सर्वस्वीकार्यता समूचे देश में एक साथ लगी क्यों नहीं होती? मसलन शराब का ही उदाहरण लीजिए, कुछ राज्यों में इस पर पूर्णतया प्रतिबंध है किंतु पूरे देश में नहीं। अगर कोई चीज गलत है तो उसे सिर्रे से नकारना पूरे राष्ट्र के लिए सही है, लेकिन अगर कोई चीज सही है तो उसे सभी जगह एक साथ लागू हो जाना चाहिए।

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

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^[1] संस्थापक-स्व. पूर्णचंद्र गुप्त, पूर्व प्रधान संपादक-स्व.नेरेंद्र मोहन, संपादकीय निदेशक-महेन्द्र मोहन गुप्त, जागरण प्रकाशन वि. के. लिए- नोतेन्द्र श्रीवास्तव द्वारा 501, आई.एन.एस. बिल्डिंग,एफो मार्ग, नई दिल्ली से प्रकाशित और उन्ही के द्वारा डी-210, 211, सेक्टर-63 नोएडा से मुद्रित, संपादक (राष्ट्रीय संस्करण)- विष्णु प्रकाश त्रिपाठी

^[2] दूरभाष : नई दिल्ली कार्यालय : 23359961-62, नोएडा कार्यालय : 0120-3915800, E-mail: delhi@nda.jagran.com, R.N.I. No. DELHIN/2017/74721 * इस संक में प्रकाशित समस्त समाचारों के चयन एवं संपादन हेतु पी.आर.बी. एड्ट के अंतर्गत उत्तरदायी। समस्त विवाद दिल्ली न्यायालय के अधीन ही होंगे। हवाई शुल्क अतिरिक्त।

मर्यादा का उल्लंघन

जैसे-जैसे चुनाव का माहौल गरमा रहा है, नेताओं की वाणी से निकलने वाले शब्द कई बार विवाद का कारण भी बन जा रहे हैं। इससे माहौल भी खराब होता है और आचार संहिता का उल्लंघन भी। लेकिन समस्या तब ज्यादा गंभीर हो जाती है जब संवैधानिक पद पर आसीन राज्यपाल जैसा च्यक्ति या नीति आयोग के प्रमुख जैसा कोई वरिष्ठ नौकरशाह या अर्थशास्त्री ऐसी बातें करने लगे या टिप्पणी करे, जो आचार संहिता के उल्लंघन के दायरे में आती हो। हाल में ऐसे दो मामले आए। पहला मामला राजस्थान के राज्यपाल का और दूसरा नीति आयोग के उपाध्यक्ष का। दोनों ही मामले तूल पकड़ गए। राजनीतिक दल सक्रिय हुए और चुनाव आयोग से कार्रवाई की गुहार लगाई। चुनाव आयोग ने दोनों ही मामलों को गंभीर मानते हुए चेतावनी दी। ऐसे में जो पहला सवाल उठा वह था पद की मर्यादा का। इन दोनों ही मामलों से ऐसा लगा कि पद की गरिमा और मर्यादा बाद में है, उससे पहले कहीं न कहीं किसी के प्रति निष्ठा दिखाना ज्यादा जरूरी है।

राजस्थान के राज्यपाल कल्याण सिंह ने पिछले महीने की 23 तारीख को अलीगढ़ में मीडिया के सामने यह कह दिया था कि ‘हम सभी लोग भाजपा के कार्यकर्ता हैं और इस नाते हमें भाजपा को जिताना है। हम सब चाहेंगे एक बार फिर से केंद्र में मोदीजी प्रधानमंत्री बनें...।’ कल्याण सिंह राज्यपाल के पद पर नहीं होते तो कोई बात नहीं थी। लेकिन लगता है वे भूल गए कि वे अब राज्यपाल हैं, यह संवैधानिक पद है। ऐसे में उनकी निष्ठा अपनी या किसी अन्य पार्टी के प्रति नहीं, बल्कि संविधान के प्रति होनी चाहिए। राज्यपाल राज्य में केंद्र का प्रतिनिधि होता है और राष्ट्रपति ही उनकी नियुक्ति करते हैं। कल्याण सिंह जो कुछ बोले, उससे यही संदेश गया कि वे चुनाव के दौरान अपनी पार्टी के लिए खुल कर काम कर रहे हैं। जब मामला चुनाव आयोग पहुंचा तो आयोग ने इसे गंभीर माना और राष्ट्रपति से उनकी शिकायत की। राष्ट्रपति ने इसे विचार के लिए गृह मंत्रालय को भेजा है। देखने की बात यह है कि क्या ऐसा कोई फैसला आता है जो भविष्य के लिए नजीर बन सके। इससे पहले भी 1993 में हिमाचल प्रदेश के तत्कालीन राज्यपाल गुलशेर अहमद भी इसी तरह के विवाद में आ गए थे। वे भी अपने बेटे ईसद अहमद के लिए चुनाव प्रचार करने पहुंच गए थे। तब भी ऐसा ही विवाद मचा था और चुनाव आयोग ने उन्हें आचार संहिता के उल्लंघन का दोषी पाया था और गुलशेर अहमद की राज्यपाली चली गई थी।

इसी तरह, नीति आयोग के उपाध्यक्ष ने भी संयम नहीं बरता और कांग्रेस की प्रस्तावित न्यूनतम आय गारंटी योजना (न्याय) की आलोचना करते हुए कह दिया कि कांग्रेस चुनाव जीतने के लिए चांद दिलाने का वादा कर रही है और वित्तीय व्यवस्था को गंभीर नुकसान पहुंचाने वाली है। जब यह मामला चुनाव आयोग पहुंचा तो आयोग ने उन्हें आचार संहिता के उल्लंघन का दोषी पाया और सार्वजनिक रूप से ऐसे बयान देने में सतर्कता बरतने की चेतावनी दी। इस तरह की टीका-टिप्पणियां या बयान ऐसे महत्वपूर्ण पदों पर आसीन लोगों के विवेक पर सवाल खड़े करते हैं और साथ ही उन संस्थाओं की गरिमाओं को भी ठेस पहुंचती है जिसके वे मुखिया होते हैं। नीति आयोग के उपाध्यक्ष को क्या इस बात का अंदाजा नहीं रहा होगा कि वे जो कह रहे हैं, आचार संहिता का उल्लंघन है। उनके इस बयान से क्या एक पार्टी विशेष के प्रति उनका झुकाव परिलक्षित नहीं होता! जब उच्च पदों, खासतौर से संवैधानिक पदों पर आसीन महानुभाव ही स्थापित परंपराओं, मानदंडों और मर्यादा का खयाल नहीं रखेंगे तो समाज और राजनीति में क्या संदेश जाएगा!

हताशा आतंकी

कश्मीर में दहशतगदों की हताशा इस कदर बढ़ती गई है कि अब वे उन्हीं लोगों की हत्या करने लगे हैं, जिनके लिए तथाकथित तौर पर संघर्ष का दावा करते हैं। इसका ताजा उदाहरण बारामूला के सोपोर में छुट्टी मनाने आए एक सैनिक के घर में घुस कर उसकी हत्या कर देने की घटना है। शनिवार रात को सैनिक के घर में घुस कर कुछ आतंकियों ने गोलीबारी की और उसे बहुत नजदीक से गोली मार दी। पिछले कुछ महीनों से आतंकियों ने घाटी में कश्मीरी मूल के सुरक्षाकर्मियों को निशाना बनाना शुरू किया है। पिछले साल उन्होंने त्राल इलाके में पचें चिपका कर अपील की थी कि कश्मीरी युवक पुलिस और सेना में न जाएं। स्थानीय लोगों से भी अपील की थी कि वे अपने बच्चों को सुरक्षा बलों में भर्ती होने से रोकें, नही तो कड़े कदम के लिए तैयार रहें। पर उनकी अपील का असर नहीं हुआ। कश्मीरी युवकों के सामने बड़ी समस्या रोजगार की है, सो वे दहशतगदों की अपीलों को अनसुना करते रहे। दहशतगदों ने इसे अपनी नाफरमानी माना और ऐसे युवाओं के खिलाफ हिंसक रुख अख्तियार कर लिया। पिछली ईद के समय उन्होंने ऐसे तीन कश्मीरी युवाओं की हत्या कर दी, जो छुट्टी मनाने घर आ रहे थे या आए थे। फिर कश्मीर पुलिस में भर्ती हुए कुछ युवाओं को भी इसी तरह मार डाला।

दरअसल, जबसे सुरक्षाबलों ने घाटी में सघन तलाशी अभियान चलाया है और दहशतगदों के ठिकानों पर कड़ी नजर रखनी शुरू की है, तब से उनका मनोबल काफी गिरा है। थोड़े-थोड़े अंतराल पर हिज्जुल के कई कमांडर मार गिराए गए। कश्मीरी युवाओं को हाथ में बंदूक उठाने के लिए उकसाने की उनकी कोशिशें कमजोर हुई हैं। पहले वे जिस तरह आम युवाओं को उकसा कर सेना पर पत्थरबाजी के लिए सड़कों पर उतारने में सफल हो जाते थे, वह भी अब बंद है। उधर, आम कश्मीरी नागरिकों ने उनकी सुरक्षाबलों का साथ देने की अपील टुकरा दी। इससे उनकी हताशा और बढ़ी है। दहशतगदों को तभी ताकत मिलती है, जब स्थानीय लोग उन्हें समर्थन देते हैं। पिछले कुछ महीने पहले तक जब भी सुरक्षाबल आतंकियों के खिलाफ शिकंजे कसने का प्रयास करते थे, स्थनीय लोग पत्थरबाजी करना शुरू कर देते थे। इस तरह उन्हें जो समर्थन मिला करता था, वह अब नहीं दिखता। इसलिए भी झुंझलाहट में वे सेना में भर्ती हुए घाटी के युवाओं को निशाना बना रहे हैं।

आम कश्मीरी के सामने बड़ी समस्या रोजगार की है। उनके बच्चे पढ़-लिख कर कोई रोजगार, कोई नौकरी करेंगे, तभी उनके जीवन में बेहतरी की उम्मीद जगेगी। अगर दहशतगर्द उसी पर रोक लगाएंगे, तो भला वे कैसे उनका समर्थन करेंगे। यह अच्छा संकेत है कि स्थानीय लोग दहशतगर्द संगठनों के दबाव से मुक्त हो रहे हैं। पर इसके साथ ही सरकार की तरफ से भी सकारात्मक पहल की जरूरत है। अगर रोजगार के नए अवसर उपलब्ध होंगे, तो कश्मीरी युवाओं के भटकने की संभावना काफी कम रह जाएगी। फिर आतंकवाद के पनपने की असल वजहों को समझना भी जरूरी है। देखना होगा कि कुछ महीने पहले जिस बारामूला को आतंकवाद मुक्त जिला घोषित किया गया था, वहां आतंकियों का मंसूबा इस कदर कैसे बढ़ा कि घर में घुस कर एक सैनिक को मार डाला।

कल्पमेधा

जातियां व्यक्तियों से बनती हैं, लेकिन राष्ट्र का निर्माण केवल संस्थाओं द्वारा होता है।

- डिज़राइली

जयंतीलाल भंडारी

भारतीय उपभोक्ता बाजार के विस्तार में मध्यम वर्ग की अहम भूमिका है। शहरों में रहने वाले मध्यम वर्ग के लोग अपने उद्यम-कारोबार, अपनी सेवाओं और पेशेवर योग्यताओं से न केवल अपनी कमाई बढ़ा रहे हैं, वरन अपनी क्रय शक्ति से उपभोक्ता बाजार को भी मजबूत बना रहे हैं। देश में मध्यम वर्ग की बढ़ती क्रयशक्ति उपभोक्ता बाजार को नई गति दे रही है।

भारत का उपभोक्ता बाजार दुनिया में सबसे तेज गति से आगे बढ़ रहा है। वर्ष 2008 में इस उपभोक्ता बाजार महज इकतीस लाख करोड़ रुपए था, जो पिछले साल यानी 2018 में एक सौ दस लाख करोड़ का हो गया। माना जा रहा है कि 2028 तक यह तीन गुना बढ़ कर तीन सौ पैंतीस लाख करोड़ रुपए का हो जाएगा। एक वैश्विक कंसल्टेंसी फर्म की रिपोर्ट में भारत के उपभोक्ता बाजार की तस्वीर पेश करते हुए कहा गया है कि वर्ष 2008 से यह हर साल तेरह फीसद की दर से बढ़ रहा है। उपभोक्ता बाजार की यह वृद्धि देश में बढ़ती आबादी, तेज शहरीकरण और तेजी से बढ़ते मध्यम वर्ग की वजह से हो रही है। उपभोक्ता बाजार में उत्पादों के साथ-साथ सेवाओं की मांग भी तेजी से बढ़ रही है।

देश के उपभोक्ता बाजार के बढ़ने का एक बड़ा कारण ई-कॉमर्स का तेजी से बढ़ना भी है।

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जनसत्ता

उपभोक्ता बाजार की चुनौतियां

डेलॉय इंडिया और रिटेल एसोसिएशन ऑफ़ इंडिया की रिपोर्ट में बताया गया है कि भारत का ई-कॉमर्स बाजार वर्ष 2021 तक चौरासी अरब डॉलर का हो जाएगा। वर्ष 2017 में यह चौबीस अरब डॉलर का था। भारत में ई-कॉमर्स बाजार सालाना बत्तीस फीसद की दर से बढ़ रहा है। निसंदेह ई-कॉमर्स ने देश में खुदरा कारोबार में क्रांति ला दी है। देश में इंटरनेट के उपयोगकर्ताओं की संख्या साठ करोड़ से भी अधिक होने के कारण देश में ई-कॉमर्स की रफ्तार तेजी से बढ़ी है। भारत के विशालकाय उपभोक्ता बाजार की मांग पूरी करने के लिए देश-विदेश की बड़ी-बड़ी कंपनियां अपनी रणनीतियां बना रही हैं। उपभोक्ता बाजार की अपनी शक्ति के कारण भारत आर्थिक महाशक्ति बनने की ओर अग्रसर है।

देश की बढ़ती जनसंख्या और उपभोक्ता बाजार का सीधा संबंध है। इस समय भारत की जनसंख्या दुनिया में सबसे तेजी से बढ़ रही है। वर्तमान में भारत की आबादी एक सौ चींतीस करोड़ और चीन की आबादी एक सौ इकतालीस करोड़ है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र की वैश्विक जनसंख्या रिपोर्ट में कहा गया था कि वर्ष 2024 में भारत की जनसंख्या चीन से अधिक हो जाएगी। दुनिया के अन्य सभी देशों की तुलना में भारत की जनसंख्या सबसे अधिक बढ़ेगी। भारत की यह विशालकाय आबादी सबसे बड़े वैश्विक उपभोक्ता बाजार का आधार भी होगी।

भारत में जैसे-जैसे उद्योगीकरण, कारोबारी विकास और शहरीकरण बढ़ रहा है वैसे-वैसे देश का उपभोक्ता बाजार तेजी से बढ़ रहा है। जहां एक ओर गांवों से रोजगार की चाह में लोगों का प्रवाह तेजी से शहरों की ओर बढ़ रहा है, वहीं दूसरी ओर शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य और आधारभूत सुविधाओं के कारण लोग शहरों में ही रहना पसंद करते हैं। वैश्वीकरण के नए परिदृश्य में भारतीय शहर प्रतिभाओं के लिए खुशहाली के नए केंद्र बन गए हैं। प्रतिभाएं शहरों में इसलिए रहना चाहती हैं क्योंकि शहरों में विश्वस्तरीय रोजगार अवसर सुजित हो रहे हैं। भारत दुनिया का सबसे बड़ा प्लेसमेंट सेंटर बनता जा रहा है। स्थिति यह है कि भारत के कई शहरों से विकसित देशों के लिए आउटसोर्सिंग का प्रवाह तेज होता जा रहा है। भारत में अंग्रेजी बोलने वाले पेशेवर सरलता से मिल जाते हैं और व्यावसायिक कार्यस्थल पश्चिमी देशों के मुकाबले काफी कम दरों पर उपलब्ध हैं।

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यह बात भी महत्वपूर्ण है कि नए शहरों का तेजी से विकास भारत में उपभोक्ता बाजार को तेजी से आगे बढ़ा रहा है। विश्व आर्थिक मंच ने इसी साल ‘वैश्विक शहरीकरण में भारतीय शहरों की छलांग’ से संबंधित रिपोर्ट जारी की है। यह रिपोर्ट दुनिया के सात सौ अस्सी बड़े और मझोले शहरों की बदलती आर्थिक तस्वीर और आबादी की बदलती प्रवृत्ति को लेकर तैयार की गई है। इस रिपोर्ट में बताया गया है कि 2019 से 2035 तक दुनिया के शहरीकरण में काफी बदलाव आएगा। तेजी से विकसित होते हुए नए शहरों की रफ्तार के मामले में शीर्ष के वीस में पहले सत्रह शहर भारत के होंगे। इन शहरों से भारत का उपभोक्ता बाजार व्यापक बनेगा।

भारतीय उपभोक्ता बाजार के विस्तार में मध्यम वर्ग की अहम भूमिका है। शहरों में रहने वाले मध्यम वर्ग के लोग अपने उद्यम-कारोबार, अपनी सेवाओं और पेशेवर योग्यताओं से न केवल अपनी कमाई बढ़ा रहे हैं, वरन अपनी क्रय शक्ति से उपभोक्ता बाजार को भी मजबूत बना रहे हैं। देश में मध्यम वर्ग की बढ़ती क्रयशक्ति उपभोक्ता बाजार को नई गति दे रही है। भारत में मध्यम वर्ग के लोगों की आर्थिक ताकत तेजी से बढ़ी है। इसी ताकत के बल पर भारत ने 2008 की मंदी से सबसे पहले निजात पाई थी। वर्ष 1991 से शुरू हुए आर्थिक सुधारों के बाद देश में मध्यम वर्ग के लोगों की संख्या और खरीद क्षमता ऊंचाई पर पहुंच गई है और चारों ओर भारतीय मध्यम वर्ग का स्वागत हो रहा है। नेशनल इंस्टीट्यूट फार अप्लाइड इकोनॉमिक रिसर्च की नवीनतम रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि वर्तमान में देश में मध्यम वर्ग के लोगों की संख्या तीस करोड़ से अधिक है। देश में उच्च मध्यम वर्ग के सत्रह करोड़

द्वारा रहे हैं, वरन अपनी क्रय शक्ति से उपभोक्ता बाजार को भी मजबूत बना रहे हैं। देश में मध्यम वर्ग की बढ़ती क्रयशक्ति उपभोक्ता बाजार को नई गति दे रही है। भारत में मध्यम वर्ग के लोगों की आर्थिक ताकत तेजी से बढ़ी है। इसी ताकत के बल पर भारत ने 2008 की मंदी से सबसे पहले निजात पाई थी। वर्ष 1991 से शुरू हुए आर्थिक सुधारों के बाद देश में मध्यम वर्ग के लोगों की संख्या और खरीद क्षमता ऊंचाई पर पहुंच गई है और चारों ओर भारतीय मध्यम वर्ग का स्वागत हो रहा है। नेशनल इंस्टीट्यूट फार अप्लाइड इकोनॉमिक रिसर्च की नवीनतम रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि वर्तमान में देश में मध्यम वर्ग के लोगों की संख्या तीस करोड़ से अधिक है। देश में उच्च मध्यम वर्ग के सत्रह करोड़

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लोग छियालीस फीसद क्रेडिट कार्ड, उनचास फीसद कार, बावन फीसदी एसी और तिरपन फीसद कंप्यूटर के मालिक हैं। मध्यम वर्ग की ताकत से चमकते हुए भारतीय बाजार में अपार संभावनाएं हैं। इसके लिए दुनिया के विकसित और विकासशील देशों के उद्यमी और कारोबारियों के कदम भारत की ओर तेजी से बढ़ रहे हैं। इस समय जब भारत की विकास दर दुनिया में सर्वाधिक सात फीसद के स्तर पर है, उसमें मध्यम वर्ग की अहम भूमिका है। शेरपर बाजार की ऊंचाई में भी मध्यम वर्ग की भूमिका है।

ऐसे में जब देश का उपभोक्ता बाजार बढ़ रहा है, तब उपभोक्ताओं को किसी भी प्रकार की उगी से बचाने और उनके हितों के संरक्षण की चुनौतियां भी मुंह बाएं खड़ी हैं। जो उपभोक्ता आज बाजार की आत्मा कहा जाता है वह कई बार बाजार में मिलावट, बिना मानक की वस्तुओं की बिक्री, अधिक दाम, कम नापतौल जैसे शोषण से पीड़ित होते हुए दिखाई दे रहा है। उपभोक्ता संरक्षण के वर्तमान क

कार्बन का कोहरा

ज्ञान और विज्ञान में उत्कृष्ट प्रगति के साथ मनुष्य धरती को तबाह भी कर रहा है. पृथ्वी पर अभी कार्बन डाइऑक्साइड की मात्रा तीस लाख सालों में सबसे अधिक है. जिस भूवैज्ञानिक दौर में हम रह रहे हैं, उसकी उम्र भी इतनी ही है. जर्मन शोध संस्था पॉस्टडैम इंस्टीट्यूट के अध्ययन के अनुसार, इस गैस में बढ़ोतरी का मुख्य कारण जीवाश्म ईंधन का इस्तेमाल है, जो वैश्विक ऊर्जा का सबसे बड़ा स्रोत है. कार्बन डाइऑक्साइड के साथ वातावरण में मिथेन की बढ़त भी बेहद चिंताजनक है. धरती के तापमान को बढ़ाने में इन गैसों की सबसे बड़ी भूमिका है. इनके कारण हमारे ग्रह के वातावरण में गर्मी संचित होती रहती है. ये गैस बाहर से प्रकाश को आने देते हैं, पर गर्मी के एक हिस्से को निकलने से रोक देते हैं. लाखों सालों में पृथ्वी के औसत पूर्व-औद्योगिक तापमान में दो डिग्री सेल्सियस से अधिक की वृद्धि नहीं हुई है, पर अब इस सीमा को लांघने की आशंका बढ़ गयी है. यदि पर्यावरण और जलवायु को लेकर हमारी मौजूदा लापरवाही में बदलाव नहीं आया, तो आगामी 50 सालों में ही बढ़ोतरी दो डिग्री सेल्सियस की रेखा से पार चली जायेगी. नासा के मुताबिक धरती के सतह के औसत तापमान के लिखा से पिछला साल बीते 140 सालों में सबसे अधिक रहा था. ध्रुवीय ग्लेशियरों के पिघलने, समुद्री जल-स्तर के बढ़ने, वनों के निरंतर क्षरण, वन्य जीवों के अस्तित्व पर संकट, प्राकृतिक आपदाओं की बारंबारता आदि के रूप में जलवायु परिवर्तन के खतरनाक नतीजे हमारे सामने हैं. तीस लाख साल पहले शुरू हुए वर्तमान भूवैज्ञानिक दौर

में मानव सभ्यता की आयु मात्र 11 हजार साल ही है. ऐसे में जो जलवायु परिवर्तन हो रहा है. यह बहुत गंभीर है. इन तथ्यों की स्पष्ट चेतावनी है कि हमें आपात स्तर पर तापमान वृद्धि को नियंत्रित करने के उपाय करने होंगे. अंतरराष्ट्रीय राजनीति के पैंतरे के कारण जलवायु से जुड़े समझौते बेअसर हैं. देशों के बीच अर्थव्यवस्था को लेकर आत्मघाती प्रतिस्पर्धा चल रही है. सर्वाधिक कार्बन उत्सर्जन करनेवाले विकसित देश उभरती अर्थव्यवस्थाओं को आवश्यक वित्तीय मदद करने में आनाकानी कर रहे हैं, जिसकी वजह से स्वच्छ ऊर्जा के विस्तार की गति बहुत धीमी है. यह संतोष की बात है कि अमेरिका और यूरोप में नये सिरे से पर्यावरण की चिंता को राजनीतिक एजेंडे में लाने के लिए प्रयास हो रहे हैं. चीन और भारत ने भी प्रदूषण रोकने और ऊर्जा के वैकल्पिक स्रोतों पर ध्यान देना शुरू किया है, परंतु इन देशों के सामने अपनी आबादी की आकांक्षाओं को पूरा करने के लिए आर्थिक और औद्योगिक विकास की गति को बनाये रखने की बड़ी चुनौती भी है. हमारे देश में ऊर्जा के लिए स्वच्छ स्रोतों को बढ़ावा दिया जा रहा है, पर कार्बन उत्सर्जन में वृद्धि ही हो रही है. पवन और जल प्रदूषण की भयावह समस्या भी है. ऐसे में देश और दुनिया के भ्रमाने पर सहभागिता के साथ धरती और मानव जाति को बचाने के त्वरित प्रयास आवश्यक हैं.



बोधि वृक्ष

चित्त की धारा

एक धनपति मरणासन्न था. जीवनभर धन तक ही उसकी दौड़ रही थी. आखिरी क्षण थे, उसने आंख खोली और अपनी पत्नी को पूछा- मेरा बड़ा लड़का कहाँ है? पत्नी के मन में बड़ा आह्लाद हुआ. यह पहला मौका था कि उसने किसी को पूछा था, प्रेम दर्शाया था, शायद अंतिम क्षणों में उसके हृदय में प्रेम उठा हो. पत्नी की आंखों में आंसू भर आये, उसने कहा- आप चिंतित न हों, बड़ा लड़का आपके पास बैठा हुआ है. उसने पूछा- इससे छोटा कहाँ है? पत्नी ने कहा- वह भी यहीं है. उसके पांच लड़के थे, उसने कहा- सबसे छोटा कहाँ है? पत्नी बोली- वह भी आपके पैर के पास बैठा है. सब मौजूद हैं, आप घबराएं नहीं. वह आदमी जो मरने के करीब था, उठ कर बैठ गया और कहा- अगर ये पांचों यहीं हैं, तो फिर दुकान पर कौन बैठा है? यह पूछ कर वह आदमी मर गया. पत्नी भूल में थी कि बच्चे प्रेम की वजह से याद आ रहे हैं. लेकिन, वह आदमी तो पता लगा रहा था कि इस वक्त भी कोई दुकान पर मौजूद है या नहीं? इस आदमी के बाबत हम क्या सोचेंगे? यह आदमी कितना दीन-हीन था? इसका जीवन कैसा जीवन रहा होगा? मृत्यु के क्षण में भी, न तो प्रेम था, न प्रार्थना थी, न परमात्मा था. कुछ था, तो सिर्फ पैसा था. यह स्वभाविक है कि जिसकी जीवन की पूरी धारा पैसे से जुड़ी रही हो, अंतिम क्षण में वह प्रेम से जुड़ भी नहीं सकता है. चित्त तो एक शृंखला है, एक सतत धारा है. अगर जीवनभर वह बाहर की तरफ घूमती रही हो, तो यह असंभव है कि अंतिम क्षण में वह अंतस की तरफ घूम आये. अगर जीवनभर उसने पैसे को केंद्र बनाया हो, तो यह असंभव है कि वह कभी प्रेम को केंद्र बना ले. प्रेम आंतरिक संपत्ति है और पैसा बाह्य संपत्ति है. इसलिए आप देख कर हैरान होंगे कि जो आदमी पैसे के लिए जितना आतुर होगा, उसके जीवन में प्रेम उतना ही कम होगा. यह बिल्कुल अनिवार्य है. जिसके जीवन में जितना प्रेम होगा, पैसे पर उसकी पकड़ उतनी ही कम हो जायेगी. प्रेम और पैसे की पकड़ दोनों एक साथ-साथ कभी नहीं हो सकते हैं.

आचार्य रजनीश ओशो

कुछ अलग

गीत नहीं, विचारधारा है

यह वक्त अद्भुत है. राजनीतिक विमर्श यह है कि वह गायिका उस पार्टी को ज्वाइन कर रही हैं या इस पार्टी को. उस पार्टी के गायक इस गायिका को समझा ले गये कि नहीं कि अभी ज्वाइन मत करो. इधर राजनीतिक

आलोक पुराणिक

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विचारधारा की तलाश हिट गीतों में होनी चाहिए. इधर एक गीत बहुत हिट हो रहा है- तेरी आंखों का यो काजल. इस गीत के गहन अध्ययन से जीवन सूत्र मिल जाते हैं और तमाम समस्याओं का समाधान मिल जाता है. इस गीत में कहा गया है कि झील से गहरी आंखों में खो जाऊं. मतलब बंदा एक बार सचमुच की झील में खो जाये या आंखों की झील में खो जाये, तो फिर बाकी समस्याओं में डूबने का सोन ही नहीं बचता. डूबते बंदे को न आंटे के भाव सताते न दालों की कीमत की चिंता होती. यानी इस गीत में तमाम समस्याओं का मुकम्मल हल बताया गया है कि खो जाओ और खो जाओ आंखों में. यह गीत नहीं, समग्र राजनीतिक विचारधारा है ! एक और हिट गीत है- जिसमें बताया जाता है कि- ही ही हंस देलें रिकिया के पापा. इसका अर्थ है कि रिकी के पापा हंस दिये. इस गीत में आगे बताया गया है कि रिकिया के पापा से कहा गया कि वह चाय बनाएँ और पिलाएँ. रिकिया के पापा ने हंसते हुए यह कार्य संपन्न भी किया. रिकिया के पापा से कहा गया कि दप्तर से घर लौटते वक्त कच्ची लेकर आना है. रिकिया के पापा हंसते-हंसते यह कार्य करते हैं. रिकिया के पापा हंसते ही रहते हैं. बंदा हंसता रहे, तो सारे बवाल खत्म हैं जी.

हम लोगों को इस बात का एहसास नहीं है कि टेक्नोलॉजी युवा पीढ़ी को कितनी तेजी से अपनी गिरफ्त में लेती जा रही है. पिछले दिनों एक बेहद चिंताजनक खबर आयी कि हैदराबाद के मलकाजगिरी में एक 16 वर्षीय लड़के को ऑनलाइन गेम पबजी (प्लेयर अननोन्स बेटलग्राउंड्स) खेलने को लेकर मारे जाने की खबर आई. तो उसने आत्महत्या कर ली. मां-बाप ने पुलिस को दिये बयान में कहा है कि बच्चे का अगले दिन अंग्रेजी का इम्तिहान था और वह पबजी खेल रहा था. इस पर मां ने उसे डांटा. इतनी-सी बात पर बच्चे ने पंखे से लट कर जान दे दी. अगर आप पबजी से नावाक़िफ़ हों, तो बता दें कि यह ऑनलाइन गेम है. इसमें हिस्सा लेने वाले खिलाड़ी को खुद को जीवित रखने और गेम जीतने के लिए दूसरों को मारना पड़ता है. ये गेम आपको एक ऐसी आभासी दुनिया में ले जाता है, जहां गोलियों की बौछारों के बीच आपको अपने खिलाड़ी को जिंदा रखना होता है. यह हिंसक खेल बच्चों और किशोरों को अपनी गिरफ्त में एक लत के रूप में लेता जा रहा है. इस गेम का दुष्परिणाम यह है कि इसके कारण बच्चा एक आभासी दुनिया में जीने लगता है. मैंने जब अखबारों की विभिन्न खबरों पर गौर किया, तो वे और चिंतित करने वाली हैं. पिछले दिनों खबर आयी कि महाराष्ट्र में रेल ट्रैक पर खड़े होकर फोन पर पबजी खेल रहे दो नवयुवकों की ट्रेन से कट कर मौत हो गयी थी. वे फोन पर गेम खेलने में इतने व्यस्त थे कि उन्हें ट्रेन की आवाज सुनायी नहीं दी और वे ट्रेन की चपेट में आ गये. उत्तर प्रदेश के गाजियाबाद के दरवावा का एक छात्र इस खेल के चक्कर में अपना घर छोड़ कर चला गया. मुंबई के कुर्ला इलाके में एक युवक ने इसी के कारण अपनी जान दे दी थी. जालंधर में इसके लिए एक किशोर ने अपने पिता के खाने से 50 हजार रुपये निकाल लिये थे. मध्य प्रदेश के छिंदवाड़ा में एक युवक पबजी खेलने में इतना व्यस्त था कि उसने पानी की जगह एसिड पी लिया था. गनीमत थी कि एसिड ज्यादा

प्रभावी नहीं था. दुनियाभर में 40 करोड़ बच्चे और युवा इस गेम को हर दिन खेल रहे हैं. अनुमान है कि भारत में भी इनकी संख्या करोड़ों में होगी. चीन ने 13 साल तक के बच्चों के लिए इसे खेलने पर पाबंदी लगा दी है. भारत में गुजरात एकमात्र ऐसा राज्य है, जिसने इस पर पाबंदी लगाई है. गुजरात के राजकोट और अहमदाबाद में पबजी गेम खेलने पर प्रतिबंध लगा दिया गया है. यहां मोबाइल पर पबजी गेम खेलने के आरोप में दस नवयुवकों को हिरासत में भी लिया गया था, जिन्हें बाद में रिहा कर दिया गया. अनेक शिक्षण संस्थानों ने भी पबजी गेम खेलने में प्रतिबंध लगा दिया है. ये घटनाएं हम सभी के लिए खतरे की घंटी हैं और इन पर तत्काल गौर करने की जरूरत है. दुनियाभर में पबजी पर प्रतिबंध की मांग उठ रही है. कोई गेम यदि बच्चों की जान के लिए खतरा बन जाए, तो उस पर प्रतिबंध लगाने पर विचार करना ही होगा. दुनिया में ऐसी अनेक कंपनियां हैं केवल युवाओं के लिए गेम ही बनाती हैं. यह करोड़ों डॉलर का धंधा है. कुत्तेक गेम का दुष्प्रभाव यह है कि वह लत बन जाता है. बच्चे दिन रात ऑनलाइन गेम में लगे रहते हैं. उनके सोना-जागना, पढ़ना-लिखना और खान-पान सब प्रभावित हो जाता है और वे बेगाने से हो जाते हैं. इसके लिए कुछ हद तक माता-पिता भी दोषी हैं. मां-बाप को लगता है कि वे बच्चों को संभालने

का सबसे आसान तरीका सीख गये हैं. दो-ढाई साल की उम्र के बच्चे को कहानी सुनाने की बजाय मोबाइल पकड़ा दिया जाता है. कुछ अरसा पुरानी खबर है कि दिल्ली के 16 साल के एक बच्चे में वीडियो गेम की लत इतनी बढ़ गयी कि उसे अस्पताल में भरती कराना पड़ा. एडिक्शन के कारण यह बालक स्कूल में फिसलूँ होता जा रहा था. खेल-कूद बंद होने और घर से बाहर न निकलने के कारण छह महीनों में उसका वजन 10 किलो बढ़ गया था और वह आक्रामक हो गया था. जब बच्चा मां पर आक्रामक हुआ, तब उसे अस्पताल में भर्ती कराना पड़ा. यह जान लीजिए कि टेक्नोलॉजी दोतरफा तलवार है. टेक्नोलॉजी की ताकत इतनी है कि उसके प्रभाव से कोई मुक्त नहीं रह सकता है. आप चाहे कि बच्चों को इसकी हवा न लगे, तो यह भूल जाइए. दिक्कत यह है कि हम सब यह चाहते हैं कि देश में आधुनिक टेक्नोलॉजी आये, लेकिन उसके साथ किस तरह तारतम्य बिटाना है, इस पर विचार नहीं करते. हमें नयी परिस्थितियों से तालमेल बिटाने के विषय में सोचना होगा. यह समस्या पूरी दुनिया की है. सभी देश इससे जूझ रहे हैं, लेकिन वे समस्या का समाधान निकाल रहे हैं. कई देशों ने इस दिशा में कदम उठाने शुरू भी कर दिये हैं कि बच्चे सीमित समय तक ही ऑनलाइन गेम खेल पाएँ, जापान में तो जब बच्चे जरूरत से ज्यादा समय किसी गेम पर बिताते



आशुतोष चतुर्वेदी

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दिवकत यह है कि हम सब यह चाहते हैं कि देश में आधुनिक टेक्नोलॉजी आये, लेकिन उसके साथ किस तरह तारतम्य बिटाना है, इस पर विचार नहीं करते. हमें नयी परिस्थितियों से तालमेल बिटाने के विषय में सोचना होगा.

हैं, लेकिन वे समस्या का समाधान निकाल रहे हैं. कई देशों ने इस दिशा में कदम उठाने शुरू भी कर दिये हैं कि बच्चे सीमित समय तक ही ऑनलाइन गेम खेल पाएँ, जापान में तो जब बच्चे जरूरत से ज्यादा समय किसी गेम पर बिताते

मौजूदा चुनाव में भाषण-कला

भारत के प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी (17 सितंबर, 1950) और कन्हैया कुमार (13 जनवरी, 1987) पर एक साथ कम शब्दों में ही सही, विचार की सचमुच क्या कोई आवश्यकता है? ईसा पूर्व चौथी शताब्दी में अरस्तू ने 'दि आर्ट ऑफ रिटोरिक' पुस्तक लिखी, जिसके दस अध्यायों में अलंकार शास्त्र, वाक्यदृता, वक्तृता और वाग्मिता पर विचार किया गया है. नरेंद्र मोदी की वक्तृता से प्रभावित प्रबुद्ध जनों को एक बार यह पुस्तक अवश्य पढ़नी चाहिए. गुजराती भाषी होने के बाद भी उनकी हिंदी वक्तृता का आज कोई दूसरा उदाहरण नहीं है. अपनी भाषण-कला, जिसमें आंगिक क्रियाएं भी हैं, जो अभिनय के 'अनिवार्य पक्ष' हैं, से वे श्रोताओं में प्रभाव उत्पन्न करते हैं. अपनी भाषा-शैली और नाट्य-शैली के कारण मोदी अधिक 'पापुलर' हैं. वहीं जेएनयू के छात्र संघ के पूर्व अध्यक्ष कन्हैया कुमार को एक प्रमुख वक्ता के रूप में ख्याति प्राप्त है. भाषण-कला में कन्हैया भी मोदी से कम नहीं हैं. मोदी के बाद कन्हैया देश के दूसरे प्रमुख वक्ता हैं.



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मोदी और कन्हैया दोनों एक दिन में कई-कई सभाएं कर रहे हैं. दोनों भाषण-कला में बेजोड़ हैं. अरविंद केजरीवाल से बड़ी है कन्हैया की वक्तृता. वह कुछ अंशों में मोदी से भी बड़ी है, क्योंकि वे विवेक को जागृत करते हैं.

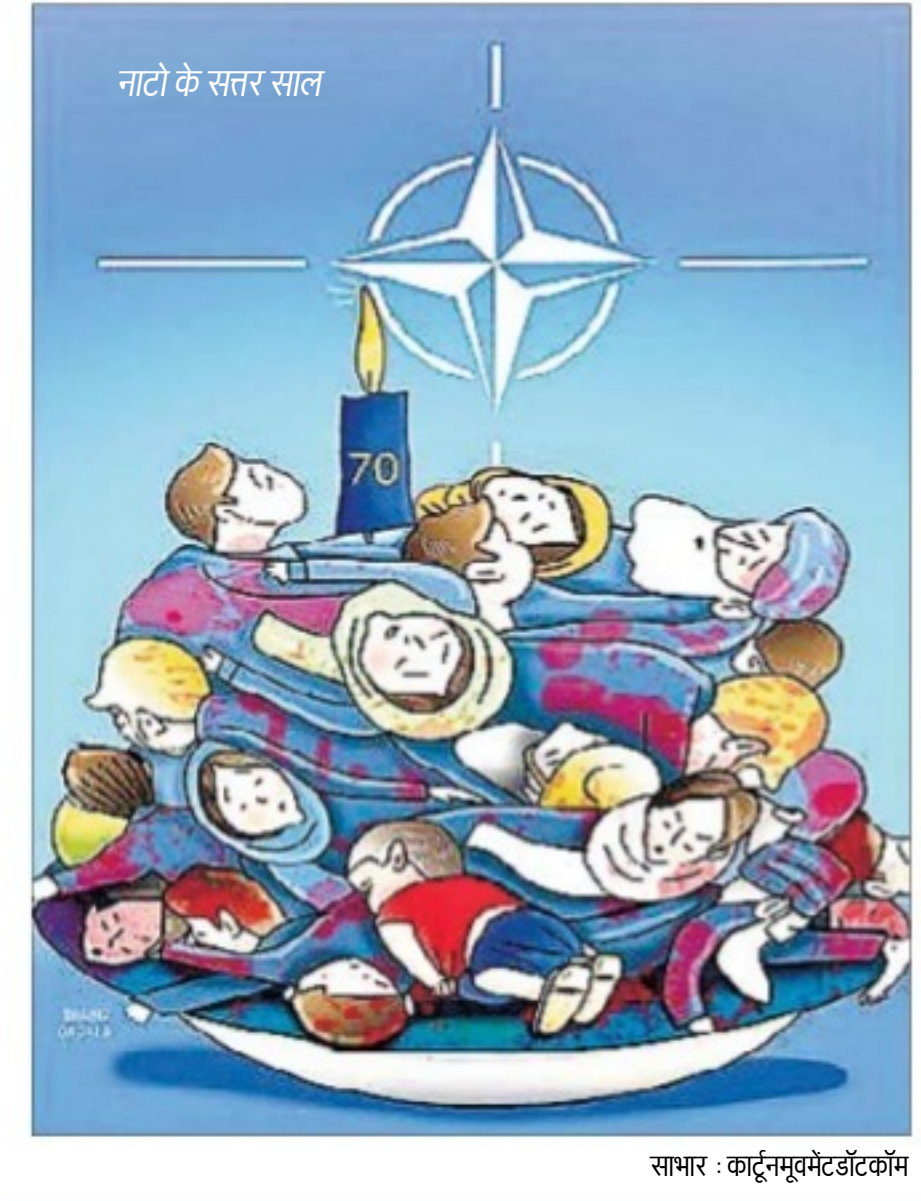
पब्लिक सेक्टर की कंपनियों क्यों बंद की जा रही हैं? रेलवे के कुछ स्टेशन क्यों बचे या ठेके पर दिये जा रहे हैं? शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य का बजट कम क्यों है? पटेल की मूर्ति बनाने का काम चीनी कंपनी को क्यों दिया गया? मुसलमानों को बाबर और लादेन की सजा क्यों दी जा रही है? मोदी के विचार कि कचरा साफ करने से आध्यात्मिक सुख मिलता है, मनुस्मृति के विचार हैं. पिछले तीन वर्ष से कन्हैया कुमार देश के प्रधानमंत्री से सवाल पर सवाल पूछ रहे हैं. ये तार्किक हैं और सोचने को प्रेरित करते हैं. प्रधानमंत्री होने के बाद भी नरेंद्र मोदी तार्किक नहीं हैं. उन्होंने अभी तक एक भी प्रेस-कॉन्फ्रेंस नहीं की है. मोदी के यहां 'मैं' प्रमुख है. अभी आडवाणी ने अपने ब्लागों में 'नेशन फर्स्ट, पार्टी नेक्स्ट' और 'सेल्फ लास्ट' की बात कही है. मोदी के यहां 'नेशन' और 'पार्टी' से प्रमुख हैं 'सेल्फ'. उनका अर्थशास्त्र कॉरपोरेट अर्थशास्त्रियों का है. सत्रहवें लोकसभा का चुनाव मोदी के नाम पर लड़ा जा रहा है. चुनाव में एक व्यक्ति-विशेष महत्वपूर्ण है भाजपा के लिए. व्यक्ति कितना ही बड़ा हो, वह देश का पर्याय नहीं हो सकता. कन्हैया बेगूसराय से भाकपा के प्रत्याशी हैं. वे अपना मुक़ाबला संविधान विरोधी शक्तियों से मानते हैं. नरेंद्र मोदी कांग्रेस के विरोधी हैं. कन्हैया मोदी और आरएसएस के विरोधी हैं. कन्हैया की चिंता में लोकतंत्र और संविधान की रक्षा है. वे गरीबों, दलितों, अल्पसंख्यकों, स्त्रियों और आदिवासियों के समर्थक हैं. मोदी के यहां इनकी चिंता नहीं है. मोदी में सारी शक्तियां केंद्रित हो चुकी हैं. आज राष्ट्रवाद का 'रेटोरिक' है. मुख्यमंत्री और केंद्रीय मंत्री तक भारतीय सेना को 'मोदी की सेना' कह रहे हैं. प्रधानमंत्री द्वारा आदर्श आचार संहिता का उल्लंघन पर कांग्रेस ने चुनाव आयोग में शिकायत की है. अभी तक कन्हैया ने आचार संहिता का उल्लंघन नहीं किया है. मोदी और कन्हैया दोनों एक दिन में कई-कई सभाएं कर रहे हैं. दोनों भाषण-कला में बेजोड़ हैं. अरविंद केजरीवाल से बड़ी है कन्हैया की वक्तृता. वह कुछ अंशों में मोदी से भी बड़ी है, क्योंकि वे विवेक को जागृत करते हैं, जो मोदी के यहां नहीं है. कन्हैया निर्भीक, साहसी और हिम्मती हैं. वे नफरत के सामने मुहब्बत, तानाशाह के सामने जम्हूरियत और असमानता के सामने समानता को महत्व देते हैं. वे डरने को नहीं, लड़ने को प्रेरित करते हैं. उनकी राजनीति मूल्यों की है. दृष्टि तार्किक और वैज्ञानिक है. समझ साफ और पैनी है. कन्हैया के भारत और मोदी के भारत में अंतर है. कन्हैया शायद ही वाराणसी जाकर प्रचार करें. और मोदी? क्या मोदी बेगूसराय जाकर कन्हैया के विरोध में और भाजपा प्रत्याशी गिरिराज सिंह के समर्थन में भाषण देंगे?

देश दुनिया से

गरीबी नहीं, गरीबों को खत्म कर रहा पाकिस्तान

पाकिस्तान में सरकार बनने के पांच महीने के बाद वहां महंगाई ने रिकॉर्ड बना दिया है, जिससे इमरान खान के बहुत समर्थकों को भी झटका लगा है. इमरान खान ने चुनाव से पहले गरीबी हटाने, नौकरियां बढ़ाने और पाकिस्तान को कल्याणकारी इस्लामी देश बनाने का वादा किया था. इमरान खान ने गरीबी हटाने की बड़ी बड़ी बातें कीं, लेकिन वह गरीबी को खत्म नहीं कर रहे हैं, बल्कि गरीबों को ही खत्म कर रहे हैं. लगातार बढ़ रहे घाटे और आर्थिक तंगियों से जूझ रही पाकिस्तान की सरकार के सामने भी ज्यादा विकल्प नहीं हैं. वह अंतरराष्ट्रीय मुद्रा कोष से 13वां राहत पैकेज लेने में जुटी है. पाकिस्तान के विदेशी मुद्रा भंडार में 8.5 अरब डॉलर हैं. साल की शुरुआत से तुलना करें, तो विदेशी मुद्रा भंडार को बेहतर स्थिति में कहा जायेगा. लेकिन इससे सिर्फ दो महीनों का ही आयात हो पायेगा. मांग को कम करना अर्थव्यवस्था को स्थिर बनाने का हिस्सा है, ताकि चालू खाते और व्यापारिक घाटे को कम किया जा सके. मार्च में पाकिस्तान में मुद्रास्फीति की दर 9.4 प्रतिशत से ज्यादा थी. नवंबर 2013 के बाद से ये रिकॉर्ड मुद्रास्फीति है. खाने पीने की चीजों और पेट्रोल के दाम तेजी से बढ़े हैं, जो ज्यादातर उपभोक्ताओं को प्रभावित कर रहे हैं.

कार्टून कोना



सामार : कार्टूनमूवमेंटडॉटकॉम

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

आपके पत्र

कब सुधरेगी अस्पताल की हालत
धनबाद के पाटलिपुत्र मेडिकल कॉलेज एवं अस्पताल में हमेशा संकट के बादल छाये रहते हैं. कभी वाड में ऑक्सीजन सिलिंडर न होने की खबर, तो कभी ब्लड-बैंक में ब्लड की कमी से मचा हो-हल्ला. कभी पानी की किल्लत, तो कभी बिजली नदारद. अब एक नयी मुसीबत धनबाद के इस अस्पताल के गले पड़ गयी है. 30 ट्यूबर एवं सीनियर रेसिडेंट्स कई महीने में सेवा-निवृत्त हो जायेंगे, तो मेडिकल छात्रों को पढ़ायेगा कौन और लोगों का इलाज करेगा कौन? इस संकट से निकलने के लिए कॉलेज प्रशासन को जल्द ही नियुक्ति प्रक्रिया शुरू करनी होगी, अथवा एमसीआइ अगर इंस्पेक्शन के लिए आ गयी, तो 50 सीटों पर नामांकन भी रद्द होने का खतरा बन जायेगा. झारखंड सरकार के स्वास्थ्य मंत्रालय को आनिवाली इस समस्या पर तुरंत ध्यान देना चाहिए और मेडिकल कॉलेज में शिक्षकों की नियुक्ति प्रक्रिया यथाशीघ्र शुरू कर देनी चाहिए.

डॉ शिवम कुमार झा, को-ऑर्परेटिव कॉलोनी, धनबाद

नाम छोड़ो, काम दिखाओ !

दुनिया चाहे जैसे बदले, हमारा मुल्क बदलता है तीन चीजों से- विज्ञापन, विज्ञापन और विज्ञापन. इस्तेहारों ने सब कुछ बदल दिया है. वह चाहे जिंदगी का तौर-तरीका हो, खेल का मैदान या सियासत की चालें. यह विज्ञापनों का बाजार ही है, जिसने आइपीएल को दुनिया का सबसे बड़ा शो, तो देश को चौकीदार का सबसे बड़ा मुक़ाबला बना दिया. सियासी मुक़ाबले मुझे से हट कर चेहरों के इट-गिट घुमते पोस्टर-बैनरों के बीच होने लग गये हैं. इस्तेहारों के बेहिस्साब खर्चों ने भारतीय चुनावों को दुनिया के सबसे खर्चीले मुक़ाबले की कतार में खड़ा कर दिया है. हिंदुस्तानी सियासत में नाम की चलन ने काम से इतर इंसान को नाकाम बना दिया है, लेकिन एक बात तो तय है कि राजनीति के मैदान में आये नामों को लोग काम दिखाने को कहेंगे ही.

एमके मिश्रा, रातू, रांची

पार्किंग माफियाओं से अरत

आप बाजार में, पिकनर देखने, किसी पार्क में जाने, प्रदर्शनी देखने, बैंक, पोस्ट ऑफिस, जीवन बीमा कार्यालय, कोर्ट-कचहरी आदि कहीं भी आवश्यक कार्य हेतु जाते हैं और वहां आस-पास खाली जगह को देख कर अपनी गाड़ी खड़ी कर देते हैं. क्योंकि वहां कहीं पार्किंग का कोई बोर्ड नहीं लगा है, न वैसी कहीं सुविधा है, परंतु जब आप अपना काम कर वापस लौटते हैं और तो एक नौजवान अपने हाथ में एक रसीद के साथ अचानक प्रकट हो जाता है और आपको थमा देता है. पूछने पर बताता है 'पार्किंग चार्ज'. चूंकि आप उस समय बिल्कुल अकेले होते हैं या अपनी पत्नी के साथ, अतः उस स्थिति में आपके पास रकम को देने के सिवाय कोई विकल्प ही नहीं होता है. यह सच है कि बिना पुलिस के सहयोग के इस तरह पार्किंग चार्ज वसूलने वाले माफियाओं का अस्तित्व नहीं हो सकता. कृपया इस गंभीर समस्या पर सभी नगर निगम, प्रशासन और पुलिस के बड़े अधिकारी समुचित ध्यान दें और आम जनता को मुक्ति दिलाएं.

निर्मल कुमार शर्मा, गाजियाबाद