CHINESE WHISPERS

While many among the Congress party

"authenticity" of the Balakot air strikes.

has included a chapter about the Indian

the Congress government in Rajasthan

Air Force fighter jets attacking terrorist

camps across the Line of Control in a

school textbook. The chapter not only

speaks of the valour of Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman – who was held

under captivity for 60 hours in Pakistan

aerial dogfight - but also waxes eloquent

about Union minister Rajyavardhan Singh

candidate from Jaipur Rural who won a

silver medal for the country at the 2004

of the chapter, National Security and

Tradition of Bravery, which appear in a

new textbook meant for Class 9 students.

Summer Olympics. The two stories are part

after his aircraft was shot down in an

Rathore, a Bharatiya Janata Party

leaders continue to question the

Stories of bravery

Early EV trends in India

Two- and three-wheelers seem likely to take off first and the ride-share market will probably be more enthusiastic than private owners



TECH-ENABLED

DEVANGSHU DATTA

arious policy measures have been adopted to encourage electric vehicles (EV). EVs have many advantages. They are zero-emission and less noisy, though the electricity may be dirty. Electric power is much cheaper in terms of per km consumption. EV engines have fewer moving parts than internal combustion (IC) engines. So they are easier to maintain and less liable to breakdown. This is

true even for hybrids, given less wearand-tear for IC engines.

One downside is price. Despite tax cuts, EVs and hybrids are much more expensive than IC vehicles. While this is offset by cheaper running costs, the difference is daunting. Then, there's safety. EV fires are hard to extinguish. Lithium-ion batteries can reignite hours after they appear to have been extinguished, due to internal short-circuits. Fire departments used to dealing with burning IC cars need to retrain for EV accidents.

EV recharges take much longer than filling a petrol tank. Even a fast recharge (up to 50 per cent of the full battery capacity) takes a minimum of 20 minutes. A battery swap is a quicker option but even that is cumbersome. Different vehicles need different fast and slow charge points.

Setting up infrastructure to support EVs is a challenge. There are over 60,000 petrol pumps across India. That gives us an idea what the mass adoption of EVs may mean in terms of charge station penetration. And, of course, workforce retraining is needed to create the necessary service, maintenance and repair ecosystem.

In March 2019, the Cabinet cleared the ₹10.000 crore FAME-II programme. The FAME I (faster adoption and manufacturing of hybrid and electric vehicles (FAME) was launched on April 1, 2015 with ₹895 crore support and a twoyear timeline, which was extended multiple times.

FAME II has a three-year timeline from April 2019. It aims to support 1 million two-wheelers, 500,000 threewheelers, 55,000 four-wheelers and 7,000 buses. Currently EV sales are growing very fast off a low base. The Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicles (SMEV) claims 630,000 EV auto-rickshaws were sold in 2018-19 along with 126,000 two-wheelers and about 3600 passenger cars. That's less than 4 per cent of total two/threewheeler sales of over 19 million in 2018-19, and less than 1 per cent of 3 million plus car sales.

FAME-II will have ₹1,500 crore outlay in 2019-20; ₹5,000 crore in 2020-21 and ₹3,500 crore in 2021-22. It offers a subsidy of ₹150,000 each to 35,000 electric four-wheelers, and ₹13,000 each to 20,000 strong hybrid fourwheelers. It will subsidise 7,090 e-buses at ₹50 lakh each.

Delhi's draft Electric Vehicle Policy 2018 is also ambitious: It targets an EV base of 25 per cent of all new vehicles registered by 2023 and aims to set up battery-swapping facilities and charge stations every 3 km. Delhi registers about 700,000 new vehicles annually.

Delhi's policy also offers a lot of tax breaks and subsidies in addition to FAME-II. There's a subsidy of up to ₹22,000 for electric two-wheelers, with additional subsidies for battery-swapping EVs. There's a cash-back incentive of ₹15,000 for scrapping BS-2/BS-3 standard two-wheelers. All road tax, registration, MCD parking fees are waived for all EVs and there's a cashback of ₹10 per trip for e-autos or e-cabs. In addition, the state will buy 1,000 electric buses in 2019-20.

Charge stations are delicensed under FAME-II with a target of a charge station every 3 km in urban areas and every 25 km on the highways. Every charge station needs different fastcharge and slow charge plug-points.

The fast charge systems include a combined charging system and a ChadeMo plug with 50 kw connections with 200-1000 volts of DC power. They also need Type 2 AC fast chargers with a 22 kw connection at 380-480 volts. There also need to be two slow charge points — Bharat AC 001 (10 kw, 230 volts) and Bharat DC 001 (15 kw 72 volts).

EV adoption will depend on many things falling into place. The market will probably respond positively to the policy push. Vehicle prices should fall as volumes rise and the cost of batteries falls. Similarly, the number of charge stations and qualified service personnel will surely grow.

However, this will take time and there will be an enormous reformatting of value chains. By 2030, global IC sales should peak and EV sales will start to take over. If we go by the trends in India, EV two and three-wheelers seem likely to take off first and the ride-share market will probably be more enthusiastic than private owners. But that could change as the ecosystem develops and prices reduce.

103 not out

Hundred and three-year-old Shyam Saran Negi cast his vote yesterday for the 32nd time since 1951 when he had first exercised his franchise. And he cast his vote at the same polling booth at the village Kalpa in Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh. Negi has voted in all 16 Lok Sabha elections; he has also voted in 13 Assembly and two territorial council elections. The local administration had made

arrangements to ferry him from his home to the polling booth in a primary school nearby and accorded him a hero's welcome when he arrived to cast his ballot.

The biggest challenge before the new govt

More than liquidity crisis, banks' risk aversion is at the root of the current problem. Despite two policy rate cuts, most banks have raised lending rates



BANKER'S TRUST

TAMAL BANDYOPADHYAY

senior banker has recently said that traditionally the real sector affects the health of the financial sector but now, in the world's fastest growing major economy, the financial sector woes are set to spill over to the real sector. My aunt agrees with the banker. Running the risk of being dubbed a Cassandra, she says it will be a big mess unless the new government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) act on this on a war footing.

Have the government and the banking regulator been in a denial mode? Not exactly. But, they need to act fast. Why? Let's take a quick look at what's happening in the Indian financial sector.

■The industry of non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), which have been growing at a much faster rate than the banks, is in a mess because of asset-liability mismatches. (For many, even the quality of assets is an issue.) The compounded annual growth rate of NBFCs versus 9.4 per cent growth of the banking system: the housing finance companies have been growing at 20 per cent. The total credit market of the NBFCs till midlast year was close to ₹28.5 trillion, almost a third of the banking assets. It has started shrinking.

■Bank credit has been growing at around 12.3 per cent, much higher than around 8.4 per cent in the past two years but this does not reflect the true picture. In the past few years, there were credit substitutes, including loans given by the NBFCs. The relatively higher bank credit growth has not been able to cover that up. A closer look at the components of the bank credit bares all. Credit to large industry is growing at less than 8.2 per cent; micro and small industries 0.7 per cent; and medium industries 2.6 per cent. Where is the money going? The banking sector's personal loan portfolio has been growing at around 18 per cent and housing loan at 19 per cent.

■The ₹23-trillion mutual fund industry is feeling the tremor of debt mutual funds' exposure to various promoters of Indian corporations who have pledged their shares. The value of such shares has gone down, forcing the fund houses and the promoters themselves to sell shares in the market. Many NBFCs too have such an exposure.

■BSE data says the value of shares pledged by the promoters was ₹2.25 trillion in the last week of April. More than 50 per cent of the promoters — 2,932 out of 5,126 BSE-listed companies — have raised money through this route. With



ownership, capitalism is being redefined in Asia's third largest economy.

■After the Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services (IL&FS) fiasco, most raters are either scurrying for cover or aggressively downgrading companies. There are seven of them. Do all of them know how to assess risks? Of course, they are competent to read the balance sheets and the profit and loss accounts but they woefully lack market intelligence. This is why they always close the stable door after the horse bolts. Going by media reports, the rating agencies have rated around ₹40,000 crore worth of debentures backed by promoter shares; these instruments have found place on the books of debt mutual funds

For the record, the raters have put more companies under "rating watch" in recent times (after the IL&FS episode) than they had done at least in the last one decade. In fiscal year 2019, corporate bonds worth ₹10 trillion were put under rating watch, about 10 per cent of the total corporate debt. The comparable figure for 2018 was ₹2 trillion.

■If these are not enough to prompt the authorities for fast corrective action, there is a perceived liquidity crisis. Is the

liquidity crisis grave? Many feel so. Thev say, it will jam the entire credit system and the \$2 trillion economy will come to a grinding halt. While I agree with the gravity of the situation and the likely fallout, the perception on the liquidity crisis is exaggerated. At the root of the problem is not the lack of liquidity but the risk aversion of banks.

■The daily systemic liquidity deficit, which was ₹1.3 trillion earlier this month, has come down to around ₹30,000 crore. The RBI has been persistently addressing the issues generating around ₹70,000 crore through \$10 billion swaps in two tranches, selling bonds worth ₹25,000 crore in May, and tweaking the so-called liquidity coverage ratio of banks to add liquidity to the system in April. But the banks are not willing to lend as they feel many NBFCs can go down under and they will not get back their money. Most of them have also not cut their loan rates despite two rate cuts by the RBI in the past few months. In fact, they have raised their loan rates.

When my aunt says it's the Lehman moment for India, I don't agree with her but we could head towards that if we don't address the issues first.

What should be done?

NBFCs, mutual funds and rating agencies have lost credibility. Quite a few banks are not in the best of heath. And the banking system has turned its back to credit-starved entities. They are giving money only to individuals for buying houses and personal consumption. Essentially, they are leveraging the India growth story. So far, the debate has been on joblessness and job cuts in the unorganised sectors but once the job cuts spill over to the organised sector, banks will see retail borrowers defaulting. That will be the proverbial last straw on the camel's back.

Before the Lehman moment stares at us, we need to act. For the government and the Indian central bank, it's time to shed the inhibitions and act decisively to avoid a systemic collapse. A few NBFCs may have to be put to sleep (the US did that to Wachovia — its forced merger with Wells Fargo), a few of them with impeccable track record may have to be made banks and kept under RBI glare (a la what the US Fed had done to Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs). We also need an Indian version of quantitative easing (QE) and a troubled asset relief programme (TARF).

The RBI can take a close look at the troubled NBFCs and banks, force them to write down assets, arrive at the fair market value, and the government can pump in the money. If the structure is right, the government can reap rich dividends from the TARF once they get back to health.

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Too early



O P Ravindranath Kumar, the son of Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) coordinator O Pannerselvam, found himself in the middle of a controversy when a plaque in a temple was spotted depicting his name as Theni Member of Parliament (MP) though the election results have not been declared yet. When a picture of the plaque became viral on social media, the temple management moved in quickly and covered it with a new one that omitted the "MP" bit. However, the episode triggered allegations of foul play at a time when the Election Commission has already announced repolling to be held in some booths in the Theni constituency. Kumar was swift in denying the allegations and said he was not aware of the plaque till it was pointed out to him on Friday. The culprit was later identified as a former police constable and AIADMK follower who had once shaved off his head praying for the success of former Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa.

INSIGHT

Tactical voting in our democracy

Psephologists and social scientists might have lot more attention to pay to "tactical voting" statistics for a better understanding of our democracy



ATANU BISWAS

eaders like Mayawati and Navjot Singh Sidhu were barred from campaigning for two-three days by the Election Commission (EC) in this Lok Sabha elections for mixing religion with political discourse while electioneering. Supposedly they crossed the *lakshmanrekha* while engineering "tactical voting" to get votes from minority communities. There were several accusations of "vote transfer" too in this election. In fact, "tactical voting" is very common in a multi-party democracy like India. There is data evidence that a significant section of voters do vote differently in Lok Sabha and state Assembly elections. Isn't that also tactical voting?

In his seminal book An Economic Theory of Democracy (1957, p. 48), Anthony Downs concluded that rational voters do not vote for their most preferred candidate when they think that candidate is not likely to win rather a voter "decides what party he believes will benefit him most; then he tries to estimate whether this party has any chance of winning", of course by necessarily predicting "how other citizens will vote by estimating their preferences". Thus, voting for a less preferred but more generally popular candidate is very common in a simple plurality election where the third-party supporters usually vote for one of the major parties. In the popular Gibbard-Satterthwaite theorem in social choice theory dealing with deterministic ordinal electoral sys-

tems with a single winner, every voting rule is susceptible to tactical voting — in certain conditions some voter's sincere ballot may not defend their opinion best. It is known as "tactical voting" in the UK, and "strategic voting" in the US

"tactical voting" should be highest in seats that are closely contested.

It is never easy to measure the quantum of tactical votes as it requires knowledge of both individuals' voting choices as well as their unobserved preferences. I didn't see any serious attempt from the social scientists or pollsters to estimate the percentages of tactical votes favouring or opposing any party in important elections. But there are a

few estimates in other countries. Just prior to the 2005 general election in the UK, BBC noted that "there is a strong interest among British voters in tactical voting". In the UK, tactical voting played a significant role in the

2010 election also, mainly for Liberal-Democratic voters supporting Labour. Left-leaning newspapers like the Daily Mirror, The Guardian, The Independent and New Statesman advised voters to vote tactically and many proposed voting guides such as identifying constituencies in which voters should consider voting tactically like "Lib Dems

Vote Labour Here" and "Labour Vote Lib Dem Here". Two days before the election, Labour leader Ed Balls said that Labour supporters in Conservative-Liberal Democrat marginal seats should strongly consider voting tactically for Liberal Democrat candi-

dates. Then the Conventional wisdom suggests that UK's 2017 general elections was a "hold your nose" vote; an Electoral Reform Society report claims that 6.5 million people (more than 20 per cent of voters) said they planned to choose a candidate most likely to beat the one they disliked. They voted tactically to prevent a "hard Brexit" or another Conservative govern-

> Thirty per cent of Canadian voters (over 5 million) are non-partisan, and they consider a host of issues including party platforms, leaders, and electability to vote. Justin Trudeau won in Canada's 2015 election, when in a span of three weeks, 1.4 million voters changed their mind from New Democratic Party to Liberal. In

Slovenia, 30 per cent voters voted tactically in their parliamentary election in 2011. During the 2018 parliamentary election in Hungary, several websites such as taktikaiszavazas.hu (meaning "tactical voting") promoted the idea to vote for opposition candidates with the highest probability of winning a given seat, which was adopted by about onefourth opposition voters.

There is a widespread belief that single transferable vote resists tactical voting. Reducing incentives to tactical voting was the primary argument behind the unsuccessful United Kingdom Alternative Vote referendum in 2011 to change the voting system in the UK from First-Past-The-Post to alternative voting.

What's the approximate percentage of "tactical voting" in India? Nobody knows. However, although it should vary from one part of the country to another, given the complex multi-party system of the country, can it be less than the corresponding estimates obtained from the UK or Slovenia? If not, then it's more than the percentages of vote shares of many major (or every?) political parties in India. And what about a "tactical map" of the country by plotting the estimated tactical vote shares in different constituencies using different colours on a map of India? Psephologists and social scientists might have lot more attention to pay to "tactical voting" statistics for a better understanding of the democracy.

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LETTERS

Mutual gain

This refers to "Skilling:The way forward" (May 17). Most youths aspire for upward mobility in jobs and hence, existing labour laws, which are too restrictive, require revision with greater flexibility for both employer and employee due to the capitalistic leanings of the economy. Accordingly, there should be greater control over labour inspectors. The substantial cost of labour due to shortage in supply over demand raises costs. It also necessitates apprenticeship in skilled labour to be made a part of the curriculum for continuing education. India, even according to the existing National Apprenticeship Law Act, falls well behind China and Germany but economic expansion demands statutory flexibility and thus can solve this problem for the future.

The distribution and returns from skilled labour today are too lopsided with migration of a section of them overseas bringing in foreign exchange while the same in domestic areas fall short in supply against demand. Unlike in the past, where the employer was the king and unemployment compelled employees to be dictated to, the situation today calls for satisfaction for both sides The prospective employee today seeks skilled jobs and not any job as in the past. The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has been set up for exactly this purpose. Skilled employees on many occasions feel that their capabilities are being underutilised and seek greener pastures. This



keeps employers also on their toes. A competitive market compels the employers' desire to absorb a larger percentage of skilled labour which explains why 47 per cent of the trainees provided by the NSDC move into the private sector as against 15-18 per cent in government schemes. Established private companies, both Indian and foreign, absorb skilled labour to both employer and employee satisfaction. The Maharashtra Knowledge Corporation wherein educational degrees are combined with apprenticeship benefitting lower income groups is being considered a model for implementation at National level for imparting and promoting skilled labour.

C Gopinath Nair Kochi

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► HAMBONE



Advantage Mr Modi

If NDA manages a majority, it should focus on the economy

n a political scenario as complicated as India's, it is not always safe to rely on exit polls. They have frequent problems with sampling, and with extrapolating from vote shares to seats. The exit polls have not been accurate in two of the last four Indian general elections. Even elsewhere in the world, elections are never over until the last vote is counted — and sometimes dozens of exit polls are wrong, as demonstrated by the surprise victory by the incumbent government in Australia, which overturned every prediction by exit and opinion polls. That said, when almost all the exit polls share a particular trajectory, as has happened in the case of those for the 2019 general elections — which have been released now that voting has ended — the chances are that they are based on an underlying trend. Even a heavy discounting of exit poll accuracy cannot take away from the conclusion that the National Democratic Alliance is likely to return to power with a comfortable majority in the Lok Sabha.

If this is the case, several conclusions could be drawn. The first is that assembly elections — such as those in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh — are not good predictors of a Lok Sabha election, in which nationalism became a major campaign factor. In addition, the popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is sufficient to lift his party even in states where its local leaders or governments had become unpopular. Many predicted that there would be a difference in how people voted once Mr Modi himself was "on the ballot", as it were, and the exit polls seem to bear out that belief. Mr Modi's image as a decisive leader who takes decisions based on the national interest in that case would have outweighed the Congress' focus on pocket-book politics. The Congress' policy prescriptions seemed designed to focus on discontented sections of society — but it continues to be handicapped electorally by the fact that Rahul Gandhi, even if much improved as a campaigner, does not have the stature to be a serious challenge to Mr Modi's popularity. According to the exit polls, the Congress will do marginally better than its stunning defeat in the 2014 elections, but it will remain a distant second to the BJP. The grand old party will have to do some serious introspection about leadership gaps.

If the polls are correct, and the NDA wins a second term easily, Mr Modi, who rose to power in 2014, promising to deliver faster growth and job creation and has been waging a tough re-election battle against the backdrop of an economic slowdown and rural distress, should seize the political capital he will have built up through a victory and translate it into long-delayed economic reforms. It will be necessary to employ some fiscal prudence, now that the general elections are over, and to address both structural and cyclical factors plaguing the Indian economy. The time for boosting the NDA's performance is over — it will be time to acknowledge the scale of the task required to meet Mr Modi's goal of a decent society by 2022. This will require speedy changes to many laws, including those governing labour and employment; it will require ensuring that continuing hassles for manufacturing and exporters are removed, and it will require a focus on education and skilling. The politics is hopefully now done — the action should be all on the economic front.

The Basmati question

Delhi HC does well to allow MP farmers to produce it

y quashing the Centre's orders, which confined the cultivation and seed production of Basmati to seven northern states, the Delhi High Court has essentially upheld Madhya Pradesh's contention that its farmers can continue to produce this premium-quality aromatic rice as they have been doing for decades. The court's verdict is based chiefly on the technicalities that the Centre's directives were in contravention of the Seeds Act and that they encroached upon the domain of the state governments, as agriculture is a state subject. This decree, therefore, cannot be construed to automatically grant the geographical indications (GI) status to Madhya Pradesh's scented rice as demanded by the state's government, the rice industry and Basmati growers. That matter pertains to the Geographical Indications of Goods Act.

Madhya Pradesh, while challenging the agriculture ministry's orders, had contended that Basmati was being grown for decades in 13 districts of the state and these should be included in the areas demarcated for GI-covered Basmati farming. However, the Basmati industry of the north and the apex farm exports promotion body, the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Agency (Apeda), do not buy this plea. Their main worry is that the inclusion of central India in the notified Basmati belt would dilute the exclusivity of the Basmati-growing region that qualifies it for the GI privilege. They also fear that the increased supply would lower the premium on the prices of this scented rice in the domestic and export markets.

At present, the Basmati tag is reserved solely for the fragrant rice grown in the Indo-Gangetic plains along the Himalayan foothills in the states of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttarakhand, the Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir, and western parts of Uttar Pradesh. The typical characteristics that set Basmati apart from the other aromatic rice varieties include long slender seeds that elongate on cooking, instead of swelling; distinct aroma; and soft, fluffy and non-sticky texture of the grains. Besides, real Basmati is photo-sensitive in nature, meaning that its seeds can perform to their potential only under specific agro-ecological conditions found in the north-western Indo-Gangetic zone. Conducive ecological factors are deemed imperative for the development of typical aroma and taste in the Basmati grains.

That said, the truth that is often disregarded by the stakeholders in the Basmati sector is that many of the officially recognised Basmati varieties are not pure-bred or pedigreed Basmati lines but are the "derived Basmati" strains with only one of the parents being genuine Basmati. The bulk of the Basmati exports are also of the derived varieties. However, their legal status as Basmati under the GI convention is indisputable. Since many of the varieties grown in Madhya Pradesh are either the same or similar to those grown in the north, they can safely be acknowledged as Basmati even if, technically, they do not qualify for the GI tag on a geographical location basis. There should, therefore, be no objection to Madhya Pradesh's aromatic rice being traded as Basmati at least in the domestic market to cater to the huge and rapidly growing demand for this delectable rice. The state's Basmati traders would be well-advised also to develop their own brands of aromatic rice for the domestic market. That would be a win-win situation for all stakeholders in the rice sector, including growers, traders and consumers.

ILLUSTRATION: ALAY MOHANTY



Elections and stock prices

Macro-forecasting is the area where more effort is required

e have seen big election-related moves of the stock market in the past. But with the benefit of hindsight, the market's forecast of future profit growth has been poor. This is part of a larger pattern, where the Indian stock market is often good at sizing up one company at a time, but fails to understand the macro forces that are shaping

the entire country and influence all firms. Finance players need more macroeconomics and political science expertise. Election results may also be particularly important for 'politically connected firms' (PCFs).

In 2004, everyone had expected the NDA to be reelected, but in fact the UPA won. The CPI(M), which was part of the UPA, was on televi- SNAKES & LADDERS sion promising that there would be no more privatisation AJAY SHAH of PSUs. On 17 May 2004, Nifty had its biggest ever one-day decline, giving a scare to the managers of exchanges.

But in hindsight, this rapid assessment was wrong. We constructed an index of the net profit of all listed companies (excluding finance and oil companies). This did pretty well in the UPA-1 period. The index of net profit tripled: it went up from 264 to 808 between Q2, 2004 and Q2, 2009.

In 2009, the stock market was delighted when the election results came in: strong profit growth was expected in the future. Look forward into time. and we see that the rapid assessment was wrong. The index of net profit went up from 808 in Q2, 2009 to 954 in Q2, 2014. If you take inflation out, this was a decline in net profit.

From 2013 onwards, the stock market was optimistic that with the expected change in government, strong net profit growth would come back. We do not yet know the net profit index for Q2, 2019. The latest value for the net profit index, for O4, 2018, stands at 875. When the O2, 2019 results are out, it is unlikely that strong net profit growth would be visible over the five year period.

These three experiences suggest that the Indian $\,$ stock market has fared poorly in absorbing the

information from an election outcome and thinking about its impact upon net profit. So we should be cautious about how well the stock market will parse the election outcome of May 2019.

This is part of a larger pattern of weak macro-forecasting by the Indian stock market. When we look back at the big moves of the overall market P/E ratio, we find it fares poorly at anticipating the big moves of net profit. The main story of

earnings in India is that there was a strong increase in the period 2002-08. By and large, the P/E of the market rose after — not before — this profit growth came through. The market failed to anticipate what was coming. And later, the P/E ratio was high for a sustained period, thus forecasting that high profit growth would come about in the future, but this anticipated profit growth did not come about.

The Indian stock market fares better when looking at one company at a time. When averages of hundreds of companies are made, a company with a high P/E ratio tends to produce more profit growth. in the future, when compared with a company with low P/E ratio. But it has not fared well at thinking about the macroeconomic and political outlook.

Going from the macro to the micro, how might election results impact upon individual companies? Some linkages between political parties and certain firms might exist. When institutions are weak, per sonalities matter. Certain persons and companies could have strong relationships with certain political figures. The priorities in licencing, regulation-making, and enforcement activities can change owing to election results, particularly for a class of firms that are termed 'politically connected firms' (PCFs).

Relatively little is known about India on these themes. But there are several studies for other countries which are illuminating.

■ A paper (Mobarak and Purbasari, 2006) shows that in Indonesia, firms connected with the Suharto regime preferentially got import licences.

■ A paper on Pakistan (Khwaja and Mian, 2005) found that ex-politicians shape bank loans to PCFs. ■ A paper (Faccio and Parsley, 2009) found that when a politician dies, there is a 1.7 per cent decline in the stock price of companies headquartered in the politician's hometown, and this rapid assessment is the correct one as earnings growth and access to credit is adversely affected in the period

after the death. ■ A paper (Claessens et al, 2008) finds that Brazilian firms which engaged in election funding got better stock market returns in the 1998 and 2002 elections.

■ In Indonesia (Fisman, 2001), rumours about Suharto's ill health induced negative returns of PCFs ■ In 1933, when Hitler rose to power, the firms with

strong links to the Nazis got strong returns (Ferguson and Voth, 2008) ■ In Malaysia, when the government ran out of mon-

ey to give subsidies to PCFs, in the 1997 crisis, the PCFs got negative stock market returns (Johnson and Mitton, 2003).

These examples, of fascinating research projects from other less developed countries, help in thinking about stock prices in the coming week.

The Indian stock market is getting firm valuations right, when averaged across a few hundred companies. On average, low P/E firms produce lower profit growth in the future than high P/E firms. In this micro-forecasting, there is a role for thinking more about political connections of PCFs. But the Indian stock market is weak at macro/political thinking, at anticipating aggregate earnings growth of listed companies. In the past, the aggregate P/E ratio has been a poor forecaster of future aggregate earnings growth. In an emerging market, the overall market index is a rather important factor in shaping the returns of individual firms and portfolios, which amplifies the importance of correct thinking about the overall index valuation.

Macro-forecasting is thus the area where more effort is required. The finance fraternity in India needs to strengthen its capabilities in macroeconomics and political science.

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Fani's climate change fingerprint

horrific tropical cyclone-making landfall in the midst of election cacophony is not a good idea. It captures headlines briefly and it makes for good politics — who did what and who did not. But the fact is the impact of cyclone Fani, which devastated large parts of the Odisha and then hit West Bengal and Bangladesh, has not gone away. It has left behind a trail of broken homes, powerlines and infrastructure. The state has lost years of its development dividend in one rude and cruel shock.

But what needs to be acknowledged is the undeniable fact that there were far fewer fatalities in this cyclone than before. It tells us of the huge and incredible effort that was made by scientists, who correctly predicted the path and by the Odisha administration, which ensured over a million people were evacuated and taken to shelters for protection. The state had lost 10,000 people in the super cyclone of 1999. This time, even when wind speeds crossed 170 km/hour and

reached 204 km/hour, the loss of human life was contained at 41 (which has now

SUNITA NARAIN

reportedly increased to 70). This is no small feat. However, what we need to understand is what Fani means in an increasingly climate-risked world. Every time there is a similar natural disaster, fingers are pointed and attribution is made to climate change. Every time, there is a pushback, with climate sceptics arguing that there have always been cyclones and

such natural disasters. Why blame climate change? Sceptics will point to the fact that there is no absolute count, over time, to show that the number of tropical storms — cyclones or hurricanes — has increased. There is some change but the time-scale is not long enough to count the difference. The 2018 climate assessment by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) found that tropical storms in the Northern Hemisphere were up — from 63 in the previous year to 74 in 2018; and were roughly the same, 22, in the Southern Hemisphere. So, if you want, at your risk, you could argue, nothing is new.

Storms will come and go. Why blame climate change? The fact is that there is a big difference in these

storms, as the India Meteorological Department (IMD) is finding. These storms are increasingly and crazily unpredictable — in recent vears the IMD has nearly perfected the science of cyclone forecast but now it is learning, in real time, to change its methods and to advance its technology to keep pace with this erratic creature of the oceans.

The first shock was with Ockhi, which hit the Kerala coast in late 2017, took many lives and caught fishermen at

sea unawares. Ockhi went from a deep depression in the ocean to a cyclonic storm in a matter of six hours. We must realise that the failure to predict and warn was not just human. It was because of the unnatural characteristics — never seen before — of such a tropical storm. It changed direction: it gathered steam when least expected and become more intense and more virulent at speeds never seen before. One reason for this changing "nature" of the storm was, as scientists later found, the intense heat pockets in the ocean, which changed the direction and speed of the cyclone.

This time, the IMD was prepared for this change it had learnt bitter lessons from Ockhi. They used even more sophisticated equipment and improved their prediction models with this learning. But the speed of change is so rapid that this learning of 2017 is already outdated.

In this case, Fani intensified from severe to very severe in no time — it also made landfall ahead of its schedule. This in spite of the fact that there i really good cyclone prediction now in India. Just consider what this means in real time. Fani was to hit Odisha by the afternoon, evacuations should have been completed by then. But Fani landed with ferocity by the morning. The fact that the state administration had planned and managed to move people ahead of schedule speaks volumes for their state of preparedness.

Then, Fani, moved inland — it reached Bhubaneshwar — and there it did not weaken in its wind speed. This in itself is surprising as storms need moisture on land to gather intensity and to lash the land with rain. This time, it is peak summer — a time when ocean storms never hit in any case. How did it move inland? Why? How should this be predicted in the future?

Fani tells us many things: One, that we must invest in the science of the weather and in the governance capacity to move rapidly to avert disasters. Two, that we must not count the number of tropical storms to conclude that the world is risked or not. But most importantly, it teaches us that the future is even more risked and even more unpredictable than we imagined. It is time we woke up to this reality. There is no time to lose.

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Dissecting Hindu nationalism



AKSHAYA MUKUL

uture historians will find it an uphill task to chronicle Narendra Modi's five-year term. Newspapers, the first draft of history and often a critical primary source for a scholar, would not be worthy research material. Barring honourable exceptions, they present the scholar with the imminent danger of exposure to a singular, dominant narrative with barely a few degrees separating them in reverence and awe of the Modi era.

Therefore, it is heartening when an eclectic mix of fine scholars and objective journalists get together to produce a tome on the Modi era. Christophe Jaffrelot, who for

of Hindu nationalism, has teamed up with anthropologist Thomas Blom Hansen and gender and conflict expert Angana P Chatterji to produce a volume that promises to become a benchmark of contemporary history writing.

In the past five decades or so, there has been a shift in history writing, with an increasing focus on contemporary times. There has, however, been a parallel debate on techniques, or lack of it, in the writing of such accounts. Contemporary historians do not have the wisdom that time provides to general historians in assessing the significance of a period, an event or a personality. But contributors to this volume have made full use of the advantages that Cambridge historian David Thomson listed in favour of writers of contemporary history: personal experience, sense of the atmosphere of the time and the possibility of talking to participants.

This interdisciplinary volume successfully demonstrates how the unprecedented electoral verdict of 2014 has played out in

decades has written on almost every aspect creating a majoritarian narrative, in capturing the institutions and legitimising forces and groups to take over civil society with no regard for law.

In the introduction, the editors have aptly characterised Mr Modi and his five years as a period of "neo-sultanism", a take-off on Max Weber's notion of "sultanism" in which "power operates primarily on the basis of discretion under the aegis of a strong man". Having placed the Modi years within a theoretical paradigm, the contributors look at each aspect of his government, how it has assiduously created the majoritarian world, how dissent is being targeted and also how it is being contested "from the streets to the courts"

Mr Hansen's essay, illustrated through three revealing ethnographic studies from Mumbai and Aurangabad (Maharashtra) where he has spent years, shows the subversion of "force of law" into "law of force" when it comes to Muslims and other marginal groups. Mr Jaffrelot looks at the worldwide trends and traces the roots of

"ethnic democracy" (a product of ethnic nationalism, the ideology of majoritarian group based on racial, linguistic, religious or, more generally speaking, cultural characteristics, that implies a strong sense of belonging and often of superiority) in India

and its coming of age in the last five years. Most of the essays in the volume stand out for the way they synthesise contemporary accounts with a historical perspective and maintain a safe distance from propagandist literature and dogma. Tanika Sarkar's essay on how history is perceived and taught by the Sangh Parivar is the most comprehensive account of right-wing pedagogy and takes it beyond mere rhetoric. She raises the pertinent question of the failure of the mainstream historians — mostly Left-secular — to deal with public histories written by the Rashtriya Swayamseyak Sangh (RSS). Ms Sarkar rightly argues that this has happened because scientific secular history has been written in "isolation from local, organic social-cultural processes".

Nandini Sundar answers the question many Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders and their acolytes in media often ask their critics: "If B.IP is anti-adivasi and anti-Dalit why does it get their support, their vote?" Ms

Sundar explains how voting is not always a reflection of one's ideological preference, and lists BJP's transformation as an electoral machine, the media's failure to call out BJP's doublespeak on an issue like the beef ban silence in the north-east, lynching Muslims in north India — and the changing aspirations of adivasis beyond jal (water), jangal (forest), zameen (land) as possible reasons.

The volume is equally insightful on the economic side of Mr Modi's majoritarian policies, which bear close resemblance to totalitarian regimes worldwide. Pranab Bardhan's deconstruction of Mr Modi's economic policies as "hoaxes", "PR coups" and a "continuation of UPA policies" is a succinct description of how disproportionate time was spent on superficial issues leaving key economic issues such as employment to languish. Veteran writers on the Indian economy A K Bhattacharva and Paranjov Guha-Thakurta. while admitting less evidence of crony capitalism so far, detail the opaqueness that gov erns Modi's economic decisions, demonetisation being just one of them. They remind readers that neither has crony capitalism disappeared nor can the possibility be ruled out of economic scandals of this regime emerging later. Together the two essays provide an

insight into how the majoritarian agenda works in the field of economy, how few benefit and through a narrative of "us" versus "them", the majority is convinced that those blocking their way to prosperity are the minorities and the marginals, the beneficiaries of the state's appearement past policies.

Overall, the book is the most coherent and comprehensive analysis of five years of Modi rule. It looks at the long-term trends and threats the majoritarian narrative has created. For future historians this volume offers useful reference material on how to produce a first-rate contemporary account of a regime that had no regard for facts and scholarship.

The reviewer is author of Gita Press and the Making of Hindu India

MAJORITARIAN STATE How Hindu Nationalism Is Changing India Angana P Chatterji, Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot (eds) HarperCollins; ₹899; 537 pages

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WHO CAN BE AMERICAN?

US president Donald Trump

Instead of admitting people through random chance, we will establish simple, universal criteria for admission to the US. No matter where in the world you're born, if you want to become a US citizen, it will be clear exactly what standard we ask you to achieve

Getting credit flows back will be next PM's challenge

Sharp jump in provisioning for next round of NPAs means reviving credit growth tough; low deposit-growth worrying, too

ANKS HAVE NOW been cleaning up their balance sheets for close to three years after the asset quality review process started in 2016. It was expected that, by now, most of the bad loans would have been identified and adequate capital set aside for these in the event the money cannot be recovered from the borrowers. However, the sharp jump in provisions made by a clutch of state-owned banks for loan losses in the March quarter both existing and potential—to over ₹50,000 crore is cause for concern. Moreover, some private sector banks too appear to be setting aside more capital for potential loan losses than one had estimated. The rising provisioning suggests the NPA cycle may not have have ended yet. After IL&FS and Jet Airways, there could be other big exposures that could turn toxic. Also, bankers have been redflagging stress in the real estate sector and MSME space, too. This is a big concern because, while private sector banks should be able to access the markets for equity capital, the state-owned banks may not have adequate growth-capital to fund businesses and consumers in FY20 unless the government comes to their rescue. This is despite the fact that capital adequacy norms have been eased.

The other big concern is the sharp deceleration in credit growth over the last six months, essentially the shortage of affordable credit. The near-collapse of NBFCs and HFCs has resulted in the flow of credit weakening. Alook at the loan data shows that banks, too, have been lending a lot less to certain segments. For instance, loans to the consumer durable segment contracted by 68% year-on-year (y-o-y) in March. While some of this could be attributed to lack of purchasing power, it is also a fact that loans that were being offered were not attractive enough. If growth is not to be stifled, businesses must have access to adequate affordable credit. At this point, banks are finding it hard to mobilise deposits, partly because consumers' savings are thinning as their incomes are growing slowly, or are not growing at all. Deposits are now growing at sub-10% y-o-y, but to support credit growth of 13-14%, CRISIL estimates the asking rate of annual deposit growth would be significantly higher at about 10% in FY19 and FY20, compared with around 6% in FY18. The growth in FY19 has been a little over 8%, with outstanding deposits now at close to ₹126 lakh crore. Unless the economy rebounds, and, therefore, consumer incomes get a boost, it is unlikely banks will be able to attract deposits at a faster pace.

It is something of a chicken-and-egg situation. But while some of the currency-in-circulation should come back to the banking system after the elections, over the longer term, banks need to be able to mop up deposits at a quicker pace, else lending will be constrained. Also, liquidity measures being used by RBI—including open market operations—will help. But, unless the government spends far more than it has budgeted, it would be hard to create jobs and boost consumers' incomes and, thereby, savings. The other option, of course, is to attract more foreign flows into the corporate bond market.

A CEO is responsible for risk

RBI diktat on Chief Risk Officer provides cover to NBFC bosses

HOUGH THE PROBLEMS associated with the IL&FS default, and its loans of over ₹100,000 crore, are still very large, there can be little doubt that deft handling of the situation by the government and RBI ensured the country's financial system didn't freeze up and there was no contagion despite the IL&FS exposure across various sectors. But, even those who felt India had dodged—at least, for now—a bullet wouldn't have envisaged that the rot spread so deep and so wide, or that so many other large NBFCs would have such large exposures. In a note last month, Credit Suisse estimated that, of the exposure to four stressed groups that AMCs have, 11% or roughly ₹2,200 crore is through close-ended plans aggregating ₹18,000 crore; around 56% of this is up for maturity in Q1FY19. It is estimated that mutual funds have trimmed NBFC exposure to 27% of AUM (from 34% in Aug-2018) with exposure to NBFC commercial paper down 40%. But there is a need to be watchful since mutual funds have a ₹320,000 crore exposure to NBFCs (including housing finance companies) and ₹130,000 crore of this matures over the next three months.

It is in this context that the central bank has asked NBFCs to appoint Chief Risk Officers (CROs) and to ensure that they are insulated from various pressures. So, for instance, any premature transfer/removal of the CRO is to be intimated to RBI's department of non-banking supervision. Similarly, the NBFC's risk management committee and/or board is to meet the CRO once a quarter without the NBFC's MD/CEO being present, all credit products are to be vetted by the CRO and the CRO will even have voting power if s/he is one of the decision-makers in the creditsanction process. But why is the central bank getting into micro-management? Risk-management is part of the NBFC's job, whether it does it through a risk officer is its internal matter; if RBI feels not enough risk-mitigation is being done, it needs to tighten the rules, ask for more provisioning or other mitigation steps. By mandating the CRO as central to the NBFC's functioning, in effect the central bank is making the CRO responsible for everything that goes wrong; surely that is the job of the MD/CEO and the board? In the NSE co-location case that Sebi ruled on recently, for example, the stock exchange's bosses—Ravi Narain and Chitra Ramakrishna over different periods—argued that they never understood technology and so didn't understand that the technology allowed favourable treatment to a few brokers. In its order, Sebi said this was not acceptable and that they had to take responsibility. It is easy to see how, in the future, various NBFC bosses will now try and pass off the blame to the CRO.

BirthingTROUBLE

The gap in institutional delivery means India doesn't have enough data on low birth weight

RECENT ARTICLE in *The Lancet* on the prevalence of low-birth weight (LBW) examines datasets from 148 out of 195 UN member countries. India was among the nations that didn't figure in the study that found that there were 20.5 million LBW instances amongst all the live-births in the 148 nations. The global nutrition targets set at the World Health Assembly in 2012 is of a 30% reduction of LBWs over 2012 to 2015. The estimated prevalence of LBW was 14.6% in 2015, down from 17.5% in 2000—an average annual reduction rate (AARR) of 1.23%. But, in order to meet the global nutrition target, the AARR should be at 2.74% between 2012 and 2025. *The Lancet*, in an editorial, states that the weight of a new born matters a lot because of its strong relation with neonatal health and survival, growth and non-communicable diseases in adulthood. And this affects the life-stage cycle for women, as those whose height and weight remain low when they become mothers, risk another low birth weight baby.

For India, where a raft of schemes on maternal and child healthcare exist, being part of the *Lancet* assessment should have been important. But, India's non-inclusion is, sadly, linked to the non-availability of updated data-sets. This mars effective monitoring and assessment of the country's various healthcare programmes. Experts believe a top reason for the non-availability/partial availability of birth-weight and similar data is the fact that over a fifth of the births in the country are non-institutional, i.e., they don't occur at a healthcare facility, and instead mostly occur at home. Though India has bettered its record on institutional deliveries—79% in 2015-16, up from 38.7% in 2005-06—the gap is still significant. Tackling this will need a multipronged approach—higher costs as well as distance and lack of transportation are cited as top reasons for non-institutional deliveries. This means the cash incentive for institutional deliveries, under one of the maternal and neonatal health programmes, is clearly not enough and there are infrastructural hurdles as well. Also, education makes a material difference to the likelihood of institutional delivery. India is estimated to have a high prevalence of LBW. Fighting this has to begin with having the relevant data, and the hurdles to that are systemic.

FUTURE TENSE

THE DRAFT E-COMMERCE POLICY INSPIRES COMPARISONS WITH THE DISCREDITED PROTECTIONIST MODEL OF YORE

India's e-commerce policy: Licence Raj II?

Kathuria is director & CE, ICRIER

Views are personal

OSEPH SCHUMPETER HAD once observed that "the capitalists' achievement does not consist in providing silk stockings for queens but in bringing them within reach of factory girls." Inequality, however vulgar it is, ought not to be held up as the reason to preclude interventions that allow an improvement at the lower end of the income distribution. The litmus test for new policy in India, including for ecommerce, ought to be whether it helps the economy to grow and create jobs, especially when evidence is showing a decoupling of job growth from GDP growth. The fact is that with more and more young people entering the labour market, and with India looking more and more labour abundant than ever in its history, it is important we do not repeat mistakes of the past. Placing limits on competition for e-commerce platforms, as the new e-commerce policy attempts to, might actually be counterproductive. The Indian experience with licensing still haunts those who lived through the dirigiste period of the 1980s and earlier. Put in place to limit concentration of economic power in the hands of a few, licensing actually produced outcomes the policy intended to prevent in the first place. India's retail sector is growing at

unprecedented rates, and as is often the case, growth brings about structural changes. Retail in India is becoming more organised. It is adopting modern technology thus spawning new platforms, both multi-format stores in malls and internet driven e-commerce. There is evidence that e-commerce is growing rapidly in tier-2 and tier-3 towns and in areas where the demand for variety is not being met by the brickand-mortar outlets. It is a fallacy to assume that e-commerce is catering only for the rich—in fact, on the contrary, it is making inroads into relatively less well-off households,, and one can only imagine the impacts it will have when internet in rural areas improves with the completion of the much-delayed Bharatnet project. Already, there are over half a billion internet users and the average Indian phone user now consumes more mobile data than most Europeans. On the demand side, the rise in e-commerce across urban and rural households alike can be attributed to sharp shifts in consumer preferences for convenience, variety and brands. Millions of Indian consumers are buying products on the internet. E-commerce platforms such as Flipkart and Amazon attract customers using their deep discount models. More recently, prices were brought down by moderating delivery charges and offering cashbacks through integrated payment portals. Other spillovers that a strong e-commerce sector promises are improved logistics, reduced prices and above all, jobs that a labour abundant

This process needs to be helped along. Increase in e-commerce is likely to have disproportionate impacts on GDP because of the reasons mentioned above. While robust evidence exists for other countries, for India, it is yet anecdotal and needs to be spelled out. Sooner rather than later, it will emerge and, hopefully, corroborate the global evidence. Meanwhile, policymakers in India are being cautious for multiple reasons.

One, the sector is politically sensi-

country like India so desperately needs.

tive, and there is a mindset that India is not ready to compete globally on ecommerce, and therefore runs the risk of being dominated by foreign e-commerce firms. As an aside, if one studies the history of foreign direct investment (FDI) in China, it emerges that it had a relatively smooth ride because there was no strong domestic industry that pushed back (Tarun Khanna, 2008). We, however, feel that Indian e-commerce doesn't need protection to thrive—it underestimates its own ability to compete. India is an acknowledged powerhouse in IT services and knowledge of the Indian market is an unequivocal advantage for operating here. What is hard for both Indian and 'foreign' firms is policy uncertainty. We should make it clear once and for all what model of ecommerce-inventory or market place we will allow in the country. DIPP's Press Note 2 of December 2018 clarified regulations governing the e-commerce sector, including control over inventory, the relationship between a marketplace and its sellers and additional compliance requirements for e-commerce platforms with foreign investments.

The fear of "capital dumping" in the inventory-based model thus discouraging Indian start-ups due to their ability to offer deep discounts doesn't stand up to deeper scrutiny. The evidence weighs heavily in favour of companies creating complex arrangements to circumvent these. More importantly, the optimal regulatory response

doesn't need

protection to

thrive—India is an

acknowledged

powerhouse in IT

services and

knowledge of the

an unequivocal

advantage

would be to invoke competition law to address this, and simultaneously create a financing ecosystem to encourage startups. Discouraging the inventory-based model is a sub-optimal policy response if the intent is really to promote domestic start-ups.

Recently, India decided to opt out of the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) e-commerce discussions—the primary concern being unfair market access to foreign play-

ers. This is the first time India has formally opposed any negotiations on e-commerce at the WTO. E-Commerce entered the WTO in 1998, when member countries agreed not to impose custom duty on electronic trade, and the moratorium on free trade was to be reviewed periodically. There are several reasons that explain India's resistance to entering a dialogue on e-commerce, including the fact that domestic manufacturing is still reeling under the effect of India's decision to 'over-commit' under WTO's Information Technology Agreement of 2000. Moreover, the dynamism of e-commerce makes conservatism a safe regulatory response. The scope of negotiations on e-commerce have widened since then to include other issues of digital trade, such as cross-border data flows, server localisation, intellectual property rights, etc.

Data and its newly discovered utility is the second, and perhaps more compelling, reason for the reluctance to politically commit to a liberal model. To our mind, whatever the reasons, it is not

tor that will be hard to contain within domestic boundaries. After all, Flipkart and Paytm, to name two erstwhile startups, began as domestic players, and have grown enormously due to fund infusion from abroad. There is no doubt that the views central in the draft Personal Data Protection Bill (2018) and the draft E-Commerce Policy (2019) that emphasise the sovereign claim on data management and owner ship need intense debate, but not solely from the lens of encouraging domestic industry. The Indian consumer has been subject to much monopoly abuse during the days of the 'license raj', contending that reposing her data and trust in

justified to abandon dialogue on a sec-

an Indian company is better seems a disingenuous argument to make.

Indian e-commerce But data and cross-border data flows must be discussed for their own sake. What are the implications of the data regime on India's competiveness for IT outsourcing? What is the regulatory burden on SMEs that we wish to promote as the backbone of domestic market is our structural transformation? Forcing data centres and server farms to be located in India without adequate access to power and water may just turn

> them away instead. Building a strong local industrial base is an absolute necessity but it is irrelevant as to who builds it. Data rules should be equally applicable.

> The draft e-commerce policy inspires comparisons with the discredited protectionist model of yore. As mentioned above, growth of e-commerce is important not only for itself but more so for the spillovers on the rest of the economy. In a fascinating new book, Radical Markets by Posner and Weyl, the new protectionism visible in the world today is rooted in what they call 'stagnaequality' lower growth combined with inequality being experienced globally. India, on the other hand, and by its own admission, is the fastest-growing market in the world, albeit with rising inequality. If the intent is to provide silk stockings to factory girls, limiting competition to powerful domestic industry is exactly the opposite of what should be done. It is a lesson we learnt the hard way.

> > Co-authored with Mansi Kedia, consultant, ICRIER

Trump's tariffs could cost China big

If the country falls back on old bad habits, its chances of reaching high-income status may well be threatened

MOHAMED A EL-ERIAN Bloomberg



BY PUTTING MORE barriers in China's path to US markets and, in the process, risking some short-term damage to the domestic and global economies, US president Donald Trump could exact a heavy long-term cost on the world's second-largest economy. Indeed, he may even threaten China's chances of eventually entering the ranks of highincome countries.

Chinese leaders have long known that they need to change their development model if they are to make this difficult transition, powering through the dreaded "middle-income trap" that's tripped up so many other developing countries. For two decades, they relied on global markets to provide a crucial tailwind while they pursued reforms at home. But this is changing now that the US is increasing tariffs on Chinese imports and limiting their tech companies' access to US markets. Also, some US companies have already begun to reorient their supply chains away from the mainland.

With external tailwinds turning into headwinds, China will need to rely far more on domestic demand to generate prosperity. To do so without building up risks in the financial system, Beijing would need to promote far greater household consumption and private investment, rather than relying on the debt-fueled government investment and inefficient state owned enterprises that have helped drive

domestic engines of growth for most of the last several decades.

This effort will fail unless the govthat tend to reassert themselves whenever economic and financial insecurities increase in China.

The first is the tendency for households to sock away more money as a form of self-insurance. Especially when they're uncertain about their economic prospects, Chinese households revert to parking away higher savings to safeguard their future ability to pay for things like hospital bills, education for their family, and retirement.

China's success in prudently reducing its household saving rates in recent years appears to have stalled in the last 12 months. The latest high-frequency economic data, including this week's lower-than-consensus expectations for retail sales and industrial output, suggests the problem may get worse before it gets better. China needs to do more to provide households with pooled insurance mechanisms (including improving health insurance, education and pension systems) so that they can feel more confident spending.

The second trend is the tendency for the government to revert to fiscal and monetary stimulus whenever the economy hits a soft patch. Recent evidence suggests that such measures are less effective than they used to be, requiring much more debt per unit of GDP to sta-

bilise growth. This only adds to the risks building up in China's financial system. Most development economists argue that to avoid the middle-income trap, countries instead must lead with the supply side, securing further productivity gains and diversifying their domestic economic base.

The third is the government's tendency to fall back on state-owned enterprises to boost GDP. Most available evidence suggests that the efficiency and productivity of these companies is low and declining, while their contributions to China's debt load and resource misallocations are increasing. China instead should be empowering its more efficient private companies to be responsible for the bulk of jobs and growth in the economy. So far China has resisted following the examples of Canada and Mexico in making concessions to the Trump administration in order to defuse trade tensions and build a more sustainable economic relationship with the US. If it also cannot resist indulging these three habits, its multi-decade record of impressive economic performance, not to mention its future prospects, will be at serious risk. That would only further embolden those US policy makers who, driven by both economic and national security considerations, hope their actions now will dampen China's ability to challenge America's global dominance.

LETTERS TO

THE EDITOR

Rafale documents: Punish theft

A Supreme Court bench, of Justices R Banumathi and R Subhash Reddy, has reportedly held in a May 9 judgment that dishonest and temporary "removal" of original documents to take photocopies and to further use information within amounts to theft. In the Rafale case, the petitioners Arun Shourie, Prashant Bhushan and Yeshwant Sinha have submitted stolen documents. The authority of the Supreme Court is supreme and no power in the earth can prevent the apex court from looking into the documents of any nature. The Supreme Courts seems to have been interested to see the stolen documents to know if the government has anything to conceal. The government has made it clear that the price clause has been kept secret, and it has also come out with the explanation, which is true, that Pakistan and China should not know the details of the deal with

France. If the Supreme Court holds

documents can be used to haul up

committed theft of the documents

must be prosecuted irrespective

of the judgment going in favour of

or against the government. There

the view that the stolen

the government in case any

irregularity is found, it is also

necessary that those who have

Should the thieves not undergo punishment? — KV Seetharamaiah, Hassan

is no need for lecture that one

who steals anything is thief.

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

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FINANCIAL EXPRESS



SANTOSH MEHROTRA

Professor of Economics, JNU, and the author of 'Realising the Demographic Dividend: Policies to Achieve Inclusive Growth in India'

New industrial policy needed, aligned to trade policy

Making the case for an integrated trade-and-industrial policy, which means that the ministry of commerce and industry, the DIPP, and the ministry of finance (which takes a final view on taxes) will need to work together

LTHOUGH INDIA'S GDP growth rate since Independence has consistently increased, industry accounts foronly 25% of GDP (in 1950, it was 8%). Manufacturing contributed in 2017 only about 16% to GDP, stagnating since the economic reforms began in 1991. By contrast, in east Asia, the industry's share has exceeded 30-40% while that of manufacturing is 20-30%. Malaysia roughly tripled its share of manufacturing value-added in GDP from 1960 to 2014 to about 24%, while Thailand's share increased from 13% to 33% over the same period; Vietnam, too, has seen a sharp recent increase. In India, manufacturing has never been the leading sector other than during the second and third Plan periods, and certainly not since 1991.

No major country managed to reduce poverty or sustain growth over long periods of time without the manufacturing sector driving economic growth. This is because productivity levels in industry (and manufacturing) are much higher than in either agriculture or services, and it is the source of productivity gains across primary and tertiary sectors, through the

spread effects of technological change. The 1991 reforms reduced barriers to

entry for private industry (ending indus-

trial licensing), reduced the sectors

reserved for the 'public sector' from 17 to

eight (apart from the beginning of disin-

vestment in public enterprises), and sig-

nificantly reduced import duties. It was

the thrust of policies over two decades. By the late noughties—the decade from 2000 to 2009—the need for a real industrial policy was being felt. Hence, in 2011, the National Manufacturing Policy was announced. However, by this time, the rapid reduction in tariffs had led to Chinese and other imports flooding India with capital goods, intermediates as well

as consumer goods. While the most severe effects of openeconomy policies on India's manufacturing were felt from the early 2000s onwards, those effects had begun in the 1990s. In manufacturing, the simple average tariff fell from 126% in 1990-91 to 36% in 1997-98, and then to 12.1% in 2014-15. Tariffs were reduced to well below the upper-bound of rates permissi-

ble under WTO rules. Meanwhile, GDP growth in India was led by the services sector, led by communications, software and air transportation since the early 2000s. Services growth was accompanied by a sharp rise

in import demand for manufactures computer hardware, telecom equipment, and aircraft. So, economic liberalisation, while contributing to growth in the services part of the GDP, had the reverse effect on manufacturing.

This situation from 2001 onwards was not helped by the spate of free trade agreements (FTAs) signed by India, which led to an inverted import duty structure (IDS)—it means higher duty on intermediate goods compared to final/finished goods, with the latter often enjoying concessional customs duty under some schemes. Due to such a duty structure, domestic manufacturing units end up importing finished goods from China, Europe and East Asian countries. As a result, the trade deficit in manufacturing on account of import competition was 44% of manufacturing GDP during 2008-09 to 2010-11.

One sector that did not face IDS and prospered is automobiles. In this sector, most final goods are under the negative list of imports; components are not. MFN tariff rates have been also quite high for importing vehicles in completely built-up form. However, duties are quite low for the completely knocked down version of the

vehicle, which is expected to promote local vehicle assembly. Hence, prima facie, the duty structure is in line with promoting domestic production in automobiles. Not surprisingly, India has become, in the last 15 years, one of the world's largest manufacturers of two-wheelers, three-wheel-

ers, cars and trucks. Second, since 1991, the import-intensity of manufacturing production has dramatically increased. For India, an upward trend in

import intensity since 2003 explains capital intensity, to some extent. The implication is that manufacturing would be characterised by 'jobless growth', while numbers of youth joining the labour

force was rising. According to economist Dani Rodrik, it will not be possible for next-generation industrialising countries to move 25% or more of their workforce into manufacturing, unlike the East Asians. However, this shouldn't mean that India cannot increase manufacturing share in GDP, or the share of employment above the current 12%, rely-

ing both on domestic and export markets. We are making the case for an integrated trade-and-industrial policy, which means that the ministry of commerce and industry, the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion, and the ministry of finance (which takes a final view on taxes) will need to work together on such an integrated trade-and-industrial policy. However, there is no constituency for manufacturing in any ministry, especially ministry of finance.

IDS constitutes negative protection of India's merchandise industries. If the effective rate of protection (ERP) is positive in the presence of IDS, then the latter may not affect domestic industries. A 2017 study of ERP in Indian manufacturing, with a view to examining the effect of IDS, shows that inverted duty structure exists in paper and paper products, chemical and chemical products, pharmaceuticals, computer, electronics and optical products, machinery and equipment, other transport equipment for the majority of the years under consideration. Another study by Hoda and Rai (2014) had also reported IDS in electronic products such as refrigerators, air conditioners, washing machines, microwave ovens, etc. Tariff Commission studies have demonstrated the same.

Action too little, too late

Productivity levels

in industry (and

manufacturing) are

much higher than

in agriculture or

services, and it is

the source of

productivity gains

across primary and

tertiary sectors

In the Budget for 2014-15, the government had, with a view to boost domestic manufacturing and also to address IDS,

reduced the basic customs duty(BCD) on various inputs (for example, for the chemicals and petrochemicals sector). This initiative was carried forward in the Budget 2015-16 (for example, BCD was reduced on 22 key

inputs/components). However, the existing FTAs contain long-term contractual obligations, which cannot simply be modified. Although the government can consider invoking the WTO's 'safeguard clause' (embedded in most FTAs to

sanction the adoption of countermeasures to guard a domestic industry facing 'threat of serious injury' from imports), maintaining a symmetry between applying safeguard measures and the objective of trade liberalisation is

always a challenge. The goods and services tax (GST) does deal with IDS in a specific clause. The law provides for refund of unutilised input tax credit (ITC) where credit accumulation is on account of IDS, subject to certain riders. However, this action is insufficient to counteract IDS. All that the GST has managed to do is neutralise the negative protection, and possibly level the playing field—but levelling the playing field for the potential domestic manufacturer cannot lead to a manufacturing sector investment boom. A new government will need to take rapid action with a new Industrial Policy aligned to Trade Policy.

The joy of absence

How some companies fight the curse of presenteeism

ONALD REAGAN FAMOUSLY quipped that "it's true hard work never killed anybody, but I figure, why take the chance?" Beyond a certain level, extra effort seems to be self-defeating. Studies suggest that, after 50 hours a week, employee productivity falls sharply.

But that doesn't stop some managers from demanding that workers stay chained to their desk for long periods. At the blood-testing firm Theranos, Sunny Balwani, then boyfriend of the founder, Elizabeth Holmes, had an obsession with $employee \, hours, and \, would \, tour \, the \, engineering \, department$ at 7.30pm to check people were at their desks. All those hours were wasted when the company eventually collapsed (prosecutors have charged Ms Holmes and Mr Balwani with fraud).

Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba, a Chinese e-commerce group, recently praised the "996" model, where employees work from 9am to 9pm, six days a week, as a "huge blessing." To be fair, Mr Ma said employers should not mandate such hours. Still, presenteeism is the curse of the modern office worker.

There will be days when you do not have much to do, perhaps because you are waiting for someone else in a different department, or a different company, to respond to a request. As the clock ticks past 5pm, there may be no purpose in staying at your desk. But you can see your boss hard at work and, more important, they can see you. So you make an effort to look busy.

Some of this may be a self-perpetuating cycle. If bosses do not like to go home before their underlings, and underlings fear leaving before their bosses, everyone is trapped. Staff may feel that they will not get a pay rise, or a promotion, if they are not seen to be putting in maximum effort. This is easily confused with long hours. Managers, who are often no good at judging employees' performance, use time

in the office as a proxy. The consequence is often wasted effort. To adjust the old joke about the Soviet Union: "We pretend to work and managers pretend to believe us." Rather than work hard, you toil to make bosses think that you are. Leaving a jacket on your office chair, walking around purposefully with a notebook

Smartphones and

laptops can be

used as easily at

home as in office.

Turning an office

into a prison does

nothing for the

creativity. To be

productive you

need presence of

mind, not being

present in the flesh

or clipboard and sending out emails at odd hours are three of the best-known tricks. After a while, this can result in collective self-delusion that this pretence is actual work.

But presenteeism has more serious consequences. It is perhaps most prevalent in Japan, where people attend the office even when they are in discomfort. In doing so, they are doing neither themselves nor their employers any favours.

As well as reducing productivity, this can increase medical expenses for the employer. According to a study in the Journal of Occupation and Environmental Medicine, these costs can be six times higher for employ-

ers than the costs of absenteeism among workers. To take one example, research published in the British Medical Journal found that Japanese employees with lower-back pain were three times more likely to turn up for work than in Britain. As a result, those workers were more likely to experience greater pain and to suffer from depression. What could be more dispir-

iting than being in pain while feeling trapped at work? None of this is to say that employers are not entitled to expect workers to be in the office for a decent proportion of time. Inevitably there will be a need for some (preferably short) meetings. Dealing with colleagues face-to-face creates a feeling of camaraderie, allows for a useful exchange of ideas and

enables workers to have a better sense of their mutual needs. In the grand sweep of humanity, presenteeism is a recent phenomenon. Before the industrial era, most people worked in their own farm or workshop and were paid for the amount they produced. Factories emerged because new machines were much more efficient than cottage-industry methods, and only a large employer with capital could afford them. Suddenly, workers were paid not for their output but for their

time, and were required to clock in and out. But modern machinery like smartphones and laptops is portable. It can be used as easily at home as in the office. Turning an office into a prison, with inmates allowed home for the evenings, does nothing for the creativity that is increasingly demanded of office workers as routine tasks are automated. To be productive you need presence of mind, not being present in the flesh.

THE ECONOMIST

What's your adversity quotient? **IE MEANING OF THE** word 'adverse' is a hostile or critical situation. We all face some or the other adversities in life; it's only during adversities that one really comes to know who are friends and well-wishers.Like IQ (intelligence quotient), EQ (emotional quotient) and SQ (spiritual quotient), there is an AQ (adversity quotient), which is a score that measures the

Organisations ability of a person to deal with adversities in are emphasising his or her life. One needs to increase resilience to overcome adversities in life. on testing AQ The term AQ was coined by Paul Stoltz in rather than just 1997 in his book 'Adversity Quotient: Turning Obstacles into Opportunities'. To quantify EQ and IQ AQ, Stoltz developed an assessment method called the Adversity Response Profile (ARP). AQ is one of the possible indicators of a person's success in life and is also primarily use-

responding to changes in environment. There are umpteen examples of people who fought adversities and have become successful. The richest person in the world couldn't make any money at first. Do you know that Bill Gates' first company, Traf-O-Data (a device that could read traffic tapes and process the data), failed miserably? When Gates and his partner Paul Allen tried to sell it, the product wouldn't even work. Gates and Allen didn't let that stop them from trying again to fix the problem. Traf-O-Data helped them prepare Microsoft's

first product a couple of years later.

ful to predict attitude, mental stress, perse-

verance, longevity, learning and style of

In 2000, when the world was celebrating the new century, Amitabh Bachchan was feeling disastrous because he had no films, no money, no company (ABCL), a million legal cases against him, and the tax authorities had put up a notice of recovery on his house. The mega star was then in his late 50s. Yash Chopra offered him a role in his film *Mohabbatein*. It was this time when Bachchan got a huge break through Kaun Banega Crorepati. It propelled him into national stardom and helped in the reversal of his fortunes. In my opinion,

nobody can match Bachchan on KBC. AQ is the key determinant of success and winning in a person's life. This does not

mean that EQ and IQ are irrelevant; resilience in the face of stressful situations and in a world of rapid changes determines success in life. At workplace, in business, in personal life when one faces difficulties yet fights out the problem courageously and moves ahead is a person with a good AQ. Such a person is the real hero. There is a magic that comes when one is strong enough to identify a goal and move steadily towards it, while also being flexible enough to pick oneself off the ground when obscurities come in way.

VIDYA

HATTANGADI

The author is a management thinker and blogger

It does not matter whether you are an entrepreneur, a musician, a home maker, a student, a clerk, a CEO or a plain Jane, rising



to the occasion, especially during the times of difficulty, should be included into the mentality of those who desire growth, development and success. It's effortless to remain stagnant when you are not happy, but it takes strong character to utilise how a transitional phase can work for you.

I don't know the exact number of attempts and failures Thomas Alva Edison had before he created the light bulb; it is debated that he failed 10,000 times. But what a great man Edison was. His response to his repeated failures was: "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."

Across the world, organisations are emphasising on testing AQ rather than

just EQ and IQ. It can be difficult to test AQ, as seeing how people think and behave under pressure is not easy to simulate in an interview context. However, it is possible to screen a 'fair-weather employee' from the resume; also, you can screen a hard-working employee; whether an employee can adapt to change easily or not; whether a person can cope when things get challenging at work; whether somebody is capable of taking more responsibility, or asked to do something

Look for resilience in the CV: Organisations must avoid individuals who tend to be easily discouraged when confronted

he/she has never done before.

with even minimal adversity. Such people will infect and weaken others in a team. They will kill the overall morale and culture. On the contrary, candidates who stuck out a job in dire circumstances even though the business subsequently closed deserve consideration. Often, such people exhibit greater depth and breadth of work experience because they have been the last per sons standing and have worn many hats.

Rewards: Usually, incentive structures reward contribution primarily on an origin basis. The risk with a very simplistic appraisal model is it doesn't work—it may fail to reward someone demonstrating high AQ because often such employees fail to project their hard work as they get lost in solving problems or finding solutions to a sticky snag; it has been observed that people, who are committed, do not run after getting rewarded for their work.

Appreciation: Members of the team who demonstrate the highest AQ and deliver results, all other things being equal, should be promoted to leadership posi tions in the organisation. Often, these team members will be the ones who are also the most productive and get things done as they are less prone to distraction or dissuasion by adverse circumstances surrounding them. A worker who is engrossed in his work, and is busy fixing some problem, will not have time to gossip.

Conclusion: Adversity is the state in which a man most easily becomes acquainted with himself.

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

AVIATION IS FOR THE COMMON MAN. MY GOAL IS TO ENABLE EVERYONE TO FLY. IT SHOULDN'T BE

ONLY FOR THE RICH. — TONY FERNANDES

The Indian EXPRESS

∽ FOUNDED BY ∽ RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Monitor's test

Polling over, EC needs to urgently address crisis within, allay apprehensions about weakening of its hard-won independence

"UST AS THE seventh and final round of polling in the general election concluded on Sunday, the constitutional body that conducted the arduous exercise has again and unhappily — come under the spotlight. Differences among its members, now out in the open, threaten to damage the EC's formidable and hard-won reputation as an impartial and effective poll monitor. In protest over his dissenting views going unrecorded in the Commission's final orders, Ashok Lavasa, one of the three election commissioners, has recused himself from meetings on complaints concerning violations of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) — Lavasa had opposed the clean chit given to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on four complaints that accused the PM of violating the Code during the campaign. Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora has said that disagreements among the commissioners are not new or surprising since they are not "clones of each other", but the circumstances surrounding Lavasa's recusal raise disturbing questions. They appear to lend credence to the Opposition's allegation that the Commission has leaned in favour of the ruling regime in general and of Prime Minister Modi and BJP President Amit Shah on complaints concerning MCC violations. In the long term, the current impasse within presents a challenge for an institution that has been losing its sheen in recent times. But in the short term, the EC needs to resolve the differences at the top since the tensions seem to have reached a breaking point.

The public turmoil within the EC threatens to make it part of a disquieting pattern seen earlier, featuring institutions such as the CBI and even the Supreme Court. The differences on the bench over the Chief Justice of India's allocation of cases saw four of the Supreme Court's senior-most justices hold an unprecedented press conference in January last year. The judges explained the move as an attempt to assert the independence of the judiciary and uphold the integrity of the institution. The year ended with the crisis within the CBI becoming public, requiring the apex court to step in, after the top two officials of the country's premier investigating agency, in the words of the attorney general, fought like "kilkenny cats" and brought "public ridicule" upon the institution. The Reserve Bank, too, has been visibly under stress with the exit of two governors in quick succession, reportedly after disagreements with the government on issues of institutional autonomy.

With the electoral process drawing to an end, the EC needs to reflect on the charges of institutional weakening, and address the gaps in the law governing its conduct. How it resolves the tensions within is of utmost importance to its credibility, independence. The full EC meeting scheduled on Tuesday will be tracked by all those with stakes in the health of this vital institution in a constitutional democracy.

MASALA FOR THOUGHT

Spate of borrowings by sub-sovereign entities highlights the potential risk of rising contingent liabilities of many states

HE STATE GOVERNMENT-BACKED Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board raised Rs 2,150 crore from the international markets last week through a Masala Bond offering, which is essentially debt issued to overseas investors in rupees or the local currency. The listing of these bonds on the London Stock Exchange, with the state's chief minister and his team in attendance, marks a first for an Indian sub-sovereign entity, though other private Indian corporates and some Central PSUs, too, have in the past taken the same route. The symbolism of a Left-led government making this move has certainly not been lost on many, as also the coupon or interest rate on these bonds, which at 9.723 per cent for five years, appears to be high when benchmarked to the yield on the tenyear government bond which is now 7.36 per cent. A rupee offering — Amaravati Bonds listed on the BSE last year by the Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority — backed by the state government there helped raise Rs 2,000 crore at a coupon rate of 10.36 per cent for 10 years. The initial investor response to these two bonds in two different markets is sure to encourage other state governments to join the bandwagon.

Borrowings by these Special Purpose Vehicles provide an off budget mechanism or escape clause to states to circumvent the restrictions imposed on borrowings both in India and abroad, especially after the FRBM law came into force. For many investors, these are attractive pickings, as these borrowings are guaranteed by the state governments and with the comfort of escrow mechanisms. To be fair, after the higher resource transfers, following the 14th Finance Commission's recommendations, much of the burden of building and developing infrastructure entailing huge capital expenditure and with a longer payback period has fallen on states. That has been amplified by the slowdown in the economy and the consequent decline in revenues. Commendable as the recent effort by states such as Kerala or Andhra Pradesh to diversify their sources of funding is, however, the spate of borrowings by sub sovereign entities also serves to highlight the potential risk of rising contingent liabilities of many states. What has fuelled concern is not just the growing recourse to off budget borrowings both at the federal and state levels in India, but the lack of transparency and classification of risk related to these explicit liabilities and the lack of adequate provisions for future repayment.

The BoP crisis of 1991 forced policy makers to change tack and adopt a prudent course on external sector management, marked by a record of no sovereign default. For the new government, the challenges posed by the banking sector and NBFCs or shadow banks may well be on top of the economic agenda. But equally, the issue of rising internal debt and contingent liabilities should gain increased attention. Both are critical to the country's financial stability.

Freeze Frame

E P Unny



The unpeople of India



Election rhetoric has only exacerbated Muslim fears. New government must combat the distrust and hate

ABDUL KHALIQ

I FEAR FOR our future as a secular, multicultural country that once celebrated a richness of culture and tradition. Till not long ago we affirmed our common humanity even as we celebrated our differences. Our nation represented diversity, kindness, compassion and a revulsion of extremist views. But, over time, our collective souls have been deadened by violence, deepening communal and caste divides and the most perverse thinking. The cosmopolitan spirit has been throttled by hyper nationalism, populism and a deep distrust of the liberal values of tolerance and inclusion. A creeping majoritarianism is spreading across the land.

In this overheated, protracted election season, Muslims are up against it, caught between a rock and a hard place. Theirs is an Orwellian world where they are the "unpeople"— a term coined by George Orwell in his scary masterpiece 1984, to define those whose names and existence had been erased because they had incurred "Big Brother's" ire. Muslims now have to live with the bleak truth that the most powerful political party and its ideological parent, with tentacles spread across the country, are pathologically hostile to Muslims. What makes their plight infinitely worse, is the fact that even the major allegedly secular party has consigned Muslims to social invisibility. Can one trust a party that is afraid to even allude to the Muslims' problems, let alone address them?

When the PM evoked the 1984 mass slaughter of Sikhs and quoted Rajiv Gandhi's infamous justification about the inevitable effect of the falling of a big tree, why did the Congress president not hit back by recalling the 2002 Gujarat riots and Modi's Newtonian observation justifying the killing of hundreds of Muslims as a reaction to an action? He refrained, not for any ethical reason, but simply for fear of being seen as empathetic to Muslims and their problems and of equating the two tragedies. Caught between the flagrant hostility of the right-wing and the fraudulent concern of the secular front, Muslims are India's outcasts.

In today's India, where all issues across the political spectrum are seen through the lens of identity politics, Muslims are vilified for their custom, dress and tradition. They

Muslims now have to live with the bleak truth that the most powerful political party and its ideological parent, with tentacles spread across the country, are pathologically hostile to Muslims. What makes their plight infinitely worse, is the fact that even the major allegedly secular party has consigned Muslims to social invisibility. Can one trust a party that is afraid to even allude to the Muslims' problems, let alone address

them?

are physically attacked for the food they eat, discriminated against in employment, housing, and even civic amenities, and, they are routinely victimised by law-enforcement authorities simply for being Muslim. Social media is awash with the most hateful, stereotypical portrayal of Muslims as terrorist sympathisers, baby producing factories and worse. Although India has been the home of Islam and its adherents for much more than a millennium, Muslims today are constantly pilloried about their loyalty to the nation.

All assessments about Muslims are universalised, in black and white and deeply problematic. In a conversation with two CRPF sub-inspectors who have recently returned from Kashmir (I did not reveal that I was Muslim), I was told that "these Muslims are a nuisance as even their women throw stones at us." Please note that the stone-throwing by the disgruntled Kashmiris is perceived as a common trait of Muslims – all 190 million of them. Their other complaints were that Muslims support Pakistan and insist on eating only halal meat. When I asked how the civil unrest in Kashmir could be resolved, I got an answer that stunned me: "Make sure that the police force in Kashmir is recruited only from the Shia community and they will teach these Sunnis a lesson!" How well have the British taught us the art of "divide and rule" and of polarising communities! The conversation filled me with anguish at the gratuitous distrust and hatred for Muslims. The animosity runs deep and is expressed by ordinary citizens in a matter-of-fact tone that is unnerving.

I recall clearly the sense of cautious optimism among Muslims when Narendra Modi assumed power in 2014. His swearing-in was a strikingly symbolic moment, epitomised by the presence of the Pakistani PM that signalled hope of rapprochement with Pakistan (Indian Muslims know through experience that their well-being is linked to this crucial relationship). The PM represented a more decisive polity that promised an equitable social order expressed most eloquently in the Socratic slogan, "Sabka saath sabka vikas". This slogan encapsulated this nation's foremost mission of fostering social solidarity based on the principle that every human

being matters. Minorities felt reassured by the PM's emphatic assertion in 2015 that "my government will not allow any religious group, belonging to the majority or minority, to incite hatred against others, overtly or covertly." He repeatedly made appeals to preserve our core values of diversity, tolerance and plurality, calling on Hindus and Muslims to work together to fight poverty instead of fighting one another. His stunning embrace of Nawaz Sharif on Christmas Day 2015 filled everyone with hope.

On the ground, however, India began witnessing a deepening cultural mutation as vigilante squads terrorised and lynched Muslims in the name of protecting the cow, launched "ghar wapsi" campaigns that have all but ended the freedom to choose one's faith and used "love jihad" to stifle any kind of solidarity between the two communities. Minorities began to believe that the present dispensation's aim is to convert India into the Hindu Rashtra of Hindutva where Muslims and Christians would live as second-class citizens. The current election rhetoric has only exacerbated those fears. The BJP Lok Sabha candidate for Barabanki boasted that "Narendra Modi has made attempts to break the morale of Muslims. Vote for Modi if you want to destroy the breed of Muslims."

We are on the cusp of having a new government at the Centre. Opinion polls and the most reliable — the bookies — predict victory for the NDA, but with a reduced majority. Ironically, the return of Modi as PM is the best hope for peace within the country and the neighbourhood. Imran Khan was right when he said that only Modi could help resolve Kashmir. He is the only leader with the power to rein in the lunatics whose purpose in life is to polarise communities and engage in eternal war with Pakistan. In any case, the new government's first task would be to combat the overpowering atmosphere of distrust and hate bedevilling society which constitutes the foremost threat to the nation, more so than terrorism. The creation of a truly secular society free of prejudice and dis-

The writer is secretary general, Lok Janshakti Party. Views are personal

crimination must be the prime mission.

THE SALT EXAMPLE

Fortifying staples with essential nutrients holds the key in fight against anaemia

ALOK KUMAR AND VEDEIKA SHEKHAR

INDIA HAS been able to dramatically reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty from 306 million people living on less than \$1.90 (on a PPP basis) a day in 2011 to 48 million today. However, it is puzzling as to why the country has been unable to show a similar dynamism in its record against malnutrition. Despite major government interventions — including providing highly subsidised foodgrains to the poorest 67 per cent of the population under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), a free Mid-day Meal Scheme (MDM) that targets around 100 million students in government schools and a supplementary nutrition programme through the ICDS network — the country is home to the largest number of malnourished children in the world.

In the decade between 2005-06 and 2015-16, stunting declined at the rate of 0.9 per cent per annum. Though anaemia among children has declined, it affects every second child in the country. There has been no perceptible decline in anaemia among 15 to 49year old women; it affects around 60 per cent of them. This public health emergency needs to be addressed immediately.

Poverty, gender disparity, poor sanitation, low health and nutrition service coverage and poor nutritional intake - particularly an irondeficient diet – continue to impede our fight against anaemia. The daily consumption of iron rich dark green leafy vegetables has reduced from 64 per cent to 48 per cent of the population in the last decade Many, in fact, argue that the NFSA's focus on wheat and rice

Evaluations in Odisha's Gajapati district, which experimented with fortified rice, found that the incidence of anaemia has reduced by 20 per cent between 2012 and 2015, of which 6 per cent reduction can be directly attributable to fortification.

has forced millets — traditional source for iron and minerals — out of the market. The government's iron supplementation programme to overcome IDA has led to only 30 per cent of pregnant women consuming iron and folic acid tablets. This compels us to think of simpler and effective strategies like fortification of food staples with essential micronutrients like iron and vitamin.

Food fortification is a largely-ignored, yet critical, strategy which has proved an effective, affordable, scalable and sustainable intervention in many countries. India too has tested this idea when it successfully tackled the widespread problem of goitre by mandating iodised salt in 1962. As there are numerous programmes to address malnutriton, this simple idea of fortifiying meals has the potential to reach every segment of the

population.

nutritional landscape. Comprehensive regulations and standards have been framed by the FSSAI on fortification of food. The Women and Child Development and Human Resource Development ministries have issued advisories to the states to mandatorily use fortified wheat flour and edible oil in ICDS and MDM. However, given that fortifi-

Policy-makers have recently begun to ad-

dress this blind spot to change the country's

India, traction has been slow. Rice is the staple for 65 per cent of the Indian population, most of whom are located in high malnutrition burden states. Supply of fortified rice through a network of fair price

cation of these staples is still relatively new in

shops is a cost-effective intervention to address anaemia across all sections of the population. Evaluations in Odisha's Gajapati district, which experimented with fortified rice in MDM, found that the incidence of anaemia has reduced by 20 per cent between 2012 and 2015, of which 6 per cent reduction can be di-

rectly attributable to fortification. The Department of Food and Public Distribution, facilitated by the NITI Aayog, has recently launched a centrally-sponsored scheme on rice fortification in PDS. The programme is designed to cover 15 districts, initially. Although the budget is a meagre Rs 147 crore, the implications for the fight against anaemia are huge. Our estimate for a pan-India roll out of rice fortification is around 2,400 crore (about 1.4 per cent of the total food subsidy bill in 2018-19). A successful pan-India scale up of fortification will depend on many factors — the political will of state governments, flexibility to allow states to adapt the fortification model to their procurement and distribution systems and capacity building of different stakeholders. The FSSAI's role, its enforcement machinery and the quality control labs needs to be strengthened. Lastly and most crucially, sustainability of fortification depends on the regular consumption of fortified food by the consumers and thus a comprehensive state specific strategy should be developed to generate awareness among the consumers.

The writers are with the Niti Aayog

May 20, 1979, Forty Years Ago



PANCHAYAT POWERS THE CHIEF MINISTERS' conference in Delhi decided to delegate more financial and administrative powers to panchayat raj institutions to make them effective instruments of development. The conference decided to set up a committee which would frame guidelines for a model legislation. The legislation is expected to be adopted by various states with suitable adjustments to provide a proper structure for the panchayat raj institutions and ensure delegation of adequate financial and administrative powers to them. The two-day conference, convened by Prime Minister Morarji Desai, discussed the role of

panchayat raj institutions in the context of

the Ashok Mehta committee report.

HAZARI PRASAD DIES THE RENOWNED HINDI writer Hazari Prasad Dwivedi died of cardiac arrest at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. Dwivedi, who was 71, is survived by his wife, three sons and four daughters. The body of Dwivedi will be kept in the Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya and cremated at the Nigambodh ghat. Dwivedi, who suffered a cerebral stroke early this month in Varanasi, was admitted to AIIMS on May 11. Last night, his condition deteriorated and he was in a deep coma. On examination, it was

found that he had a brain tumour but he

could not be operated upon.

COAL TO COST MORE

THE UNION CABINET is expected to take a final decision on the increase in coal prices next week. Knowledgeable sources point out that the quantum of increase may be Rs 20 per tonne, even though this falls short of the expectations of the Union Energy Ministry. Since July 1975, there has been no increase in the price of coal even though all vital inputs like power, steel and explosives used by the coal industry have become dearer over the years. The energy ministry's case for an increase in coal prices has been pending before the government for nearly two years.

THE IDEAS PAGE

Iranian delusion and the American war machine

The million-dollar question is: How can Iran defuse one of this era's most serious crises?



RAMIN JAHANBEGLOO

"SHOULD WE NEGOTIATE with Iran's ayatollahs?" This is a question which was put by Henry Kissinger, the former US Secretary of State under Richard Nixon, to Bernard Lewis, the British-American historian of the Middle East. "Certainly not!" came Lewis's uncompromising response. It looks like the overall stance of the Trump Administration goes in the direction of Lewis's general doctrine for the future of Iran and the Middle East. Lewis died a year ago, on May 19, 2018, but his influence among the American statesmen and strategists has not decreased. As a matter of fact, in his obituary for Lewis, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo wrote: "I owe a great deal of my understanding of the Middle East to his work. He was also a man who believed, as I do, that Americans must be more confident in the greatness of our country, not less."

Well, it happens that in the mind of Lewis, the greatness of the United States goes hand in hand with a radical Balkanisation of the Middle East. Dick Cheney, the 46th US vice president (2001 to 2009), had a similar strategic ambition in terms of the invasion of Iraq. About half a million people died in Iraq as a result of war-related causes between the beginning of the US-led invasion in 2003 and mid-2011.

Inspired by the same line of thinking, Pompeo and John Bolton seem to be impatient to try once again the "Bernard Lewis Doctrine". However, as the recent verbal confrontation between the authorities in Tehran and the Trump administration shows, nobody can say what the end game of the new American sanctions and the recent military measure taken by the Pentagon in the Persian Gulf would be. Are these measures part of Donald Trump's campaign for re-election? Or, is it an effort to force Iran to negotiate a "better" nuclear deal? Or is it to prepare for a regime change in Iran? One does not need to be in on the secret of the gods to answer these questions. As the saying goes, "When the chips are down, these civilised people will eat each other."

Let us be very clear: By hitting Iran between the eyes, the US is hoping to provoke the ayatollahs and the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) to react militarily. But for the time being, Iran's response has not been to attack any American interests in the region. As a matter of fact, in a calculated step-bystep escalation, Iran declared that it will not abide by some of its obligations under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Also, during a visit to Moscow, Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif added that Iran will not leave the nuclear deal. It is also doubtful that Zarif's recent visit to Delhi will have any effect on the American decision to suspend its sanctions' exemption to Iran's oil customers such as India or to stop the US aircraft carrier, Abraham Lincoln, from going to the Middle East.

Interestingly, leaked video footage aired on Israeli TV shows Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu boasting that he had

VIEW FROM THE

Neighbourhood

HISTORY LESSONS



up against the whole world and come out against this agreement," Netanyahu claimed. Netanyahu posted the interview segment with the commentary in Hebrew: "I will continue to strengthen Israel as a rising global force." It looks like Lewis's doctrine of "Balkanisation of the Middle East" is also taken very seriously in Tel Aviv, especially since we know that Ben Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, too had a similar strategic ambition.

Now, the million-dollar question is: How can Iran defuse one of this era's most serious crises?

Despite increasing pressures and threats, there is no indication from the various statements by Iranian officials that Tehran is preparing itself for an American attack. Tehran is still hanging its hopes on Trump's defeat in the 2020 US presidential elections. Another dangerous misconception among the leaders of the Islamic regime is that in the event of a war with the US, Iranians will be galvanised in the same way as they were in 1980 against Saddam Hussein. However, for the younger generation of Iranians — the 70 per cent of the population under the age of 35 — who are disenchanted with the Islamist ideology and have suffered from a brutal eight-year war

throwing away its greatest identifying feature,

one inspired by the very Indian religion of

Jainism, that of Gandhian non-violence. Modi

and his loyal media have been recklessly prim-

ing the country for nuclear war and putting

Pakistan on alert, thus preparing the scenario

Despite increasing pressures and threats, there is no indication from the various statements by Iranian officials that Tehran is preparing itself for an attack from the US. Tehran is still hanging its hopes on Trump's defeat in the 2020 US presidential elections. Another dangerous misconception among the leaders of the Islamic regime is that in the event of a war with the US, Iranians will be galvanised in the same way as they were in 1980 against Saddam Hussein.

with Iraq and domestic unrests in 1999, 2009 and 2017, a war against the US is not necessarily a desirable objective.

CR Sasikumar

Jobs, social freedoms and better economic opportunities are one thing, but dying for the revolutionary principles of 1979 is another. Tehran is also hanging its hopes on its proxies in the region. Surely, the Lebanese Hezbollah will make a military move against Israel and the American interests in the region, but no doubt, they too, would have to pay a heavy price, though nothing compared to what Iran would pay in case of an America attack. However, it would be contrary to any expectation that a country in West Asia or the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region would help Iran. Unfortunately, the delusion of the Islamic regime is that it could cause enough harm to Americans and their allies so that they will be forced to end

the war. There is no doubt that Iran will not recover easily from the damage done by a possible American attack. Even if Iran does not suffer a devastating civil war and ethnic fissures like post-Saddam Iraq, the fates of tens of millions of Iranians, including the Iranian-American citizens who are spending time in Evin prison, are at stake. Let us hope that Pompeo and Bolton will not follow the advice Bernard Lewis offered to Henry Kissinger.

The writer is professor and vice dean, Jindal Global University

squandering its legacy and opportunity, so unhow to deal with the insurgency in like Akbar or even Modi's more recent pred-Balochistan in the aftermath of the second ecessors: "As someone committed to interfaith understanding and building bridges of peace between the two neighbours, I remain baffled and distressed to see India so casually

> "Baloch separatist groups have made no secret of their hostility towards CPEC, which they perceive as yet another manifestation of state plunder of Balochistan's resources. They seem to have stepped up their campaign in recent months with a number of

According to the editorial, "the only longterm resolution to this extended, if low-key, conflict is a political one. The state must reach out to disaffected nationalists and individuals who have some currency with the more

DECODING DESPERATION

ZIAUDDIN CHOUDHURY, A former

this month attempting to migrate to Europe. While others that perished were fleeing war, destruction and instability in West Asia, Choudhury asks "why this group would include people from relatively "politically stable" countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan. Is it so difficult to live in their countries that they have to take such measures to leave their country for unknown territories?"

In addition, the article states that many of those seeking a better life in Europe are not peasants or the illiterate, but "the majority of these voluntary refugees are young people; they are not peasants who left farming in search of better occupations. They are high school-educated, many with some college education. I know, because I have met many such young people in Italy, Spain, and Portugal who had succeeded in their adventurous journeys across the seas".

The article then states that "we (Bangladeshis) flatter ourselves by gloating over our economic miracle. Our GDP quadrupling in the last 15 years. Our growth rate being consistently ahead of neighbouring countries. Our rate of literacy growing ahead of expectation." Yet, he argues, that unemployment has been left unaddressed and the education system has failed the youth. An argument that could be made for nearly all of South Asia.

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The US cannot strangle Huawei, nor will it be able to contain the development of China and deprive the 1.4 billion Chinese people of their development rights.' - GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Behind the veil

The young Muslim woman of today may choose to go ahead and own the hijab. She has decided to carve her own path



IN GOOD FAITH

Zehra Naqvi

"HIJAB" IS ONE of the most emotionally charged and politically flammable words of our times. And it doesn't help that the word rhymes with — of all things — jihad. Being a hijab-clad woman who chooses to assert herself within the mainstream is like being a walking target for "counter-terror operations" in the form of allegations and assumptions fired in your direction with great speed and precision.

In New Delhi on Friday, May 3, at the launch of Rakhshanda Jalil's book But You Don't Look Like a Muslim, the discussion centred around how identities are cultural more than religious; how they borrow from and seep into each other. It is, therefore, presumptuous to imagine a single way that a Muslim looks like, which leads to the oft-repeated exclamation: But you don't look like a Muslim!

Which is when I raised the question: And what if you do?

What of those people within the Muslim community, or any other community, who choose to carry identity markers upon their person — in an entirely harmless, non-intrusive, non-threatening way? Who are otherwise productive, constructive, compassionate members of society, but dress differently for whatever reason? If you look visibly like a Muslim, is that reason enough for you to be marginalised or demonised?

Javed Akhtar, who was one of the panellists at the event, proceeded to ask me why I dress the way I do: In a headscarf and abaya (albeit not black, which perhaps makes me less of "the Muslim" too.)

My answer was this: I am a practising Muslim. There are various levels and ways of being a practising Muslim. For someone, it may be praying five times a day, for someone else it may be celebrating Muslim festivals. This, then, is my way of

practising my religion. And yes, just as one can be a practising Muslim without a hijab, one can be a prac-

tising secularist with a hijab. Why do I feel the need to emphasise being secular? Because I identify very strongly with secular values as entrenched in the Constitution of India. And nowhere do I find them conflicting with my core values. I do not discriminate between people on the grounds of religion, nor do I divide people into "us" and "them".

People equate secularism with absence of religion. The literal meaning of the word may well be that, but as times change, so do meanings. Language is flexible, malleable and words expand to take on new meanings as the sensibilities of society change gradually. "Secular" in our times has come to mean an unbiased, non-discriminatory approach towards people from all religions. Our secularism is built on empathy and mutual respect. It does not, in any way, denote the imposition of uniformity and homogeneity.

In fact, "hijab" itself is a classic case of words acquiring new meanings. In principle, hijab is an act and an observance, not a piece of clothing. By "doing" hijab, one declares that I observe a certain manner of dressing which, to my belief, is prescribed by my religion. "To my belief" is an important qualifier because there is a whole spectrum of ways in which Muslims across the world choose to dress.

The burqa, too, is no longer just a non-

descript black robe. It has been replaced by the abaya, which now comes in as many colours and designs as any other dress. The headscarf has undergone drastic transformations – so much so that in 2017 Nike launched their sporty headscarf for hijabi athletes, tested by Emirati figure-skating champion Zahra Lari. Recently in the news was Somali-American model Halima Aden, the first woman to wear a hijab and burkini on the cover of Sports Illustrated magazine. Olympic fencer İbtihaj Muhammad even inspired Barbie to make a hijabi doll. That's a world of a difference from the image of the oppressed woman that we are routinely presented with.

India, too, has witnessed a steady growth of hijabi professionals. Ramnath Goenka Award-winning journalist Ashwaq Masoodi is an unapologetic hijabi, as is Falak Naaz Syed, a financial journalist from Mumbai. Andaleeb Wajid, the prolific writer, chooses to keep her hijab and abaya on while churning out bestsellers. Asiya Ahmed Khan, a naturalist from Hyderabad, conducts tree walks and lectures, along with providing professional consultancy services to those who wish to plant native trees. Her daughter Mariam, who is a postgraduate in environmental science from the Tata Insititute of Social Sciences, works with an NGO that spreads awareness on animals. Both mother and daughter don the hijab out of choice. And these are just a few examples.

The fact is that the young Muslim woman of today has chosen to go ahead and own the hijab. She has personalised it and decided to carve her path following her own rules.

True, there are still sections of women

who may not entirely have a choice. But banning or ridiculing the hijab won't empower them or give them agency, given that their socio-economic conditions won't change. Far more productive would be to give hijabi or burqa-clad women access to the same mainstream education and employment opportunities as others, without them being turned away for their dress. Countless Muslim women are, ironically, forced to take off their hijab in order to pursue education or employment, since people refuse to hire them in that dress – knowledge and skill be damned. How, then, are we speaking of free choice?

Providing access to mainstream education and employment are the only ways to bring agency to women. Only when they have the wherewithal to stand up for themselves can they be in a better position to take life's decisions independently, including the choice of doing hijab. And that, right there, is real agency.

The writer is a freelance journalist

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

WEST ASIA WORRY THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'As Iran

takes on US' (IE, May 17). The situation in West Asia will be a real test for the government that assumes office in the next few weeks. The critical test will be in maintaining relations with Iran on one hand and tackling the US's sanctions on other. It is unfortunate India has buckled under US pressure when it comes to relations with Iran.

Mayank Khatri, Ujjain

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'As Iran takes on US' (IE, May 17). For long, Indian ships have sailed the waters of West Asia. The major reason behind the success of Indian diplomacy in the past owes to the fact that it never got involved in the Shia-Sunni and Arab-Persian conflicts. But, recent developments suggest that India is titling towards the Arab world. India should maintain a balance between both powers.

Suchak D Patel, Ahmedabad

UP POLITICS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'What goes UP' (IE, May 16). The writer is correct in saying that in UP caste and communal factions have come together against the BJP-led government. The battle is between the nationalism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on one side and caste and regional factors allied with Nehruvian ideology on the other. **L R Gupta,** Lucknow

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader

intervention, The Indian **Express offers the Letter of** the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10,

Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES **SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS**

JET'S FALL

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The crashing of jet' (IE, May 17). Defaulting promoters are able to save the earnings from the company while the employees lose their jobs. Promoters, lending banks and executives are complicit in creating this situation. The government too must share blame for the crisis.

Y G Chouksey, Pune

Modi can learn from Akbar'. Ahmed argues that along with Ashoka and Kanishka, Emperor Akbar presents a model of stagecraft for all subcontinental leaders. First, under his rule, India (as it was then) was among the greatest economies in the world, accounting for nearly a quarter of the world's GDP. In

AKBAR AHMED, A former Pakistani-

American diplomat and academic, has writ-

ten a two-part essay in *The Express Tribune*

(published on May 14 and 15) titled 'What

contrast, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan together today account for less than four per cent. Second, "In any discussion of these emperors, we must not overlook their military might. Akbar's army possessed some 30,000 armour-plated elephants which acted like modern tanks. His infantry and cavalry numbered in the hundreds of thousands. He was a successful military commander and doubled the size of his empire, extending — after half a century of his rule — from Afghanistan in the north, to the Muslim kingdoms in south India, from Sindh in the west to Bengal in the east." Then there's the fact that of Akbar's "nine jewels" four were Hindus — his religious tolerance allowed him the best of talent

in the military, arts and administration. In the second part of the article, Ahmed focuses more on how contemporary India is

GWADAR ATTACK

beloved people."

for a nuclear exchange. The danger of all this to India itself and the world at large is ignored. Any nuclear exchange will be the ultimate act of self-destruction. The big lesson Modi can learn from the three emperors is that you can crush the opposition and minorities through your security forces and taxes, but if you want your country to truly prosper, you must win their hearts and minds which can only happen when you embrace all your citizens as part of the greater whole. If awoke in Modi's India, the three emperors would ask, what has happened to our beloved homeland? Yes, they

Subcontinent. Curated by Aakash Joshi

THE MAY 13 editorial in *Dawn* weighs in on

would say, Modi may have reached out to

attack in the region this month. "Even more disturbing, the incident took place in Gwadar city, whose port is the gateway to CPEC and the veritable jewel in the crown of the multibillion dollar project — which makes the area one of the most heavily secured in the restive province," remarks the editorial. The motive behind the attack is clear:

A weekly look at the public conversations shaping ideas beyond borders — in the

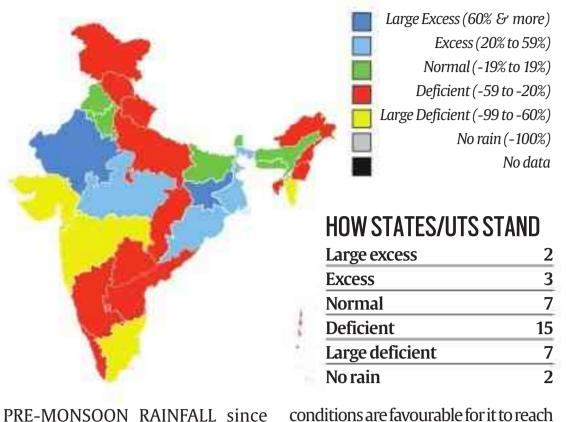
high-profile attacks."

obdurate Baloch."

Mars, but we reached out to the hearts of our Bangladeshi civil servant, puts into perspective Bangladesh's "economic miracle" in a Dhaka Tribune article on May 16. Between 40 and 60 Bangladeshis reportedly drowned in the Mediterranean earlier

TELLING NUMBERS

Pre-monsoon rain 22% short so far, large deficiency in 7 states



March has been 22% deficient so far, according to India Meteorological Department (IMD) data. From March 1 to May 19, the country has had 82.1 mm rainfall against the normal of 104.6 mm for this stage. Pre-monsoon rain is vital to agriculture in several parts of the country.

So far, 22 states and Union Territories have had deficient rain (short by 20% or more), including seven with large deficiency (60% of more). Rainfall has been normal in seven other states, and in excess in five states (including three with large excess).

The southwest monsoon has advanced into South Andaman Sea and (including map); PTI inputs in text

conditions are favourable for it to reach the North Andaman Sea and the Andaman Islands in the next 2-3 days, PTI quoted IMD as saying. From March 1 to April 24, the overall deficiency had been 27%. The lower deficiency now follows rainfall over the East and Northeast. A PTI report said the deficiency had reduced to 22% by March 15 (75.9 mm against a normal of 96.8 mm).

Until March 15, the South Peninsula had a pre-monsoon deficiency of 46%, followed by Northwest Subdivision with 36%, and East and Northeast with 7%. There was no overall deficiency in the central region.

Source: India Meteorological Department

TIP FOR READING LIST

NO VISIBLE

Works Dank

Deskilly.

BRUISES

Untold Effect of Domestic Violence

IN 2013, the World Health Organization released a report in partnership with the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and the South African Medical Research Council, declaring violence against women as "a global health problem of epidemic proportions". Physical or sexual violence is a problem

that affects more than one-third of all women globally, the report said. Yet today, many people generally do not believe domestic violence has anything to do with them, with the result that most people are silent about it. In No Visible Bruises,

American journalist Rachel Louise Snyder explores what many people don't know they are seeing. The book is an account of the scale of domestic violence in the US — where domestic violence accounts for 15% of all violent crime. The book explodes the common myths — that if things were bad enough, victims would just leave; that shelter is an adequate response; that violence inside the home is a private matter, sealed from the public sphere. Through the stories of victims and perpetrators — which allows readers to see the world through their eyes and raises the question whether

> diction to brutality — as well as law-enforcement agencies and reform movements, Snyder examines the ripples created by individual acts of violence, affecting the victim as well as those close to them, and leading to what The Washington Post describes as "intergenerational

> men can recover from their ad-

cycles of trauma". "The stories are devastating, but Snyder keeps us reading by pointing us toward possible solutions. She delves into how researchers and front-line interveners are creating practical, cost-effective, evidence-based ways to save lives," *The Post* says in its review.

AN EXPERT EXPLAINS

How to conduct, read exit polls

With various forecasts for the Lok Sabha election results out, which ones are more reliable than others? A veteran analyst describes the various methods, challenges and shortcomings in conducting an exit poll



SANJAY KUMAR

HOW DOES the common man judge which exit poll is most reliable? Rely on the one whose numbers you like the most and dismiss the one whose numbers you dislike? Today, some even judge the accuracy of an exit poll by looking at the survey agency that conducted the poll, or by looking at the television channel that commissioned the poll. Some others make a judgment from the sample size — a commonly shared notion is that the bigger the sample size, the more reliable should be the exit poll.

In reality, these should not be the indicators for judging the accuracy of an exit poll. Then how should one read these numbers, and should we even rely on these exit polls?

The numbers thrown up by various exit polls can neither be rejected in totality, nor can all be accepted without a pinch of salt. There are good exit polls and there are some not-so-good exit polls. As the least we expect from a physician is to measure the temperature of the patient, the least one should expect from an exit poll is to give the viewer/reader an estimate of the vote share. The science of surveys, which includes exit polls, works on the assumption that the data have been collected after interviewing a large number of voters using a structured questionnaire. It is a different matter whether the interview was conducted over the telephone, or face to face using either pen and pencil or a gadget (iPad or a mobile app). This method is not new; it began back in 1957 during the second Lok Sabha elections when the Indian Institute of Public Opinion conducted a poll. But not even the best guesswork or estimate can skip the methodology that is required. Without a structured questionnaire, the data can neither be collected coherently nor be analysed systematically to arrive at vote share estimates.

Sample size, representativeness

Since exit polls began in 1957, there has been enormous improvement in at least one aspect, which is sample size. Gone are the days when a national sample of 20,000-30,000 looked like a very large sample. Even those who pioneered psephology in India, like Prannoy Roy and Yogendra Yadav, worked with similar samples from the early 1980s until the late 1990s. Though the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) does not normally conduct exit polls, it did conduct a few — I recall CSDS's first exit poll during the 1996 Lok Sabha polls with Nalini Singh and Doordarshan using a sample size of 17,604. We went on to make a very accurate national projection of both vote share and seats. The CSDS has continued its voting behaviour study (National Election Study) using post-poll surveys as a tool, which is a much larger study, and has also used the study for making projections of vote share and seats at times. Our samples for post-poll surveys during the 1998 and 1999 elections remained below 10,000, and



Exit poll results at a television retail showroom in Mumbai Sunday. Ganesh Shirsekar

our projections were not off the mark. With changing times and for state-level projections and analysis, we increased our sample size in 2004, 2009 and 2014 to a little more than 20,000 (the biggest sample size was about 37,000 in 2009). When we complete our post-poll survey for the 2019 Lok Sabha election, we should have a sample of about 22,000. Our seat projections may have been off the mark on some occasions but the vote share estimates have been very close on many occasions.

I am happy to note that the sample sizes of various exit polls for 2019 run into several lakhs. I only hope I was able to learn the art of collecting a properly randomised sample of such a large number. Yes, a large sample size is important, but based on my experience, I can say for sure that more than the sample size, it is far more important to have a sample that is representative of the profile of voters. But in recent years, the pressure on television channels (which in most cases are the sponsors of these exit polls) to have the largest sample has resulted in exit polls with bigger and bigger samples. Earlier, the competition among the channels was only about which channel aired its exit poll the earliest; now, it is also about whose poll has the largest sample size.

In recent times, seat projections by CSDS based on post-poll surveys went completely wrong; in Chhattisgarh we predicted the winner wrong, and in the UP Assembly elections we predicted the winner right but were way off the mark for the final tallies for different parties. We tried to introspect as to what may have gone wrong in these surveys as the methodology remained the same — we got data collected from representative samples. If someone asked if there was a possibility of having got those post-poll survey estimates correct had we taken bigger samples, I would not have hesitated to say no, a bigger sample would not have helped. Certainly, something else went wrong with those post-poll surveys; maybe a case of some fake interviews filed by the investigators, which we could not figure out on time. Technology — calls back to respondents, images of interviews being conducted and phone calls from the field, WhatsApp groups and similar tools — have

VERDICTS DELIVERED BY

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yet there is no thumb rule for how to get the prediction correct.

helped us in overcoming such shortcomings,

Swing model & complexities

There are other challenges in conducting a pre-poll survey, a post-poll survey or an exit poll. The prediction of seats is based on a swing model — the current poll makes an estimate of vote shares for different parties and alliances by interviewing selected respondents, and the seat forecast is made based on the result of the previous election.

Estimating the vote share is not an easy task either, given various diversities in India - diversity of location, caste, religion, language, different levels of educational attainment, different levels of economic class – and all of these have a bearing on voting behaviour. Over- or under-representation of any of these diverse sections of voters can affect the accuracy of vote share estimates.

If these were not enough, there are other difficulties. Since the swing model is applied on the previous vote shares, a change in alliances, or a split or a merger of parties, between two elections poses a difficulty in making this estimate of past vote shares. During the 2014 Lok Sabha election, the JD(U) was not an ally of the BJP and polled 15.7% of the vote in Bihar, while the NDA together polled 38.7% and the UPA polled 29.7%. Now the alliances have changed and the JD(U) is part of the NDA. Since the JD(U) contested against the NDA in 2014, it is difficult to estimate what the NDA vote share would have been in 2014 had the JD(U) been part of NDA To put it simply — if 38.7% votes for the NDA resulted in 31 Lok Sabha seats in 2014, how many seats might it get if the vote share is likely to increase or decrease? This was the story of just one state; imagine the complexity of working out this forecast state-wise for 29 states.

The task of applying the swing is far more complex than one might think. Measurement of swing and electoral change is easier when the contest is limited to two parties. The complexity of swings increases as more and more political players are added. For example, the swing from the Congress to the BJP or vice versa is easier to measure than

the swing from BJP to Congress to SP and to BSP in the same election.

This model could be understood only by those who are still engaged in conducting such polls (pre, post, exit) using conventional methodology. In the current phase of exit polls, it is more an estimation of just seats, which could be done by a method (count method) other than the swing method.

How comprehensive is it?

The count method is itself time-consuming and labour-intensive, as one is expected to make an estimate for each seat. When agencies claim to have made seat-wise estimates. it is presented as the most comprehensive poll. This is when the sample size is as high as several lakhs. Some of the agencies have made innovations in the count method and this results in maximising gains by spending relatively less time and resources. While an exit poll might claim to have

covered all constituencies, in practice the poll is not required in some seats — like, why would one waste time and energy in doing a poll in Varanasi where the Prime Minister is contesting, or in Gandhinagar where the BJP president is contesting? If one looks carefully at constituencies, state-wise, many such seats could be eliminated where a survey need not be conducted and one could still make the most accurate estimate. After this elimination method combined with the count method, the survey is required in a limited number of difficult constituencies (swing constituencies). It is possible for an exit poll to be far more accurate than polls conducted using traditional methodology But while the polls using traditional methodology estimate vote share and help us analyse voting behaviour on the basis of different social economic backgrounds, the count method can hardly give an estimate of vote shares, and any systematic analysis of voting behaviour could only be a dream.

Time to reflect

The numbers from various exit polls for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections are out. The question is, would these numbers have the same fate on May 23 as the projections of 2004, or will these exit polls be more accurate than those in 2014? During the 2004 elections, all exit polls predicted a comfortable victory for the NDA, but finally we had a fractured mandate with the Congress emerging the single largest party. The average of all exit poll projections for NDA was 255 seats, and it won 187; the average of predictions for UPA was 183 seats, and it ended up with 219. Will the latest exit polls be similar to the exit polls of 2014, when most polls predicted the winner right but most failed to assess the extent of the BIP's victory (though there were a few that also predicted the extent of victory with great accuracy)? At the moment, we do not know how seriously these numbers should be taken —which poll may be more accurate than the other.

The CSDS voting behaviour study using post-poll survey techniques will be completed in the next couple of days. We are not in a position to estimate the vote share yet as CSDS has not conducted an exit poll outside the polling booth on election day.

Centre for the Study of Developing Societies. Views expressed are personal.

Professor Sanjay Kumar is currently Director,

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Why appeals are stuck at WTO, how India will be hit if process breaks down

PRABHA RAGHAVAN NEW DELHI, MAY 19

THE WORLD Trade Organization's (WTO's) dispute settlement mechanism is going through a "crisis": the body is struggling to appoint new members to its understaffed Appellate Body that hears appeals in trade.

Unless the issue is resolved, the body could become defunct, and countries locked in international trade disputes will be left with no forum for recourse.

Over 20 developing countries met in New Delhi last week to discuss ways to prevent the WTO's dispute resolution system from collapsing due to the logiam in these appointments.

What is the WTO's Appellate Body, and why is it important?

The Appellate Body, set up in 1995, is a standing committee of seven members that presides over appeals against judgments passed in trade-related disputes brought by WTO members.

With over 500 international disputes brought to the WTO and over 350 rulings issued since 1995, the organisation's dispute settlement mechanism is one of the most active in the world, and the Appellate Body is the highest authority in these matters.

Countries involved in a dispute over measures purported to break a WTO agreement or obligation can approach the Appellate Body if they feel the report of the panel set up to examine the issue needs to be reviewed on points of law. Existing evidence is not re-examined; legal interpretations are reviewed.

The Appellate Body can uphold, modify, or reverse the legal findings of the panel that heard the dispute. Countries on either or both sides of the dispute can appeal.

The WTO's dispute settlement procedure is seen as being vital to ensuring smooth international trade flows. The Appellate Body has so far issued 152 reports. The reports, once adopted by the WTO's disputes settlement body, are final and binding on the parties.

So, what is the problem in the WTO **Appellate Body?**

Over the last two years, the membership of the body has dwindled to just three persons instead of the required seven. This is because the United States, which believes the WTO is biased against it, has been blocking appointments of new members and reappointments of some members who have completed their four-year tenures. Two members will complete their tenures in December this year, leaving the body with just one member.

At least three people are required to preside over an appeal, and if new members are not appointed to replace the two retiring ones, the body will cease to be relevant. Between 1995 and 2014, around 68% of the 201 panel reports adopted were appealed.

While the US is directly involved in more disputes than other WTO member countries, several countries—including India—enter

INDIA-RELATED DISPUTES, APPEALS INITIATED SINCE 2012

Year	New disputes	New India-related disputes	Appeals by India	appeals
2012	27	3	2	Concluded
2013	20	1	1	Concluded
2014	14	0	0	NA
2015	13	1	0	NA
2016	17	3	1	Pending
2017	17	0	0	NA
2018	39	2	0	NA
2019*	9	4	0	NA

STATUS OF DISPUTES INITIATED SINCE 2015

Year	New disputes	In consultations	Total panels established /composed	Total verdicts	Appeals	
2015	13	3	10	8	2	
2016	17	5	12	7	4	
2017	17	8	9	2	1	
2018	39	12	27	0	0	
2019*	9	9	0	0	0	

TOTAL DISPUTE CASES BY COUNTRY

Country	Complainant	Respondent	Third party	APPELLATEBODYS
India	24	30	158	2014
US	123	153	150	2015
China	20	43	171	2016
Japan	26	15	203	2017
Brazil	33	16	139	2018
2019 nun	2019			

disputes as third parties.

India has so far been a direct participant in 54 disputes, and has been involved in 158

as a third party.

The understaffed appeals body has been unable to stick to its 2-3 month deadline for appeals filed in the last few years, and the backlog of cases has prevented it from initiating proceedings in appeals that have been filed in the last year. The three members have been proceeding on all appeals filed since October 1, 2018.

In February 2019, the body said it would be unable to staff an appeal in a dispute between Japan and India over certain safeguard measures that India had imposed on imports of iron and steel products. The panel had found that India had acted "inconsistently" with some WTO agreements, and India had notified the Dispute Settlement Body of its decision to appeal certain issues of law and legal interpretations in December

The body has so far been unable to review at least 10 appeals that have been filed since July 2018.

What can happen if this situation is not

addressed in time?

With the Appellate Body unable to review new applications, there is already great uncertainty over the WTO's dispute settlement process. If the body is declared nonfunctional in December, countries may be compelled to implement rulings by the panel even if they feel that gross errors have been committed.

Should such a country refuse to comply with the order of the panel on the ground that it has no avenue for appeal, it will run the risk of facing arbitration proceedings initiated by the other party in the dispute.

This does not bode well for India, which is facing a rising number of dispute cases, especially on agricultural products. In the last four months alone, four cases have been brought to the WTO against India's alleged support measures for its sugar and sugarcane producers.

Also, the overall weakening of the WTO framework could have the effect of undoing over two decades of efforts to avoid protectionism in global trade. This is a major concern currently, as trade tensions, for example between the US and China and the US and India, are on the rise.

And what is the way forward from here

While new appointments to the Appellate Body are usually made by a consensus of WTO members, there is a provision for voting where a consensus is not possible.

The group of 17 least developed and developing countries, including India, that have committed to working together to end the impasse at the Appellate Body can submit or support a proposal to this effect, and try to get new members on the Appellate Body by a majority vote.

This, however, may be an option of the last resort, as all countries fear unilateral measures by the US as a consequence of directly opposing its veto.

Count on democracy

With polling concluded, India needs to heal itself from the bitter, fact-free campaign

7ith the seventh phase of polling for the 17th general election over, the anxious wait is now for counting day. The election dates were announced on March 10, and the first phase of polling took place on April 11. The entire process will take 11 weeks to complete; polling itself was spread over six weeks. The consolidated turnout till the sixth phase was 67.37%, as against 66.4% in 2014, and there were 8,049 candidates. The compulsions on the Election Commission of India to stretch the exercise into a painfully long-drawn process are unclear. Given the absence of a rationale for such a prolonged schedule, doubts were raised whether it was designed to help Prime Minister Narendra Modi campaign in the widest possible manner. That was the first instance of the EC's impartiality and integrity coming under doubt during this election season, but not the last. A series of lapses that followed accumulated into a crisis of credibility for the commission. By being reluctant to hold Mr. Modi to standards set in the past, the EC has bruised its reputation. The process of decision-making in the three-member commission itself was called into question, with one member notifying the others that he would not participate in meetings on complaints regarding violations of the Model Code of Conduct unless his dissent, when made, is recorded in the final order. The wisdom of holding elections over stretched phases needs to be revisited in light of this year's experience and feedback from stakeholders. And restoring its reputation and integrity must be the commission's immediate priority.

Some self-reflection is called for as the country concludes a bitterly fought election during which boundaries of civil public debate have been crossed and norms breached. What makes 2019 unprecedented is not that inappropriate words were used and misinformation spread, but the fact that India witnessed an increasing tendency to normalise these. In the 2019 campaign, the leaders of the government preempted a fact-based debate on its performance of five years by blocking or contaminating official data on job generation and other parameters, and successfully pushed electioneering into a fact-free zone filled with emotive and divisive issues. This was a double whammy for democracy. On the one hand, informed discussions have become difficult, and on the other, social tensions have risen. The outcome on Thursday remains a suspense, but the incoming Prime Minister, whoever that will be, must take the initiative to rally all Indians around a truly inclusive and secular national agenda as soon he or she takes over.

Ten years on

Sri Lanka has not done enough to usher in reform and reconciliation since 2009

s one decade of peace enough to undo the devastating effects of a civil war that lasted nearly three de-Lcades? As Sri Lanka completes 10 years since the brutal and decisive war against Tamil militants came to an end, it must be acknowledged that the country has not achieved much tangible progress towards ethnic reconciliation, accountability for war-time excesses and constitutional reform that includes a political solution. The fruits of peace are limited to the revival of economic activity, but the pervasive grievances of the Tamil minority remain. Some progress has been made in resettlement and rehabilitation, but complaints abound. Many say their land continues to be held by the military, which also controls huge swathes of state-owned land. Preliminary steps were taken towards forging a new Constitution, but the process seems to be at a standstill. There is no sense of closure for families affected by the disappearance of thousands over the years. The creation of an 'Office on Missing Persons' has not inspired enough confidence. There is no mechanism to secure justice for those massacred in the closing stages of the war. What continues is the fractious politics of leaders of the national parties. Jockeying for power has overshadowed the promise of good governance, economic growth and a push towards a constitutional settlement.

Half the period since the end of the war was marked by triumphalism and also warding off international pressure for an inquiry into possible war crimes. The year 2015 brought to power a new regime, a fresh promise of democratic governance, and the infusion of a spirit of political and constitutional reform. Any reckoning at the end of 10 years would possibly have been marked by a tabulation of peace-time gains and failures. However, a month ago everything changed. The Easter Sunday bombings have taken the country back to the time when terrorism was the dominant theme. This time, there is no real 'underlying cause' to address; no group or organisation to talk to; and no tangible political grievances to redress. The serial blasts, executed by fanatical elements apparently inspired by the Islamic State, may be a flashpoint for a fresh round of inter-ethnic and inter-religious tension. Already there was some indication last week when Sinhala mobs attacked predominantly Muslim villages in waves, destroying property and threatening the people. Anti-terrorism laws and emergency regulations are back in full measure. The biggest adverse fallout is that a new dimension has been given to inter-ethnic suspicions that may deepen distrust among communities. As prospects of accountability for past crimes and constitutional reform recede, some sections, including the incumbent regime, may believe economic development may be enough to propel the country forward. But when tensions persist among communities, nothing can make up for the absence of reconciliation and trust among all sections. Never has Sri Lanka needed a shared sense of nationhood among all its peoples more than it does now.

Taking stock of Islamic State 2.0

The belief in India and Sri Lanka that they are shielded from radical extremist tendencies needs a relook



n Easter Sunday this year, April 21, Sri Lanka witnessed a series of coordi-

nated bomb blasts, killing over 250 people. It was the heaviest toll in Sri Lanka in terms of lives lost since the civil war ended in 2009, thus ending a decade of peace.

The orchestrated attacks, on three churches and three hotels frequented by tourists, were clearly intended to forward a message. The way they were carried out further indicated that the dynamics were global though the perpetrators were locals. The pattern of attacks on the churches was not dissimilar from Islamic State (IS)mounted attacks on churches in Surabaya in Indonesia in May last year, and in Jolo in the Philippines this Ianuary. The IS's statement soon after the attacks put to rest all speculation. IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi himself was to announce subsequently that the attacks in Sri Lanka were revenge for the fall of the Syrian town of Baghuz, the last IS-ruled village overrun by Syrian forces in March this year.

Key setting for radicalism

The question most often asked is why Sri Lanka was chosen by the IS to announce that it was business as usual. A more relevant question might well be why an IS attack of this scale had not been seen in this region previously. South Asia today is a virtual cauldron of radical Islamist extremist activity. From Afghanistan through Pakistan to the Maldives to Bangladesh, radical Islamist extremism is an ever present reality. Both India and Sri Lanka, however, prefer to believe that they are shielded from such tendencies, but this needs a re-

In the case of Sri Lanka, it is by now evident that officials had turned a blind eye to the fact that areas such as Kattankudy and its environs in the northeast have become hotbeds of Wahabi-Salafi attitudes and practices. Muslim youth here have been radicalised to such an extent that it should have set alarm bells ringing. The example of Zahran Mohammed Hashim, who founded the National Thowheed Jamaath (NTJ) in 2014 in Kattankudy, and within a couple of years expanded its membership multi-fold, was one index of what was happening. Hashim, who was among the terrorists who carried out the Easter Day bombings and died in the process, had swayed hundreds of impressionable youth with his oratory to support his radical agenda and was able to transform the moderate Islamic landscape to a more radicalised one. From this, it was but a short step to embark on the path of terror.

The advent of the IS occurred at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, at a time when a new breed of terrorists had emerged, inspired by the Egyptian, Sayyid Qutb, and the Palestinian, Abdullah Azzam. Combining this with the practical theology of Afghan warlord Jalaluddin Haggani made for a potent mixture. In addition to this, the IS introduced the concept of a new Caliphate especially al-Baghdadi's vision of a Caliphate based on Islamic history. This further ignited the imagination of Muslim youth across the globe and became a powerful magnet to attract volunteers to their cause. Employing the themes of hijra and bay'ah, Sunni Muslims everywhere were urged to migrate to the Islamic Caliphate. At the peak of its power, the IS held terri-



tory both in Iraq and Syria, almost equal in size to the United Kingdom.

Pivotal role of the Net

Islamic State 2.0 remains wedded to this idea of a caliphate, even though the caliphate is no longer in existence. It retains its ability to proselytise over the Internet, making a special virtue of 'direct-tohome' jihad. It continues to manage a 'virtual community' of fanatical sympathisers who adhere to their doctrine.

IS State 2.0 includes several new variations from the original concept. Returnees from the battlefields of Syria and Iraq appear more inclined to follow tactics employed by other 'oppressed' Muslim communities, as for instance the Chechens. In Sri Lanka, a close knit web of family relationships has ensured secrecy and prevented leakage of information, thereby opting for methods of old-time anarchists. Reliance on online propaganda and social media has vastly increased. The IS has also refashioned several of its existing relationships.

Tactics have varied from 'lone wolf' attacks that were seen over the past year and more in the West, to coordinated, large-scale simultaneous attacks on multiple targets, as witnessed in Sri Lanka. The real threat that the IS, however, poses is that it is able to convince the Muslim extremist fringe that their time has come. The 'idea' is the medium. As the IS morphs into IS 2.0, 'territorial flexibility' is being replaced with 'strategic flexibility'.

Ideas have an enormous impact. Radicalisation, in any event, has less to do with numbers than with the intensity of beliefs. The struggle is not against presumed disparities or injustices meted out to Muslim minorities. Rather, it reflects the quest for a new militant Islamist identity. It has more to do with the internal dynamics of Muslim societies, which across the world appear to be tilting towards radicalist tendencies. Saudi funding and the role of foreign preachers are playing a significant role in

Lessons for India

India must heed the lessons of what occurred on Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka. India is already in the cross hairs of the IS, and the announcement that the IS has created a separate 'province' should not be ignored. Some of the claims made may appear exaggerated but the threat posed by IS 2.0 is real.

Links between IS groups in Sri Lanka and India currently stand exposed and they should be cause for concern. The kingpin of the Easter blasts, Hashim, was linked to jihadis in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. He had a corresponding unit in Tamil Nadu. Indian authorities may do well to revisit the September 2018 criminal conspiracy case registered in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, which contained certain over-arching plans by the IS to target Hindus and non-Muslim activists in India. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) during its investigations has since come across links connecting IS units in Kerala and Tamil Nadu with the NTJ in Sri Lanka. These need to be pursued further. Detailed investigation by the NIA is called for to unearth

connections of the kind that involved Aadhil Ameez, a Sri Lankan software engineer suspected in the Easter bombings, in India.

The number of Indian returnees from Syria may be small, but each of them would have come back having lost 'all sense of purpose'. Their memories would only be of relentless artillery barrages, rocket fire and the air strikes that battered IS strongholds into submission. This is bound to nurture feelings of revenge – mainly against the West but extending to other segments as well. The attacks on luxury hotels and churches in Sri Lanka do smack of revenge against so-called atrocities on the IS in their Syrian stronghold.

IS 2.0 is likely to nurture two types: the less informed rabid supporters and a band of highly radical ideologues who can entice Muslim youth to their cause. The path to radicalisation of both segments is through the Internet. Time spent alone online listening to propaganda can produce fanaticism of the most extreme variety. It could promote a binary world view of a conflict between 'believers' and 'non-believers', allowing radical Islamists to set the agenda. Zahran Mohammed Hashim is a striking example of how an individual can sway hundreds of impressionable youth in favour of a cause and not only transform the landscape from moderate Islam to radicalised Islam, but also induce the cadres to embark on terror. It is not so much the NTJ per se as propaganda by erstwhile leaders such as Zahran Hashim, who are the true flag bearers of a new era of radicalist Islam, and of the new brand of terror that they propound.

M.K. Narayanan is a former National Security Adviser and a former Governor

Not in the Mahatma's name

The BJP's messaging on Pragya Singh Thakur's utterances and candidature is extremely sinister



APOORVANAND

The recent uproar over the glorification of Mahatma Gandhi's assassin, Nathuram Godse, by the Bharatiya Janata Party's Bhopal candidate Pragya Singn Thakur has forced her party to tick her off. It should be a solace for us that there is at least one nonnegotiable in Indian politics, that the political cost of the celebration of the murder of the Mahatma is formidably high! But now we would be told to let the matter rest as she has been chided even by her

Attack on secular politics

Let us look at the implication of this approach, that Ms. Thakur, sans this statement, should be acceptable to us as a potential representative in Parliament. She continues to be the 'symbol of Hinduism', as she claimed Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said of her. Our satisfaction over the condemnation of Ms. Thakur makes us forget that she is being audaciously presented as the most fitting answer to secular politics, which holds that a person accused of attacks on Muslims cannot be a people's representative in India.

The idea that a Hindu can never indulge in a terror act is, in fact, another way of saying that terror acts are always committed by non-Hindus. Or, by Pakistan, which for BJP leaders is a proxy for Muslims. Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh, while talking about the Samjhauta Express blast case acquittals, claimed that it was unimaginable to accept that Hindus could be involved in such acts, and that he believed that in all such crimes there was the hand of Pakistan. A crime has been committed, and since the Hindu suspects cannot (being Hindus) do it, it can only be Muslims even if they are not caught – this is the underlying

assumption. It is this theory which is being thrown at us by the BJP by presenting Ms. Thakur as its choice for the electorate of Bhopal. It has another sinister aspect. She was selected knowing well that she could not be a choice for Muslims. Her selection is therefore a message to Muslims that by not voting for her, they disregard the sentiments of Hindus, thus showing intolerance towards the majority.

By supporting her, the 'symbol of Hinduism', they have a chance to endear themselves to the Hindus. If they don't, they would al-



ways be a suspect.

This argument is not new. Many pundits, while accepting that Mr. Modi was a divisive figure, urged indians to choose him as he was the best bet for the economic development of India. So, can Muslims be so sectarian as to think only about themselves while the greater national interest is at stake?

The swift and determined move by the BJP to reject her statement on Godse is a clever ploy to make this issue irrelevant while judging her. It is as if we are asked to judge Godse, setting aside the act of murder of Gandhi by him. There are 'respectable' people who feel that Godse spoilt his case by murdering the Mahatma. They regret this folly as they believe that there was strong merit in his ideological stance. According to them, he rightly opposed the Muslim appeasement of Gandhi, his anger at the dangerous friendliness of Gandhi towards Pakistan is correct, and his impatience with the of Gandhi is to be understood if we want to make India strong.

We are asked to understand that there was a reason Godse was forced to kill Gandhi. We are asked to not treat him as a simple criminal. He was driven by high ideas. To make him a man of ideas, he is constantly humanised. We have seen over the years people talking about his childhood, his education, his editorship. Gandhi must have done something really horrible to provoke a thoughtful numan being to turn into an assassin. If anything, they imply, he was a just

So, we are asked to move away from the trivia, that is the act of the murder, to the substantive, the issues raised by Nathuram in his 'brave defence' in the court, which had moved people to tears even

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), unlike the Islamic State and the Maoists, understands it well that an individual and identifiable act of violence makes it abhorrent and repulsive for the masses, whereas anonymous acts of violence are always more palatable. It was therefore important for Savarkar to distance himself from his disciple, Godse, to remain respectable. For the RSS it was necessary to disown Godse

unwise and impractical pacifism majoritarian ideas he shared with or had learnt from Savarkar and the RSS. No known RSS hand soils his hands with blood; yet it is the politics of the RSS, not at all different from Godse's, which makes blood flow.

From Gandhi's perspective

Gandhi had said again and again that it would be better for him to die if India were to become inhospitable to Muslims. He was talking to those who were objecting to the recitation from the Koran at his prayer meetings. Death he could accept but not the narrowing of his heart! Neither bowing to threats or force! In the same invocation, he said, if you ask me to recite the Gita at gun point, I would refuse to obey you.

Gandhi told his audience, your heart is also large. Don't constrict it. It is this challenge which needs to be accepted. It requires immense bravery of intelligence and humanity to be able to hear Gandhi. This intelligence would tell us that the distancing from the murder of the Mahatma by the co-travellers of Godse is in fact a strategy to enlarge the space for majoritarian ideas and draw more and more Hindus towards them, thus making Gandhi irrelevant while keeping his facade decorated.

to be able to keep working on the Apoorvanand teaches at Delhi University

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.

Dissent in the EC

Ever since the elections to the 17th Lok Sabha were notified, the functioning of the Election Commission of India has been caught in controversy. To ensure a level political playing field and take steps to curb malpractices and slants, the EC should enforce the Model Code of Conduct (MCC). But this appears to be more on paper than in practice. Astonishingly, the "clean chits" to political leaders - in reality, one leader alone – despite violations and intemperate speeches, have been glossed over. In this context, the Chief Election Commissioner's contention that the dissent in the EC is more to do with its internal functioning is not in consonance with the ground reality. It is obviously too little and too late in ensuring a free and fair poll (Page 1, "Ashok

Lavasa pulls out of poll

panel meetings on model code", May 19). Even in the Supreme Court, minority and dissent opinion has invariably been made public. Then why not those of the EC's? The EC's conduct has marred and tarnished its reputation for integrity and impartiality which needs to be protected at any cost S.K. KHOSLA,

■ If it was an unprecedented move by four sitting judges of the Supreme Court to have addressed the media over allocation of sensitive cases by the then CJI, equally unprecedented now is one of the ECs deciding to recuse himself from meetings concerning alleged violations of the MCC. His grievance points to the opaque functioning of the country's election watchdog while the Chief Election Commissioner's dismissal of the issue betrays institutional

hubris. He is patently wrong. Not only should the dissenting note of any member be properly recorded but the complainant should also be furnished with the copy of the order along with the dissenting note of a member, if any, as a matter of rule. After all, one can always obtain such information under the RTI. The justification that while dealing with an alleged violation of the MCC, the EC does not function as a quasijudicial authority does not cut ice as it does act as an adjudicating body. S.K. CHOUDHURY,

Kedarnath visit

The Prime Minister's carefully choreographed 'spiritual visit' was nothing short of campaigning for the final phase of polls from a place of worship (May 19). But then he is too big for the poll panel to hold him

have to take him at his word that he was praying for the country's well-being and not his party's fortunes. No matter what he does or does not do, piety is not something to be demonstrated in order to influence the voters. G. DAVID MILTON

accountable. Meanwhile, we

Candid talk

From not having directly interacted with the public even at the level of a ward councillor, it is striking that within a short time of entering into politics, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is able to spell out, with her no-nonsense replies, a clear opinion on political personalities and the issues the country is facing. Perhaps with a little bit of grooming, she can hone her abilities to aspire for greater

As such, there should not be

wants her to be" (Interview -Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, May A. JAINULABDEEN, Chennai

any problem for Ms. Vadra

"to be anything her party

Use with care

With a smartphone in hand, it has become child's play to forward one-sided messages (Open Page, "The social media overdose", May 19). While distorted political messages can at least be discarded with disdain, the volume of abusive messages doing the rounds regarding religions or caste leaves one to wonder whether we live in a civilised society. What is required is self-discipline. Such divisive messages would affect our own

children who will face a turbulent world full of bias and enmity. V. SUBRAMANIAN, Chennai

Team India

The special feature, "Meet Team India" ('Sport' page), just ahead of the Indian cricket team's ICC Cricket World Cup England & Wales 2019 campaign makes very interesting reading. Stories about our players such as Mahendra Singh Dhoni (May 17) and Hardik Pandya (May 19) covering their formative years to their rise to stardom are fascinating and have a place in my scrapbook. R. SIVAKUMAR,

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS: An election page story titled "Bihar will be a walkover for the NDA: Sushil Modi" (May 19, 2019) erroneously talked about Mr. Nitish Kumar's return to the JD(U). It should have been his return to

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THE HINDU DELHI MONDAY, MAY 20, 2019

The task of restoring democracy

Civil society has a big role to play in restoring institutions that form the bulwark of democracy



On April 24, an ultra-right wing Italian group assembled in Milan to resurrect Benito Mussolini. The day and the place were both symbolically significant. April 25 is celebrated as Liberation Day in Italy, and it was at the Piazzale Loreto in central Milan that Mussolini's body was hung upside down on April 28, 1945. Pictures of the people in the group showed them holding with one hand a big banner that read 'Honour to Mussolini', while their other hand was raised in the old fascist style of salutation to his memory.

This story is not dissimilar to how an ultra-right wing group recreated Mahatma Gandhi's assassination on his death anniversary this year. Not dissimilar, too, to how a Lok Sabha election candidate bragged about the 'patriotism' of Gandhi's killer. As we are seeing now, the memory of the assassin of the Mahatma is being brought to the surface by the ultraright to take pride in what was clearly a shameful and sorrowful event in India's history.

The dark clouds of fascism

These instances send shivers down the spine of all those who shun violence. All over the world, decent human beings have spent the last seven decades thinking that fascism is a thing of the past and that the crimes against humanity that fascism consciously perpetrated will always be seen as the most heinous among brutal crimes. But that confidence is now becoming a precious luxury. This year, for instance, in Italy, the right wing Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini has proposed to put up a joint right wing front for contesting the upcoming election to the European Parliament. The ominous possibility of the ultras in Austria, Germany, France, and some 'new' European countries confronts Europe in the face.

The Italian development is not entirely unrelated to the outcome of the elections in Spain. While the Socialists won the election, the right wing



"The dark clouds of openly declared fascism have cast a large shadow over Europe." Italian Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini with other European leaders of the far-right at a rally in Milan ahead of the European Parliament

continues to play an important role in the formation of the new government there. The Spanish election results bring to mind a term that has dominated the Indian media for the last few months – a hung Parliament. In Spain, the Socialist party (PSOE) has won 123 seats and the anti-capitalist Podemos, which has indicated a readiness to work in a PSOE-led coalition, has won 42, which makes it a total of 165. This is 11 seats short of a clear majority. The traditional conservative People's Party has got 66 seats; their stronger shade, the centre-right Citizens party has won 57 seats; and the far-right Vox, the type that wants to resurrect Mussolini, has won 24 seats.

The dark clouds of openly declared fascism have cast a large shadow over Europe. The history of Hitler's rule tells us how he befriended the rich industrial class and destroved the German Parliament. His use of capital, science and technology for creating an unprecedented torture machine for Jews, homosexuals, gypsies, communists and all his critics was based on the capacities available in his time. Today, these capacities have increased beyond one's imagination. The technological aids for deeply invasive surveillance that the state has at its disposal are so advanced that the idea of individual and non-conformist

thought will have no space left if the ideas of the ultra-right were to cap-

The Lok Sabha election has come to an end and in a few days we will know what the ballot box has in store for us. Given India's place in the world, there is no doubt that all political parties in Europe will be keenly watching the outcome of the Indian election. Is it a small irony that a powerful bloc of nations, the BRICS, that was seen as being on an impressive and economic rise some years ago has changed so much? Brazil, Russia and China today have totalitarian and anti-people regimes, and India has obscurantist theological outfits openly claiming space in the decision-making process.

Challenges for the new regime

After the election results are announced, the new government will have many challenges waiting for its attention. These include jobless growth and a record drop in employment rates, deep agrarian distress, an education system that has completely eroded, caste discrimination and the continuing harassment of women. All these are real issues even if the government pretends they do not exist.

The most important, though, is the serious loss of credibility of democratic institutions. The Central Bureau of Investigation and the gubernatorial offices have declined beyond repair. The Election Commission, the judiciary and the Comptroller and Auditor General can still be rebuilt. Many other institutions such as the University Grants Commission, the national academies, scientific institutions and data-gathering mechanisms will require not just first-aid care but serious cure. The TRP demon will hardly permit redemption of the electronic media, but traditional print journalism and online journalism will require greater self-reflection and self-regulation. No government will be able to cope with these challenges by itself unless many active sections of the citizenry participate in the task of restoring democracy.

The task I suggest will be difficult for the country to accomplish even if a non-right government is formed, no matter of what composition. Over the last seven decades, democracy has been protected by civil society, which has critiqued the faults of various regimes. This time, civil society will have to rush to the assistance of the government in restoring institutions that form the bulwark of democracy. This task will be enormously daunting if a right wing government comes to power. Curbing its jingoism and propaganda juggernaut will require heroic efforts. To keep vigil on complicit office-holders in key institutions will become fulltime voluntary work for political opponents and non-party groups.

Yet, if many of us do not do this, we will provide an unintended impetus to the ultra-right. It is true that democracy has erred often. Yet, it is also true that democracy solidly stood the world's guarantee for averting wars. Democracy has erred, but it has not failed us. The idea of democracy today is a pale shadow of what it was imagined to be. U.S. President Donald Trump's vision for the country as a place only for Americans and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's imagining of India as a place for only those who agree with him are versions of democracy that have reduced their respective Constitutions to a forgotten baggage. Indians must hold vigil in both good and bad times. We will soon know if we can.

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FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

It's time for reflection, not prediction

Journalists must think about their role in the normalisation of extremist behaviour rather than focusing on exit polls



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

It is important for the readers, who are now being subjected to an avalanche of exit polls, to look at the outcome of the Australian elections and take these numbers with a pinch of salt. Contrary to the predictions of multiple exit polls suggesting a narrow Labour win for the first time in six years, the ruling conservative coalition led by Prime Minister Scott Morrison has managed to retain power in

Why do I prefer in-depth reportage to prepoll and post-poll surveys? A good field reporter bears witness to developments and records facts and diverse opinions. The reports that stay with us are not those that are centred around a single source, but those that painstakingly bring together facts culled from multiple sources. In the case of poll surveys, there seems to be no consensus as yet on the methodology, the ideal sample size, the right mix of qualitative and quantitative analysis, and the formula for converting the vote share to the number of seats in the firstpast-the-post system. In 2003, the Brookings Institution carried an insightful piece, "Polling & Public Opinion: The good, the bad, and the ugly", which listed out the limitations in poll surveys in homogenous societies like the U.S. These factors get further complicated in

India's heterogeneous polity. A descriptive report may not give a precise idea of the final electoral outcome, but it does provide an insight into the issues that affect the people and helps to contextualise the campaign. If the act of verification differentiates journalism from other forms of communication, it is the ability to enforce accountability that distinguishes journalism from stenography or propaganda. According to the Lettre Ulysses Award for the Art of Reportage, "good journalism interprets events by contextualising elements such as historical background and causality, presenting readers with material for a more enlightened interpretation of world affairs".

In the run-up to the 2014 Lok Sabha election, I wrote two columns, "Not being prescriptive" (April 7, 2014) and "Election coverage: Going beyond passions" (April 14, 2014). In those, I celebrated the Indian media, unlike the Western media, for not endorsing particular political parties, and suggested a form of journalism which is layered and nuanced, and which tries to capture complex Indian realities in their totality.

Whatever be the final composition of the 17th Lok Sabha, there are some disturbing questions that journalists must ask of their profession. Has the media created space for the furthering of hate speech? Has journalism done enough to arrest the spread of misinformation? What has been the role of the media in the normalisation of extremist behaviour by fringe groups? In the U.S., there is an intense debate about the role of the media. Lois Beckett, who covers gun policy, criminal justice and the far-right in the U.S. for The Guardian, came up with a searing piece titled, "How leftwing media focus on farright groups is helping to normalise hate". She says that the endless debates on how to cover the "alt right", a fractured far-right movement of racists, misogynists and anti-Semites that greeted U.S. President Donald Trump's victory with euphoria, without "normalising" the true extremism of Mr. Trump and his allies have had the opposite

Questions that will haunt the media

Since 2014, the normalisation of extremism in India has been on the rise. I would like to know what went on in the minds of journalists who reported the nomination of Pragya Singh Thakur as the BJP's Bhopal candidate and her subsequent remarks on Mahatma Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse. What was the pushback when the Minister of State for External Affairs, General (retired) V.K. Singh, called journalists "presstitutes"? Margaret Sullivan, the media columnist for The Washington Post, said that "Trump won't stop coining nasty nicknames for his foes but the media must stop amplifying them". What has been the Indian response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mocking reference to the "Khan Market Gang" in his interview to The Indian Express?

These are questions that will haunt the Indian media in the long run, and not the variable numbers thrown up by the exit polls.

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SINGLE FILE

Platforms of our own

How to ensure that social media evolves to become an enabler of transparency and democracy

ANIL K. ANTONY



Social media platforms allow political parties to reach millions of prospective voters and are therefore an integral part of elections. However, some authoritarian regimes across the world have used social media to manufacture positive public opinion. Worse, some established de-

mocracies have had to deal with propaganda, fake news and foreign interference in domestic elections. These developments point to the capacity of social media platforms to seriously undermine democratic practices worldwide.

Following the Cambridge Analytica scandal, where the company illegally harvested the personal data of millions of Facebook users without their consent and used that to influence their voting preferences, Facebook has been in the forefront in creating various checks and balances in cyberspace to create an environment for free and fair elections. It has created specialised global centres with the sole aim of promoting election integrity. As a platform that sees billions of posts each day, Facebook has identified Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning (AIML)-powered pattern recognition tools to be the most effective line of defence against "unnatural interference".

Whenever accounts are found that are similar to ones flagged in the past, and that are inaccurate, abusive, or violating the platforms' terms of service, they are systematically removed. At present, AIML tools assist the platform block or remove over a million accounts a day. According to a recent survey, one in two Indian voters has received some kind of fake news in the month leading to the elections. AIML tools also work to minimise the spread of such disinformation.

Some of the actions taken by these platforms, however, have not been that well received, especially by those who say that these platforms should not be deciding what is proper and improper in the Indian online space. For instance, Twitter's top officials, including global CEO Jack Dorsey, were summoned to appear before the Parliamentary Panel on Information Technology for alleged bias against right-wing voices on the platform.

With almost all the popular social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp, being foreign-owned, and with India having neither insights into their internal algorithms and functioning nor any viable homegrown equivalents, its population will always be susceptible to interference beyond its control. India's ability to create its own mass collaborative technology and independent institutions with technical expertise that can monitor and counter actions of the government, is paramount in ensuring that social media evolves into an enabler of transparency and democracy, rather than a cause of democratic

The writer is a technology entrepreneur, and the Convener of INC-Kerala Digital Media



DATA POINT

LACK OF HEALTHCARE

Troubled teens

Pregnant teenage girls get poor maternal healthcare and bear children who are relatively more stunted than children of older mothers, according to a study by the International Food Policy Research Institute. The study was conducted in 2015-16 and was published last week. The highest number of teenage mothers were found in eastern and north-eastern India. By Sumant Sen

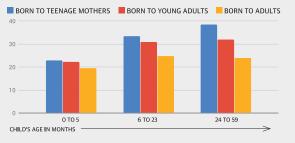
women who have their first child in their twenties. Institutional deliveries are relatively low in teenage pregnancies

Pregnant teenagers are relatively more anaemic and receive less

teens are also exposed to poor sanitation facilities compared to

antenatal and postnatal care compared to older women. Pregnant

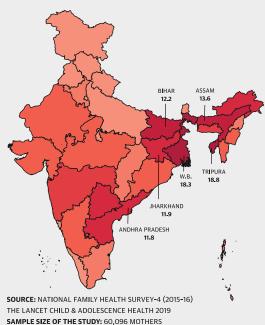
CHILD STUNTING A higher percentage of stunting is observed among children born to teenage mothers compared to those born to young adults and adults. The gap significantly widens as the children grow older. The



graph shows the % of children who are stunted across age cohorts

TROUBLE IN THE EAST In many eastern and north-eastern States, a relatively higher percentage of mothers had their first child in their teens. The map shows the percentage of teenageers who were pregnant during the National Family Health Survey-4. The darker the red,

the higher the percentage of teenage mothers



counsel of their choice. The Indian Association, Calcutta, solicit immediate intervention for interests of justice. A similar message was also wired to the Viceroy.

POLL CALL

Negative campaigning Negative campaigning is a type of political advertising whereby a political party chooses to highlight the flaws or another candidate in its campaign instead of showcasing its own candidates or the achievements of its governments, present or past. Sometimes such advertising can be subtle, while at other times it can be quite overt. Negative campaigns typically focus on a candidate's political record, or lack of it. Negative campaigns are powerful and can especially persuade floating voters to make up their minds, but divisive campaigns can also backfire.

The Indian Association [in Calcutta] has adopted a resolution

protesting against the action of the military authorities in the

Punjab in depriving the accused persons of the right of being

defended by counsel of their choice, by refusing the latter per-

mission to enter martial law area. The President of the Indian

Association has sent the following cablegram to Mr. Montagu

and Lord Sinha: At Lahore editor and others are awaiting trial

for alleged offences punishable with death and transportation.

They engaged Messrs. Norton, Roy and Chatterjee, three Cal-

cutta Barristers, but the military authorities refused the latter

permission to enter martial law area from outside the pro-

vince. This order will prejudice the defence as the accused not

having confidence in the local bar, are deprived of the help of a

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निर्वाचन सदन NIRVACHAN SADA गरत निर्वाचन आये CTION COMMIS

इतनी विशाल और जटिल चुनावी प्रक्रिया को प्रभावी तरीके से अंजाम देने वाले चुनाव आयोग को संदिग्ध बनाने की कोई भी कोशिश बेहद दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण है।

चुनाव आयोग की साख

लाकसभा

का चुनाव खत्म होने से पहले ही चुनाव आयोग के अंदरूनी विवादों का सार्वजनिक होना न केवल बेहद दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण है, बल्कि इससे इस सांविधानिक संस्था की साख पर भी प्रतिकूल असर पड़ा है। यह भूलना नहीं

चाहिए कि इसी चुनाव आयोग ने इतनी लंबी और जटिल चुनावी प्रक्रिया को बेहद प्रभावी तरीके से अंजाम दिया है, और पश्चिम बंगाल को छोड़कर कहीं भी हिंसा नहीं हुई। दरअसल क्लीन चिट देने समेत दूसरे मामलों में आयोग के बहुमत के फैसले से चुनाव आयुक्त अशोक लवासा पहले ही सहमत नहीं थे। लेकिन उनके अल्पमत फैसले को सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के फैसलों की तरह दर्ज और सार्वजनिक न किए जाने के विरोध में मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त

सुनील अरोड़ा को पत्र लिखकर आचार संहिता से संबंधित बैठकों में शामिल होने से इनकार कर उन्होंने इस विवाद को तूल दे दिया। उसके बाद मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त को अभूतपूर्व कदम उँठाते हुए बयान जारी करना पड़ा। चुनाव आयुक्तों के बीच मुद्दों पर असहमति होना लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था में स्वाभाविक है। लेकिन बेहतर यह होता कि शुरू में ही असहमित के इस मुद्दे को आपस में निपटा लिया जाता। अगर वैसा होता, तो शायद यह असहमति चनाव आयोग के बाहर नहीं जाती। अलबत्ता चुनाव आयुक्त ने अपनी असहमति को दर्ज न करने के विरोध में जिस तरह बाद की बैठकों में शामिल होने से ही इनकार कर दिया, उससे भी सहमत नहीं हुआ जा सकता। चुनाव आयोग सुप्रीम कोर्ट नहीं है। आयोग में चुनाव आयुक्तों और मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त के बीच अगर

मतभिन्नता होती है, तो उस पर बहुमत के आधार पर ही फैसला होता है, वहां असहमत टिप्पणी को दर्ज करने की कोई परंपरा नहीं है। फिर अपनी असहमति को दर्ज करने का आग्रह क्यों? चुनाव आयुक्त का रोष एक और वजह से सही नहीं। चुनाव आयोग में विरोध और असहमति के मामले पहले भी सामने आए हैं. लेकिन ऐसे मामले संबंधित आयुक्त के सेवानिवृत्त होने या उनकी कोई किताब आने पर ही सार्वजनिक हुए हैं। लेकिन दुर्योग से यह असहमति इस बार उनके कार्यकाल में ही सामने आ गई है। उम्मीद करनी चाहिए कि कल की बैठक में मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त और आयुक्त के बीच आपसी सहमित से इस विवाद का पटाक्षेप हो जाएँगा। चुनाव आयोग जैसी सांविधानिक संस्था को किसी भी स्थिति में संदिग्ध नहीं बनाया जाना चाहिए।

दीदी के गढ़ में मोदी का रथ



ब तक आप ये पंक्तियां पढ़ रहे होंगे, तब तक सात चरणों में फैला मतदान संपन्न हो चुका होगा। हालांकि यह दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण ही है कि आखिरी चरण में भी पश्चिम बंगाल हिंसा से मुक्त नहीं रह पाया।

पश्चिम बंगाल की मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी के गढ़ को ध्वस्त करने के लिए प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी और उनके राजनीतिक सहयोगी भाजपा अध्यक्ष अमित शाह द्वारा किए गए आक्रामक प्रयास का नतीजा क्या होगा, यह देखना अभी बाकी है। राज्य के विभिन्न वर्गों में भाजपा के लिए भारी उत्साह देखा गया है। समाज के विभिन्न वर्गों में भाजपा की जो विराट छवि बनी है, कुछ महीने पहले तक उसकी कल्पना नहीं की जा सकती थी। इस परिस्थिति ने बंगाल की योद्धा रानी को रक्षात्मक होने के लिए विवश कर दिया है। इसके बावजूद तृणमूल के परास्त होने की संभावना अभी दूर की कौड़ी लगती है। पिछले दो महीने से निर्बाध, अथक प्रचार अभियान के बावजूद भाजपा 42 संसदीय सीटों में से एक दर्जन से अधिक सीटों पर तृणमूल कांग्रेस को कड़ी चुनौती नहीं दे पाई। ऐसे में, वहां भाजपा को शानदार लाभ शायद ही मिल पाए, जैसा कि उसके नेता और समर्थक दावा कर रहे हैं।

अलबत्ता यह उस राज्य में भाजपा की असाधारण प्रगति को कम करके आंकना नहीं है, जहां वह एक दशक पहले अस्तित्वहीन थी। वाम दल और कांग्रेस के आभासी पतन (ये दोनों पहले तृणमूल की मुख्य विरोधी पार्टियां थीं) और विशाल वित्तीय संसाधनों के जरिये मोदी और शाह की पार्टी ममता के शासन के विरोधियों में यह चर्चा पैदा कर, कि दिल्ली का दबंग बादशाह ममता को अपदस्थ करना चाहता है, भाजपा के



पश्चिम बंगाल के मतदाताओं में भाजपा के प्रति भारी उत्साह देखा गया, जिसकी कुछ महीने पहले तक कल्पना नहीं की जा सकती थी। पर क्या नतीजे में इसकी झलक दिखेगी?

अजय बोस, वरिष्ठ पत्रकार

लिए समर्थन बढाने में सक्षम रही है।

यहां तक कि 2014 के लोकसभा चुनाव में भी मोदी लहर पर सवार भाजपा पश्चिम बंगाल में अपने वोट शेयर को छह फीसदी से लगभग तीन गुना बढ़ाकर 17 फीसदी करने में सक्षम रही थी, लेकिन वह अपनी सीटों की संख्या एक से महज दो करने में ही सफल रही। इस बार के चुनाव में 2014 की तुलना में प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के प्रति देश भर में समर्थन में जहां कमी

आई है, वहीं पश्चिम बंगाल में उनके प्रति समर्थन में तेजी आई है। ऐसे में अगर यह धारणा बनी है कि वह दीदी के गढ़ को भेदने वाले हैं, तो इसमें आश्चर्य की कोई बात नहीं।

हालांकि पश्चिम बंगाल में चुनाव परिदृश्य की बारीकी से जांच से पता चलता है कि भाजपा को राज्य में दोहरे अंकों में सीट पाने के लिए वोट शेयर में चमत्कारी वृद्धि की आवश्यकता होगी। यह इस तथ्य से रेखांकित होता है कि पश्चिम

इस सप्ताह आने वाला है। इसी

सप्ताह हम जान जाएंगे कि मोदी सरकार एक बार फिर बनेगी कि

नहीं। यह वह समय है, जब हम राजनीतिक पंडित

देश भर में घूम-घामकर वापस दिल्ली लौट आते हैं

और चुनाव अभियान का फुरसत में विश्लेषण करने बैठते हैं। सो यह लिखने से पहले ऐसा मैंने भी

किया। कॉफी का प्याला अपने लैपटॉप के बगल में

रखा और पिछले हो महीनों के अखबारों के

संपादकीय पढ़ने लगी। यू-ट्यूब पर कामदार और

नामदार (बहन-भाई) के भाषण सुने। फिर उस

गठबंधन के आला नेताओं के भाषण सुने, जिसको

मोदी महामिलावट कहते हैं। ऐसा करने के बाद

लगा, जैसे चुनाव आयोग ने आम चुनाव को इतना

ऐसा इसलिए कहती हूं, क्योंकि शुरू में असली

मुद्दे सबने उठाने के प्रयास किए थे। विपक्ष की

तरफ से बेरोजगारी और किसानों की समस्याओं की

बातें हुई थीं। विकास, सुरक्षा और गरीबी हटाने के

सफल प्रयासों के मुद्दे नरेंद्र मोदी और उनके

साथियों ने उठाए। इन बातों के बीच ही पुलवामा का

वह आत्मघाती आतंकवादी हमला और इसके बाद

बालाकोट पर भारत का जवाबी हमला हुआ। कुछ

हफ्ते यही बातें चलीं। इस दौरान मैं जब राजस्थान

गई, तो ऐसा लगा, जैसे इस चुनाव में देश की सुरक्षा

सबसे बड़ा मुद्दा बनकर रहेगा। उन दिनों मोदी की

इसके कुछ सप्ताह बाद मैं जब उत्तर प्रदेश गई,

प्रशंसा जगह-जगह सुनने को मिली।

लंबा घसीट कर अन्याय किया।

बंगाल की 42 संसदीय सीटों में से 36 में भाजपा और तृणमूल कांग्रेस के बीच 25 प्रतिशत से अधिक वोट शेयर का अंतर है, जो दोनों पार्टियों को 2014 में मिला था। इन 36 सीटों में से भाजपा को 25 में 10 प्रतिशत से भी कम वोट मिले और शेष 11 में 15 प्रतिशत से अधिक वोट

इस बात की तो बहुत चर्चा हो रही है कि ममता विरोधी विपक्षी मर्तों, खासकर वाम दलों के बड़े आदिवासी और दलित वोट बैंक का फायदा भाजपा को मिल रहा है, लेकिन राजनीतिक पर्यवेक्षक इस बात की अनदेखी कर रहे हैं कि तुणमूल कांग्रेस को भी बंगाल में पारंपरिक विपक्ष के पतन का लाभ मिल रहा है। मिसाल के तौर पर, सेंटर फॉर स्टडीज ऑफ डेवलपिंग सोसाइटीज (सीएसडीएस) ने 2014 के लोकसभा चुनाव के बाद एक अध्ययन में बताया कि उस चुनाव में कुल मुस्लिम वोटों का 55 प्रतिशत कांग्रेस और वाम दलों को गया था। लेकिन इस बार मुस्लिम मतदाताओं द्वारा एकमुश्त तृणमूल कांग्रेस को वोट दिए जाने की संभावना है, जिसे भाजपा के उग्र हिंदुत्व के खिलाफ एकमात्र गोलकीपर के रूप में देखा जा रहा है। महत्वपूर्ण बात यह है कि आदिवासी वोट मात्र आधा दर्जन सीटों पर निर्णायक है, जबकि मुस्लिम वोट उसके तीन गुना सीटों पर नतीजों को प्रभावित कर सकता है।

पश्चिम बंगाल में मोदी के रथ के लिए अन्य अवरोध स्थानीय संगठन और नेताओं का पूर्णतः अभाव है, और जो चुनाव जीतने के लिए पूरी तरह से प्रधानमंत्री के व्यक्तिगत करिश्मे पर निर्भर हैं। हालांकि भाजपा ममता के प्रमुख सहयोगी मुकुल राय और तृणमूल कांग्रेस के पूर्व दबंग नेता अर्जुन सिंह जैसे नेताओं को अपने पाले में लाने में सफल रही है, लेकिन यह

जोखिम भरी रणनीति है, क्योंकि न तो मोदी और न ही शाह पश्चिम बंगाल की राजनीति की आंतरिक गतिशीलता से बहुत परिचित हैं। बैरकपुर सीट पर इसे अच्छी तरह समझा जा सकता है, जहां स्थानीय डॉन और तृणमूल कांग्रेस के बागी अर्जुन सिंह भाजपा प्रत्याशी के रूप में पर्व रेल मंत्री और ममता के विश्वस्त दिनेश त्रिवेदी को पछाड़ने की उम्मीद कर रहे हैं।

जब इस वर्ष की शुरुआत में अर्जुन सिंह ने ममता के खिलाफ बगावत की थी, तो भाजपा ने उन्हें ट्रॉफी के रूप में लपक लिया था। उस समय व्यापक रूप से यह माना जाता था कि दो बार से लगातार बैरकपुर से जीतने वाले तृणमूल के दिनेश त्रिवेदी इस बार हार जाएंगे। हालांकि दीदी ने, जो अपने पूर्व गुर्गे के भाजपा में जाने को लेकर उग्र थीं, बेहद मजबूती से मतदाताओं को अपने पाले में किया, जिससे यह साबित हुआ कि वह चालाक होने के साथ-साथ दृढ़ संकल्पित भी हैं। कहा जाता है कि उन्होंने मुकुल राय की अर्जुन सिंह के खिलाफ व्यक्तिगत दुश्मनी का इस्तेमाल करते हुए भाजपा की बाजी पलट दी। मुकुल राय के पुत्र शुभ्रांशु अपने पिता के भाजपा में जाने के बाद भी तृणमूल कांग्रेस के विधायक

विडंबना देखिए कि बैरकपुर में मतदान के दिन त्रिवेदी क्रिकेट खेलते हुए सुकून महसूस कर रहे थे, जबकि पूर्व डॉन अर्जुन सिंह ने शिकायत की कि तृणमूल के गुंडों ने उनकी पिटाई की! पश्चिम बंगाल की मुख्यमंत्री में यह कौशल है कि वह अपने समर्थकों को संगठित करती हैं और अपने विरोधियों का रास्ता रोक देती हैं। केंद्रीय सुरक्षा बल और चुनाव आयोग पर केंद्र सरकार के नियंत्रण के बावजूद ममता का यह कौशल राज्य में चुनाव परिणामों को प्रभावित करने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभा सकता है।



अतध्वेनि

खुशियां शुभ्र चमकदार ओस की बूंदों की तरह अनंत हैं

मैं नेत्रहीन हूं और मैंने कभी इंद्रधनुष नही देखा; किंतु मुझे उसकी सुंदरता के बारे में बताया गया है। मैं जानती हूं कि उसकी सुंदरता सदैव ही अधूरी और टूटी-फूटी होती है। वह आसमान पर कभी भी पूर्णाकार में प्रकट नहीं होता। यही बात उन सभी चीजों के बारे में सही है, जिन्हें हम पृथ्वी वाले जानते हैं। जिस तरह इंद्रधनुष का वृत्त खंडित होता है, उसी तरह जीवन भी अधूरा है और हममें से हरेक के लिए टूटा-फूटा है। हम ब्राउनिंग के इन शब्दों, 'पृथ्वी पर टूटे



हुए बिंब, स्वेर्ग में एक पूर्ण का अर्थ तब तक नही समझ सकेंगे, जब तक हम खंड अपने जीवन से अनंत की ओर कदम नहीं बढ़ा लेते।

सुख का एक द्वार बंद होने पर, दूसरा खुल जाता है; लेकिन कई बार हम बंद दरवाज़े की तरफ इतनी देर तक ताकते रहते हैं कि जो द्वार हमारे लिए खोल दिया गया है, उसे देख नहीं पाते। आनंद स्वार्थ-सिद्धि से नही मिलता, बल्कि किसी समुचित उद्देश्य के प्रति वफादार होने से मिलता है। सुरक्षा, निश्चिंतता या बेफिक्री एक कल्पना है, अंधविश्वास है। जीवन अगर साहस से भरी यात्रा न हुआ, तो कुछ न हुआ। जो लोग खुशी की तलाश में घूमते हैं, वे अगर एक क्षण रुकें और सोचें तो वे यह समझ जाएंगे कि सचमुच खुशियों की संख्या पांव के नीचे के दूर्वादलों की तरह अनगिनत है; या कहिए कि सुबह के फूलों पर पड़ी हुई शुभ्र चमकदार ओस की बूंदों की तरह अनंत है। इतिहास ने जिन स्त्री-पुरुषों को मानवता की सेवा का अवसर देकर समादृत किया है, उनमें से अधिकांश को विपरीत परिस्थितियों का अनुभव हुआ है। आंतरिक सत्यों में हमारी अंधता के कारण कोई अंतर नही पडता। अधिकतम सौंदर्य-दृष्टि तक केवल कल्पना के द्वारा ही पहुंचा जा सकता है।

े-सुप्रसिद्ध अमेरिको लेखिका और विचारक



भाई की मौत ने लोगों को बचाने का जुनून पैदा किया

मैं हैदराबाद में रहता हूं। पिछले करीब पंद्रह साल से मैं शहर के हुसैन सागर लेक और आसपास के इलाकों में आत्महत्या की कोशिश करने वाले लोगों को बचाने का काम करता हं।

मै जब छोटा था, तब बहुत शरारत करता था। इससे परेशान होकर मेरे माता-पिता ने मुझे होस्टल में डाल दिया था। मेरा होस्टल स्कूल से बहुत दूर था। एक दिन जब मैं स्कूल से होस्टल लौट रहा था, तो सड़क से एक धार्मिक जुलूस निकल रहा था और बहुत भीड़ थी। मैं भारी भीड़ देखकर डर गया और भागते-भागते भटक गया। मैं इतना बदिकस्मत था कि न होस्टल लौट पाया और न ही अपने मां-बाप से मिल पाया। मेरी जिंदगी एक झटके में बेहद नाटकीय ढंग से बदल गई। कहां मैं पढ़-लिखकर बड़ी नौकरी करता, और कहां अब मैं अपनी भख मिटाने के लिए सडक पर भीख मांग रहा था। उसी दौरान एक महिला से मेरी मुलाकात हुई, जिसने मुझे अपना बेटा मान लिया। इस तरह सड़क पर मुझे दूसरी माँ मिल गई थीं। वह अपने



हुसैन सागर लेक में कृदकर आत्महत्या की कोशिश करते सैकड़ों लोगों को मैं बचा चुका हूं।

काम करता रहूंगा।

बच्चों और मुझमें कोई भेदभाव नहीं करती थी। जल्दी ही मुझे एहसास हुो गया कि दूसरी मां से मिलाकर ईश्वर ने मेरे साथ हुए अन्याय का खात्मा कर दिया है। लेकिन मेरी खुशी ज्यादा दिन नहीं टिकी। एक दिन मेरे बड़े भैया हुसैन सागर लेक घूमने गए थे। वहां उन्होंने किसी को पानी में डूबते देखा, तो छलांग लगा ली। पर अनजान आंदमी के साथ-साथ वह खुद भी डूब गए। यह खबर जब मां को मिली, तो रो-रोकर उनका बुरा हाल था। मुझे बहुत अफसोस हो रहा था कि जिस महिला ने मुझ जैसे एक सड़क पर के लड़के को अपने बेटे की तरह पाला, उनके साथ ऐसा अन्याय नहीं होना चाहिए था। काश, भैया की जगह मैं होता। अफसोस की बात यह थी कि वे दोनों लाशें भी नहीं मिली थीं। उस हादसे के बाद मैंने दो प्रण किए। एक यह कि हुसैन सागर

लेक में किसी को डूबकर मरने नहीं दूंगा। और दूसरा यह कि कोई उसमें डूबकर मर गया हो, तो उसका शव बाहर निकाल लाऊंगा, ताकि उसके परिवार वालों को अंतिम संस्कार में असुविधा न हो। हुसैन सागर लेक बेहद खूबसूरत तो है ही, यहां बहुत लोग आत्महत्या करने के लिए भी आते हैं। मैंने अब तक यहां लगभग एक सौ लोगों की जान बचाई है। ये वे लोग हैं, जिन्होंने लेक में कूदकर आत्महत्या करने की कोशिश की थी। जबिक लेक से अभी तक एक हजार से अधिक शव मैंने निकाले हैं। मैं उन शवों का अंतिम संस्कार भी कर देता हूं, जिनके कोई रिश्तेदार नहीं मिलते। चूंकि मैं लंबे समय से यह काम कर रहा हूं, इसलिए स्थानीय पुलिस मेरी मदद करती है, और मेरी सहायता लेती भी है। जैसे कि कभी-कभी वह देर शाम या रात को लेक में किसी शव के होने की मुझे सूचना देती है। मैं लाश को लेक से बाहर निकालने में पुलिस की मदद करता हूं। जिन लोगों की मैंने जान बचाई है, उनके परिजन भी मेरे अभियान में मदद करते हैं। मेरी कोई नौकरी नहीं है। त्योहारों पर लेक में जो प्रतामाएं विसर्जित की जाती हैं, उनमें से लोहा और दूसरे धातृ निकालकर मैं बाजार में बेचता हूं। कभी-कभी पुलिस विभाग भी मेरी कुछ आर्थिक मदद करता है। मेरी आय काफी नहीं है, और राज्य सरकार ने भी मेरी कोई मदद नहीं की है। पर लोगों की जान बचाने के अपने काम से मैं संतुष्ट हूं। अभी तो मैं जवान हूं। जब तक मेरा शरीर साथ देगा, मैं यह

-विभिन्न साक्षात्कारों पर आधारित

चुनावी नतीजे का समय

जिस दिन की प्रतीक्षा महीनों से थी, वह इस सप्ताह आने वाला है। यह चुनाव इतना लंबा चला है कि अगली बार चुनाव आयोग को कोई ऐसा उपाय ढूंढना होगा, जिससे इतना लंबा चुनाव अभियान फिर से बर्दाश्त न करना पड़े।



तवलीन सिंह

हो गए थे। मथुरा चुनाव क्षेत्र में मुसलमानों से बातें कीं. तो मोदी सरकार की सिर्फ आलोचना सुनी। भीड़ द्वारा की गई लिंचिंग की घटनाएं मुद्दा थीं, लेकिन् उत्तर प्रदेश में उतना ही बड़ा मुद्दा यह भी था कि जिन व्यवसायों में मुसलमान काम करते हैं, उनको तकरीबन बंद कर दिया गया है। जो कभी पशुपालन से गुजारा करते थे या चमड़ा या मांस उद्योग में काम करते थे, वे अब मजदूरी करते हैं। हिंदू किसान भी परेशान हैं, क्योंकि अब बूढ़ी गाएं बेची नहीं जातीं, सो भूखी, आवारा गाएं फसल बर्बाद कर रही हैं। अगले प्रधानमंत्री के लिए यह बहुत बड़ी समस्या बन सकती है। समाधान ढूंढना मुश्किल हो गया है, क्योंकि गोरक्षकों को अब कौन

इसके बावजद यह कहना ज़रूरी है कि मैंने अपने चुनावी दौरों में सौ से ज्यादा लोगों से बातें की हांगा आर उनम दस स भा कम एस लाग ।मल हांग जिन्होंने मोदी की आलोचना की। अधिकतर ऐसे लोग मिले, जिन्होंने बेझिझक कहा कि वे मोदी को दोबारा प्रधानमंत्री बनते देखना चाहते हैं। जिनको झिझक थी, वे स्पष्ट कर देते थे कि मोदी ने अपने सारे वादे तो पूरे नहीं किए हैं, फिर भी राहुल गांधी से अच्छे हैं, सो उनका वोट मोदी को मिलेगा। मोदी की लोकप्रियता का सबसे बड़ा कारण है कि मतदाता देख चुके हैं कि वह दिन रात देश की भलाई के लिए काम कर रहे हैं, अपने परिवार की

भलाई के लिए नहीं। कुछ ही दिनों में पता लग जाएगा कि प्रधानमंत्री निवास में किसका प्रवेश होगा। काश कि वह दिन हम कुछ घंटों में ही ला सकते। यह चुनाव इतना लंबा चला है कि अगली बार चुनाव आयोग को कोई ऐसा उपाय ढूंढना होगा, जिससे इतना लंबा चनाव अभियान फिर से बर्दाश्त न करना पड़े। इतने लंबे चुनाव अभियान से नुकसान राजनीतिज्ञों का इतना नहीं हुआ है, जितना देश का हुआ है। चुनाव आयोग को अगली बार कम दिनों में आम चुनाव को समाप्त करने का प्रयास करना होगा।

हरियाली और रास्ता

राकेश, दादी और गेहूं की बोरियां

एक युवक की कथा, जिसे उसकी दादी ने जीवन को खुशहाल बनाने का अनूठा उपाय सुझाया।



राकेश बहुत मेहनती लड़का था। उसके क्लास के सभी बच्चे ट्यूशन पढ़ते थे, लेकिन ट्यूशन न पढ़ने पर भी राकेश के बहुत अच्छे नंबर आते थे। वह सिर्फ पढ़ाई में ही नहीं, बल्कि खेल-कूद व अन्य गतिविधियों में भी काफी तेज था। लेकिन दसवीं की बोर्ड परीक्षा में उसे बहुत कम अंक मिले। उसे समझ में ही नहीं आ रहा था कि यह कैसे हुआ। वह रोते हुए घर पहुंचा। घर पर उसकी दादी खेत से लाए गए गेहूं को बोरियों में डाल रही थीं। जब उन्होंने राकेश को रोते हुए देखा, तो पूछा, क्या बात हो गई, बेटा? तुम रो क्यों रहे हो? राकेश ने बड़ी मायूसी के साथ दादी को बताया कि बोर्ड परीक्षा में उसे कम अंक मिले हैं। दादी ने उसे सांत्वना देते हुए कहा, लेकिन मेरे लिए तो तुम हमेशा अळ्वल ही रहोगे। अच्छा बताओ, यहां गेहूं की कितनी बोरियां हैं। राकेश ने बोरियां गिनीं और बोला, दस। लेकिन इससे यह थोड़े ही पता चलता है कि मैं पढ़ने में अच्छा हूं! दादी बोलीं, यहां पर दस ब्रोरियां हैं, जिनमें चालीस-चालीस किलो गेहूं भरा हुआ है। यानी सारा मिलाकर चार सौ किलो गेहूं हुआ। कल्पना करो कि अब इस चार सौ किलो गेहूं को तुम्हें बाजार में बेचना है, जिसे तुम छोटी-छोटी बोरियों में भरकर बाजार ले जा रहे हो। लेकिन रास्ते में कोई दस किलो गेहूं की गठरी चुराकर भागने लगता है। क्या तुम बाकी का गेहूं छोड़कर उसके पीछे भागने लगोगे? या फिर उसे जाने दोगे, और सतर्क रहोगे कि आगे कोई ऐसा न कर पाए। राकेश बोला, स्वभाविक है कि मैं सतर्क रहूंगा कि आगे कोई ऐसा न कर पाए। दादी बोलीं, गेहूं की अलग-अलग बोरियों की तरह हमारी जिंदगी के भी अलग-अलग चरण होते हैं। किसी एक चरण में से अगर कुछ पल खराब भी हो जाएं, तो भी बचे हुए पल हमारे पास ही

जिंदगी का कोई अनुभव एक हिस्सा भर होता है, उसे नियति नहीं मानना चाहिए।



सड़कों की गुणवत्ता विकास के नित अरब अमीरात नए आयाम छू रही सिंगापुर दुनिया में सड़कों 🕻 जापान का अहम योगदान है। ढांचागत विकास का प्रमुख अंग सड़क विभिन्न देशों में कई तरीकों से बनाई जाती है। सड़कों की गुणवत्ता को लेकर 2018 में एक रिपोर्ट आई, जिसमें बताया गया अमेरिका चीन 4 है कि, गुणवत्ता के मामले में संयुक्त अरब अमीरात पहले स्थान पर है। पाकिस्तान

जाकी रही भावना जैसी

भगवान बुद्ध एक दिन कहीं प्रवचन दे रहे थे। उन्होंने इन शब्दों के साथ अपना प्रवचन खत्म किया, जागो, समय हाथ से निकलता जा रहा है। सभा विसर्जित होने पर वह अपने शिष्य आनंद के साथ बाहर निकलने लगे। अभी वह विहार के मुख्य द्वार तक पहुंचे ही थे कि एक किनारे खड़े हो गए। दरअसल प्रवचन सुनने आए लोग बाहर निकल रहे थे, इसलिए भीड़-सी हो गई थी।



बुद्ध के पास आई। वह कहने लगी, तथागत, मैं एक नर्तकी हूं। आज नगर सेठ के घर पर मेरा कार्यक्रम पहले से तय था और मैं भूल चुकी थी। आपका धन्यवाद कि मुझे याद दिलाया। थोड़ी देर बाद एक डाकू ने अकेले में उनका धन्यवाद यह कहकर किया कि आपसे झूठ नहीं बोलूंगा। आपने बिल्कुल सही समय पर मुझे अपने काम पर जाने की याद दिलाई, आज डाका डालने

अचानक भीड़ में से एक महिला निकलकर

बहुत दूर निकलना है। उसके बाद धीरे-धीरे चलता हुआ एक वृद्ध उनके पास आकर कहने लगा, मैं जिंदगी भर दुनियादारी के पीछे भागता रहा। लेकिन आज आपकी बातों से मेरी आंखें खुल गई हैं। अब मैं पैसा और परिवार के पीछे भागने के बजाय ईश्वर की आराधना में ही अपना ध्यान लगाऊंगा। बुद्ध ने आनंद से कहा, देखो, प्रवचन मैंने एक ही दिया, लेकिन उसका हर किसी ने अलग-अलग मतलब निकाला। जिसका नजरिया जैसा होता है, वह चीजों को उसी तरह देखता है।

-संकलित

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष 12 अंक 79

मोदी को बढ़त

भारत जैसे जटिल राजनीतिक परिदृश्य में एक्जिट पोल पर भरोसा करना ठीक नहीं। उनके प्रादर्श में अक्सर दिक्कत रहती है जो मत हिस्सेदारी से लेकर सीटों तक में नजर

बीते चार आम चुनावों में से दो में एक्जिट स्थानों पर चुनाव तब तक खत्म नहीं होते

जब तक आखिरी वोट न गिन लिया जाए। कई बार दर्जनों एक्जिट पोल गलत होते हैं। ऑस्ट्रेलिया में सत्ताधारी सरकार की चौंकाने वाली जीत ने तमाम पूर्वानुमानों को झुठलाकर यह दिखाया।

उस दृष्टि से देखें तो सभी एक्जिट पोल पोल सटीक नहीं रहे हैं। दुनिया में अन्य एक खास दायरे में रहते हैं। 2019 के आम चुनाव का मामला भी अलग नहीं है। मतदान

समाप्त होने के बाद एक्जिट पोल के नतीजे जारी कर दिए गए हैं। संभावना यही है कि ये एक खास ढरें पर आधारित हैं। बहरहाल इन एक्जिट पोल की सटीकता पर सवाल होते हुए भी निष्कर्ष यही है कि राष्ट्रीय जनतांत्रिक गठबंधन लोकसभा में आराम से बहुमत हासिल कर लेगा।

अगर ऐसा होता है तो कई नतीजे निकाले जा सकते हैं। पहली बात, राजस्थान, मध्य प्रदेश और छत्तीसगढ़ के विधानसभा चुनाव आम चुनाव के सही संकेतक नहीं रहे और आम चुनाव में राष्ट्रवाद एक बड़ा कारक बनकर उभरा। इसके अलावा प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी की लोकप्रियता उन राज्यों में भी पार्टी को जिताने में सक्षम है जहां स्थानीय नेता या सरकारें अलोकप्रिय रहे। कई लोगों

ने अनुमान लगाया था कि मोदी के नाम पर वोट मांगे जाने पर अंतर आएगा और एक्जिट पोल सुझाते हैं कि ऐसा हुआ है। राष्ट्रहित से जुड़े निर्णय लेने में सक्षम नेता के रूप में मोदी की छवि संभवतः कांग्रेस की राजनीति पर भारी पड़ी है।

कांग्रेस की चुनावी नीतियां समाज के असंतृष्ट धडों पर ध्यान केंद्रित करने वाली रहीं। परंतु तथ्य यह है कि राहुल गांधी भले ही एक राजनेता के रूप में बहुत अधिक बेहतर हुए हों लेकिन अभी भी उनका कद ऐसा नहीं है कि वह मोदी की लोकप्रियता को गंभीर चुनौती दे पाएं।

एक्जिट पोल के आंकड़ों के मुताबिक कांग्रेस का प्रदर्शन 2014 की स्तब्ध कर देने वाली हार से कुछ बेहतर रहेगा लेकिन अभी

बिनय सिन्हा

भी वह भाजपा से बहुत पीछे रहेगी। इस पुराने राजनीतिक दल को अपने नेतृत्व की कमियों को लेकर गहरा आत्मावलोकन करना होगा।

अगर पोल सही हैं और राजग दोबारा आसानी से जीतता है तो मोदी को जीत से मिलने वाली इस राजनीतिक पुंजी का इस्तेमाल लंबे समय से रुके आर्थिक सुधारों में करना चाहिए। मोदी तेज आर्थिक वृद्धि और रोजगार सूजन का वादा कर सत्ता में आए थे। वह आर्थिक मंदी और ग्रामीण अर्थव्यवस्था के संकट की वजह से दोबारा चुने जाने की मुश्किल लड़ाई लड़ रहे हैं। अब आम चुनाव खत्म हो चुके हैं, इसलिए आगे कुछ राजकोषीय मितव्ययिता बरतना और भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था को प्रभावित कर रहे बुनियादी तथा चक्रीय कारकों को हल करना जरूरी होगा। राजग के प्रदर्शन को मजबूत बनाने का समय पूरा हो चुका है, इसलिए यह मोदी के 2022 के बेहतर समाज के लक्ष्य को पूरा करने के लिए आवश्यक काम की अहमियत को समझने का उपयुक्त समय होगा। इसके लिए श्रम एवं रोजगार समेत बहुत से कानूनों में त्वरित बदलावों की जरूरत होगी।

सरकार को यह सुनिश्चित करना होगा कि विनिर्माताओं और निर्यातकों के सामने आ रही मौजूदा दिक्कतों को खत्म किया जाए। उसे शिक्षा और कौशल पर ध्यान देना होगा। उम्मीद है कि राजनीति हो चुकी है, इसलिए आगे सभी काम आर्थिक मोर्चे पर

प्रज्ञा ठाकुर की जीत के क्या होंगे मानी?

ऐसा कभी नहीं हुआ कि किसी एक वर्ग ने भारतीय राष्ट्रवाद पर इस तरह अपने अधिकार का दावा किया हो और साथ ही गांधी की नीतियों पर चलने का छन्न भी रचा हो। ऐसे में अगर प्रधानमंत्री मोदी प्रज्ञा ठाकुर को अपने हृदय में माफ नहीं भी करते तो क्या फर्क पड़ जाएगा।

कीनन 'साध्वी' प्रज्ञा सिंह ने एक उपलब्धि तो हासिल कर ली है। उन्होंने नरेंद्र मोदी और अमित शाह को रक्षात्मक रुख अपनाने पर मजबूर कर दिया है। ऐसा उनके अलावा कोई और नहीं कर सका है। उन्होंने एक और ऐसा काम किया जिससे उनके पार्टी नेतृत्व को नफरत है। प्रज्ञा ने पार्टी नेतृत्व से सुर्खियां तय करने की ताकत भी छीन ली है। लगातार पांच वर्ष तक सुर्खियां तय करने और उन पर नियंत्रण रखने की शानदार नीति के बाद भाजपा का अभियान जिस तरह समाप्त हुआ, पार्टी वैसा चाहती तो नहीं होगी। सार्वजनिक जीवन में मोदी और

शाह के सामने पहली बार ऐसा मसला था जिसका बचाव करना मुश्किल था।

केंद्रीय मंत्री अनंत कुमार हेगड़े और आईटी सेल प्रमुख अमित मालवीय समेत कुछ ट्विटर प्रेमी उनके बचाव में कूदे और उन्होंने गांधी बनाम गोडसे की बहस को आगे ले जाने की कोशिश की। इन सबको चुप करा दिया गया। बीते पांच वर्षों ने हमें दिखाया है कि भाजपा, अपनी पार्टी के किसी भी व्यक्ति द्वारा किसी अन्य व्यक्ति या समुदाय के बारे में कही गई खराब से खराब बात का बचाव कर सकती है। याद कीजिए 'अली बनाम बजरंग बली', 'ईद पर बिजली हो तो दीवाली पर क्यों नहीं ', 'मोदी की सेना', 'अवैध प्रवासी दीमक हैं। या राहुल को 'पप्पू' और प्रियंका गांधी

परंतु महात्मा गांधी के बारे में ऐसा करने की सोचना भी नहीं चाहिए। कुछ लोग गोष्ठियों और शाखाओं में उनकी गलतियों के बारे में फुसफुसाते होंगे, उन्हें विभाजन का उत्तरदायी बताते होंगे लेकिन सार्वजनिक रूप से कभी नहीं। बीते सात दशक अपने वैचारिक अभिभावक आरएसएस को कतई नहीं।

भाजपा ने इस भगवाधारी हिंदुत्व आइकॉन को जो कि आतंकवाद के मामले में जमानत पर बाहर है, यह दलील देते हुए चुनाव मैदान में उतारा कि जब तक कोई दोषी सिद्ध न हो, निर्दोष है। उनके मुताबिक महात्मा गांधी का हत्यारा देशभक्त है। आप जिसे राष्ट्रपिता कहते हैं उसकी विरासत को चुनौती कैसे दे सकते हैं ? खासकर उनकी 150वीं वर्षगांठ वाले वर्ष में। प्रधानमंत्री खुद विदेशी राजनेताओं को महात्मा गांधी से जुड़े स्थानों तक ले जाने में गौरव महसूस करते हैं। दक्षिण अफ्रीका के जिस पीटरमारिट्जबर्ग स्टेशन पर गांधी को ट्रेन से जबरन उतारा गया था, वहां ट्रेन यात्रा कर चुके हैं, उन्होंने दांडी यात्रा की 89वीं वर्षगांठ पर ब्लॉग लिखा, चंपारण सत्याग्रह की शताब्दी पर वहां पहुंचे, साबरमती में गांधी आश्रम में चरखा चलाते हुए तस्वीर खिंचाई और गांधी के गोल चश्मे को स्वच्छ भारत अभियान का लोगो बनाया। प्रज्ञा ठाकुर न तो वोट जुटा सकती हैं और न ही पार्टी



शेखर गुप्ता

चुनाव की बात

की नीतिगत स्थिति में उनका कोई दखल है, उन्होंने प्रधानमंत्री और अपने पार्टी प्रमुख को जबरदस्त झटका दिया है। वे शिकायत भी नहीं कर सकते क्योंकि उन्हें गुमनामी से खींचकर तो वही लाए हैं।

मोदी के साथ संवाददाता सम्मेलन में शाह ने कहा कि कांग्रेस ने भगवा आतंकवाद का जुमला छेड़कर हिंदुओं को बदनाम करने का प्रयास किया और उनकी पार्टी का प्रज्ञा को उतारना कांग्रेस के खिलाफ 'सत्याग्रह' था।

यहां दो बातों पर ध्यान दें। पहली बात, पार्टी अब स्वयं को साध्वी प्रज्ञा से दूर नहीं कर सकती। वजह एकदम साफ है, उसने उन्हें

जानबुझकर चुना था ताकि वे अपनी बात प्रमुखता से रख सकें। दूसरा, यह विडंबना ही थी कि अपने राजनीतिक वक्तव्य को स्पष्ट करने के लिए शाह को गांधी की पहचान रहे 'सत्याग्रह' शब्द का इस्तेमाल करना पडा। जब आप गांधी के अहिंसा के विचार का इस्तेमाल उनके हत्यारे को देशभक्त करार देने वाले व्यक्ति के बचाव के लिए इस्तेमाल करते हैं तो आप समझ जाइए कि आप कहां खडे हैं।

जीवन होया राजनीति, एक सिद्धांत यह है कि सही वजह होने पर भी कभी गलत काम नहीं करना चाहिए। हमें पता है कि भाजपा दिग्विजय सिंह से हिसाब बराबर करना चाहती थी। 'हिंदू आतंकवाद' को लेकर कांग्रेस में सबसे मुखर वही रहे हैं। उन्होंने तो नई दिल्ली के बटला हाउस में हुई मुठभेड़ और वहां शहीद हुए पुलिस अधिकारी मोहन चंद्र शर्मा की शहादत पर भी सवाल उठा दिए थे। शर्मा को भी हेमंत करकरे की तरह मरणोपरांत अशोक चक्र से सम्मानित किया गया। 26/11 को आरएसएस का षडयंत्र बताने वाली एक किताब की रिलीज पर भी उन्होंने ऐसी ही बात कही।

भाजपा का मानना था कि उनके सामने हिंदू आतंकवाद के आरोप में गिरफ्तार लोगों में से सबसे कट्टर चेहरे को उतारा जाए। पिछले महीने के आखिर में प्रज्ञा ठाकुर ने हेमंत करकरे की बुराई की और दावा किया कि वह उनके शाप से मरे हैं और उनका परिवार बरबाद हुआ है (याद रहे करकरे के निधन के छह वर्ष बाद 29 सितंबर को उनकी पत्नी का भी निधन हो गया था। यह तारीख मालेगांव धमाकों की बरसी भी है)। उन्होंने बहादरी बताते हुए कहा कि वह बाबरी मस्जिद के गुंबद पर चढीं और उसे ढहाया। इसके बाद से पार्टी ने नुकसान कम करने की कोशिश की। पहले उनको मौन व्रत पर भेजा गया और भाजपा ने दिग्विजय और कांग्रेस पर आरोप लगाया कि उन्होंने भी मोहन चंद्र शर्मा का यूं ही अपमान किया था। परंतु गोडसे की तारीफ ने पार्टी के पास छिपने की जगह नहीं छोड़ी है।

सन 1989 से भाजपा की नीति रही है, धीरे-धीरे आक्रामक होना। इसकी शुरुआत लालकृष्ण आडवाणी के अयोध्या आंदोलन के साथ हुई। इर्दगिर्द के चरमपंथी तत्त्वों को निरंतर बढावा दिया जाता रहा। इस बीच कुछ को खारिज भी किया गया, मसलन साध्वी ऋतंभरा, प्रवीण तोगडिया और यहां तक कि विनय कटियार। जबकि उमा भारती और साक्षी महाराज, साध्वी निरंजन ज्योति (रामजादे और हरामजादे वाला बयान) तथा योगी आदित्यनाथ जैसे लोग मुख्यधारा

यह नीति तीन दशक तक कारगर रही लेकिन इसका अंत होना ही था। हममें से कुछ लोगों को इसका अंदाजा हो गया था। दादरी में गोरक्षकों द्वारा अखलाक की हत्या के बाद मैंने इसी स्तंभ में ऐसा कह दिया था। प्रज्ञा उस कड़ी का सबसे ताजा और शर्मिंदा करने वाला उदाहरण हैं। इसे गलती भी नहीं कहा जा सकता क्योंकि पार्टी अध्यक्ष अमित शाह ने खुद हमें बताया कि यह सोच समझकर उठाया गया कदम था, सत्याग्रह था। यह मूर्खतापूर्ण बयान था जिसने उनके इरादे स्पष्ट किए। यह जीत के अतिआत्मविश्वास और राष्ट्रवाद की गलत समझ से उपजा था।

यह मान्यता इस बात से उपजी है कि हिंदुत्व ने ही भारत को एकजुट रखा है। वह हिंदुत्व को आरएसएस की हिंदी प्रदेश की दृष्टि से जोड़कर भी देखती है। एक आस्था, एक कौम, एक भाषा और एक राष्ट्र। भारत ऐसा नहीं है। वह अत्यंत विविधतापूर्ण देश है। मोदी को याद रखना चाहिए कि अगर वह पूर्ण बहुमत पा जाते हैं तो भी दक्षिण के चार राज्य आंध्र प्रदेश, तेलंगाना, तमिलनाडु और केरल में भाजपा को 103 में से शायद दो सीट भी मुश्किल से मिलें। ऐसे तमाम प्रदेशों में इस हिंदूकरण को लेकर विरोध उत्पन्न होगा। हिंदुकरण की यह सोच हमारे पुरखों की सोच से उलट है जिन्होंने राज्यों का एक संघ बनाया और भारत खूबसूरती से एकजुट रहा। यही नहीं वह दशक दर दशक अधिक मजबूत और सुरक्षित होता गया। जबकि वैचारिक आधार पर गठित पड़ोसी देश पाकिस्तान बिखर गया।

विविधता को लेकर हमारी सहजता आधुनिक विश्व को हमारा तोहफा है। ऐसे समय में जबिक अलग- अलग संस्कृतियों का साथ रहना मुश्किल है, वहां यह एक बड़ी खूबी है। ऐसे में अगर भारत दुनिया में विविधता का सबसे बड़ा ब्रांड है तो स्विस दार्शनिक कार्ल जंग के शब्दों में महात्मा गांधी इस ब्रांड का सबसे बड़ा प्रतीक हैं।

नेहरू को गाली देना, उनसे असहमत होना आसान है। कुछ लोग इंदिरा और राजीव गांधी के हत्यारों को पहले ही नायक मानते हैं। जो चरम हिंदु दक्षिणपंथी महात्मा गांधी को मुस्लिम तुष्टीकरण की राजनीति का संस्थापक मानते हैं, उनके लिए भी गांधी को निशाना बनाना आत्मघाती है। मोदी का यह कथन ईमानदार हो सकता है कि वह प्रज्ञा को कभी माफ नहीं करेंगे। उनको यह प्रार्थना भी करनी चाहिए कि गुरुवार को आ रहे चुनाव नतीजों में उनकी जीत न हो। अगर वह जीतीं तो पांच साल तक गांधी के नाम पर शासन चलाने वाले दल को संसद में एक ऐसे सदस्य की मौजूदगी की शर्मिंदगी उठानी होगी जो गांधी के हत्यारे को देशभक्त बताती है।

चुनावी नतीजों से तय होगी बाजार की आगे की चाल

आम चुनावों के नतीजे इस हफ्ते घोषित हो जाएंगे। पहले हमने नई सरकार आने पर कारोबार संबंधी सीमित अवधि के कुछ विचारों पर गौर किया था। पुराने आंकड़ों और आख्यानों से लगता है कि खंडित जनादेश होने की स्थिति में खासी अनिश्चितता का माहौल रह सकता है। बाजार के लिहाज से इसका मतलब कई महीनों की उठापटक हो सकता है। पिछले हफ्ते मैंने इस अनुमान के आधार पर सूचकांकों का जिक्र किया था कि निफ्टी (और निफ्टी बैंक सुचकांक) में 30 मई तक 5 फीसदी या अधिक का बदलाव हो सकता है। इस संभावना से इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता है कि बाजार में उतार-चढ़ाव का दौर जून में भी जारी रह सकता है, खासकर कई दलों की मिली-जुली सरकार बनने की स्थिति में। ऐसा होने पर कारोबारी पूरे जून में पांच फीसदी या अधिक बदलाव वाले सूचकांकों में कारोबार को तरजीह दे सकते हैं। अब हम बाजार परिदृश्य की

लंबी अवधि एवं विस्तृत तस्वीर पर गौर करते हैं। आर्थिक हालात दुनिया भर में खराब हो रहे हैं और भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था भी अपनी वृद्धि दर को बनाए रखने के लिए जदोजहद कर रही है। व्यापार युद्ध, ईरान के साथ अमेरिकी तनाव और ब्रेक्सिट को लेकर मची अफरातफरी जैसे कारणों से वैश्विक हालात और भी बिगड़ सकते हैं।

मसलन, बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियां (एमएनसी) अगर कड़े सीमा शुल्क प्रावधानों से बचने के लिए अपनी विनिर्माण गतिविधियों को चीन से हटाकर भारत में स्थानांतरित कर देती हैं तो भारत को उससे फायदा हो सकता है। अगर विदेशी पोर्टफोलियो निवेशक (एफपीआई) यह मानते हैं कि अन्य उभरते बाजारों की तुलना में भारत की वृद्धि संभावनाएं बेहतर हैं तो भी भारत को फायदा हो सकता है। लेकिन भारत में प्रतिस्पर्द्धी घरेलु विनिर्माण परिवेश का अभाव है। कंपनियों के नतीजे भी आर्थिक गतिविधियों में तेजी के खास संकेत नहीं दे रहे हैं। असल में, अगर हम हाई-स्पीड डेटा में सुस्ती और मॉनसून की उम्मीद से कम संभावनाओं पर गौर करते हैं तो हालात और भी खराब हो सकते हैं।

जो भी सरकार सत्ता में आती



बाजार संकेतक

देवांग्शु दत्ता

है उसे कुछ लोक-लुभावन मदों में व्यय करना होता है। इसका मतलब है कि हमें सार्वजनिक वित्त की स्थिति में और भी गिरावट के लिए तैयार रहना होगा। उसी के साथ सरकार को वस्तु एवं सेवा कर (जीएसटी) की प्रक्रिया एवं कर दरों और ऋणशोधन अक्षमता दिवालिया संहिता (आईबीसी) की समीक्षा के बारे में भी सोचना होगा। नई सरकार को पूरी तरह नाकाम हो चुकी डेटा संग्रहण और विस्तार की समूची प्रक्रिया में सुधार करना होगा। भाजपा सरकार को ये काम करने में हिचक होगी। यही वजह है कि गैर- भाजपा गठबंधन के ही देश की आर्थिक हालत दुरुस्त करने का काम जल्द शुरू करने के अधिक अवसर हैं।

शेयर बाजार का मूल्यांकन आर्थिक वृद्धि या मूल्य जैसे किसी भी पैमाने के आधार पर उचित ठहराए जा सकने वाले मानकों से काफी अधिक है। गत 18 महीनों में भुगतान में चुक के सभी मामलों के चलते ऋण बाजार भी डांवाडोल है। भारी राजकोषीय घाटे की भरपाई के लिए सरकारी उधारी बढ़ने से कंपनियां बॉन्ड बाजार दरिकनार कर दी जाएंगी।

ऐसे में बाजार के धराशायी होने की उम्मीद करना समझदारी होगी और हमें उसके लिए तैयार रहना होगा। इसका यह मतलब नहीं है कि आपको अपना समचा पोर्टफोलियो बेच देना चाहिए और इक्विटी बाजार से निकल जाना चाहिए। अगर आप शेयर चुनने में यकीन रखते हैं तो अपनी इक्विटी होल्डिंग्स पर नजर डालें और खुद से यह सवाल करें: अगर स्टॉक का बाजार मूल्य 35-50 फीसदी तक गिर जाता है तो इनमें से कितने स्टॉक आप आसानी से बनाए रखेंगे ? इनमें से कितने

स्टॉक अगले तीन वर्षों के लिए सुविधाजनक ढंग से रख पाएंगे? ऐसे में जिन शेयरों में आप

खुद को सहज नहीं महसूस कर रहे हैं, उन्हें बेचकर मुनाफा कमाइए और उस फंड के कुछ हिस्से को संकट के समय सबसे सुरक्षित मानी जाने वाली परिसंपत्ति सोने में निवेश कर दें। पोर्टफोलियो का बाकी हिस्सा अपने पास बनाए रखें। आप जिस स्टॉक को बनाए रखने के लिए तैयार हैं. उसके प्रति अपनी प्रतिबद्धता बढ़ा दें। अगर आपके पसंदीदा स्टॉक की कीमतें गिरती हैं तो उसके और शेयर खरीदकर औसत कीमत में कमी लाएं।

अगर आप किसी इक्विटी म्युचुअल फंड पोर्टफोलियो के प्रणालीगत निष्क्रिय निवेशक हैं तो बाजार गिरते ही आपको अपना निवेश बढाने की जरूरत है। एक नजरिया तो पेशबंदी का है। अगर बाजार 10 फीसदी तक गिरता है तो आपको अपनी मासिक प्रतिबद्धता 10 फीसदी बढ़ा लें। इसी तरह बाजार के 20 फीसदी गिरने पर अपनी प्रतिबद्धता 20 फीसदी बढा दें। सिद्धांत वही रहेगा। भारतीय बाजार में मंदी का वक्त काफी बुरा हो सकता है। लेकिन वह तुलनात्मक रूप से कम समय के लिए होता है। हमने ऐसे कई दौर देखे हैं जब सूचकांकों में 12 महीने के भीतर 50 फीसदी तक का नकसान हुआ है। लेकिन शायद ही तीन साल का ऐसा दौर रहा है जब सूचकांकों ने शुद्ध बढ़त नहीं हासिल की है। अगर यह मंदी वाला बाजार है तो चक्रीय परिपाटी को भी ध्यान में रखें।

इक्विटी के सुरक्षित निवेश बन जाने का एक बिंदु भी है। निफ्टी का औसत मूल्यांकन 18-19 दायरे के पीई अनुपात में रहा है यानी उसके माध्यिका एवं औसत मूल्य दोनों ही इस दायरे में रहे हैं। तीन फीसदी का सुधार होने के बाद अब पीई 25 से ऊपर है। अगर बाजार पीई 18 से नीचे गिरता है तो मोटे तौर पर ऊंचे स्तर से 35 फीसदी कम मूल्य होने पर सूचकांक परिसंपत्ति में भारी खरीद के लिए तैयार रहें। बाजार के फिर से तेजी पकड़ने की गारंटी है और पूरी संभावना है कि दो साल के भीतर आप 50 फीसदी प्रतिफल हासिल कर लेंगे।

1,070 नेताओं पर संगीन

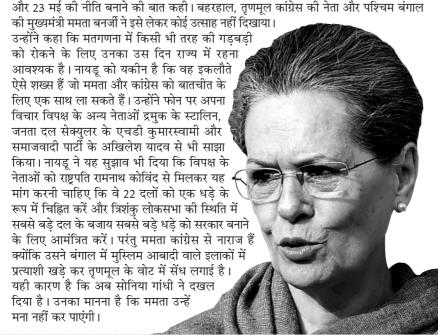
आपराधिक मामले दर्ज हैं जिनमें

मुल्यांकन के संदर्भ में,

कानाफूसी

चाय पार्टी का राज?

सोनिया गांधी ने विपक्षी दलों को आगामी 23 मई को चाय पर निमंत्रित किया। इसके पीछे क्या वजह थी ? साझा मोर्चा बनाने की दिशा में ऐसी पहली पहल तेलुगू देशम पार्टी के नेता चंद्रबाबू नायडू ने की थी। उन्होंने कांग्रेस समेत तमाम गैर भाजपा दलों तक पहुंच बनाकर 21 मई को मुलाकात करने



आपका पक्ष

लोकतंत्र में हिंसा की जगह नहीं

लोकसभा चुनाव प्रचार का शांतिपूर्ण

रहना जितना प्रशंसनीय है, उतना ही निंदनीय है कोलकाता में हुई झड़प और हिंसा। इस लोकसभा चुनाव में ऐसी पहली घटना है जिसमें हिंसा के कारण रोड शो को रोकना पड़ा। केंद्र में सत्तारूढ़ पार्टी के अध्यक्ष अमित शाह का कहना है कि अगर केंद्रीय रिजर्व पुलिस बल के जवान नहीं होते तो शायद वह जिंदा नहीं लौटते। हो सकता है कि भाजपा का यह बयान राजनीति से प्रेरित हो, लेकिन कोलकाता में हुई हिंसा राज्य सरकार और प्रशासन की संलिप्तता को दर्शाता है। लोकतंत्र में प्रत्येक व्यक्ति को अपनी बात कहने का हक है, लेकिन हिंसा और सार्वजनिक संपत्तियों को नष्ट करना कहां तक उचित है? नेताओं को अपने अच्छे व्यवहार और विचार से वोट जुटाने का प्रयास करना चाहिए, अपने घोषणा पत्रों के माध्यम से मतदाताओं को आकर्षित करना चाहिए। अलग-अलग राज्यों में राजनीतिक दलों और प्रत्याशियों



ने यही किया है। 19वीं सदी के समाज सुधारक ईश्वर चंद्र विद्यासागर की मूर्ति तोड़े जाने की घटना दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण होने के साथ निंदनीय भी है। राज्य की स्थिति इतनी बिगड़ गई है कि उसमें चुनाव 🗄 आयोग को हस्तक्षेप करना पड़ा और दो बड़े अधिकारियों को तत्काल प्रभाव से हटाना पड़ा। तृणमूल

लोकसभा चुनाव के सातवें चरण से पहले कोलकाता में हिंसा की घटनाएं हुई थीं

बाहरी बता कर तथा उनके नेताओं की रैलियों को रोक कर अपनी हताशा का सुबूत दिया है। भाजपा कार्यकर्ता प्रियंका शर्मा को कांग्रेस शुरुआत से भाजपा को : मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी पर बने मीम : आपराधिक मामले दर्ज हैं। इनमें से

पाठक अपनी राय हमें इस पते पर भेज सकते हैं : संपादक, बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड लिमिटेड, 4, बहादुर

शाह जफर मार्ग, नई दिल्ली - 110002. आप हमें ईमेल भी कर सकते हैं : lettershindi@bsmail.in

उस जगह का उल्लेख अवश्य करें, जहां से आप ईमेल कर रहे हैं।

को शेयर करने की जो सजा मिली, उसकी लोकतंत्र में ऐसी उम्मीद नहीं की जा सकती। देश में अब ऐसी व्यवस्था लागू करने की जरूरत है, जिसमें हिंसा, बंद, हड़ताल और रैली इत्यादि की जिम्मेदारी तय की जाए। राजनीतिक हिंसा या चुनावी हिंसा रोकने के लिए नियम बने। दुर्गेश शर्मा, गोरखपुर

नेताओं पर बढ़ते आपराधिक मामले

एसोसिएशन ऑफ डेमोक्रेटिक रिफॉर्म्स (एडीआर) की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार नेताओं पर बढ़ रहे आपराधिक मामले लोकतंत्र के लिए चिंता का विषय है। 2019 के लोकसभा चुनाव को मद्देनजर कराए गए सर्वे के नतीजे बताते हैं कि कुल 7,928 उम्मीदवारों में से 19 प्रतिशत या 1,500 उम्मीदवारों पर

हत्या और बलात्कार जैसी घटनाएं शामिल हैं। सत्तारूढ़ भाजपा के कुल 433 प्रत्याशियों में से 175 प्रत्याशियों पर आपराधिक मामले दर्ज हैं जो पिछले चुनाव के मुकाबले 7 प्रतिशत अधिक है। वहीं कांग्रेस के 124 प्रत्याशियों पर आपराधिक मामले दर्ज हैं जो पिछले चुनाव की तुलना में 16 प्रतिशत अधिक है। वामपंथी दल माकपा में पिछले चुनाव में 35 प्रतिशत उम्मीदवारों पर आपराधिक मामले दर्ज थे जो इस बार बढ कर 58 प्रतिशत हो गए। इस समस्या का समाधान उन राजनीतिक पार्टियों को करना चाहिए जो ऐसे दागी उम्मीदवारों को इतनी बड़ी संख्या में चुनावी मैदान में उतारते हैं। हरेक लोकसभा चुनाव में ऐसे उम्मीदवारों की संख्या बढ़ती ही जा रही है। राजनीति में पारदर्शिता और स्वच्छता बरकरार रखने के लिए संसद में बेदाग छवि वाले राजनेताओं की आवश्यकता है।

काले पर परदा

देशी बैंकों में भारतीयों के कालेधन को लेकर वर्षों से मामला गरमाता रहा है। देश की जनता जानना चाहती है कि आखिर कौन लोग हैं जो नियम-कायदों को धता बताते हुए देश का पैसा विदेशी बैंकों में भर रहे हैं और अमीर बनते जा रहे हैं। लेकिन ऐसा करने वालों के नाम कभी उजागर नहीं हो पाए। जब-जब सरकार से इस बारे में जानकारी मांगी जाती है, वह गोपनीयता का हवाला देकर कोई भी जानकारी देने से मना कर देती है। हाल में सूचना के अधिकार के तहत दायर एक आवेदन में कालेधन से जुड़े मामलों में कार्रवाई की जानकारी मांगी गई थी। लेकिन सरकार ने मना कर दिया। वित्त मंत्रालय का कहना है कि कालेधन के बारे में अब तक जो जानकारी स्विटजरलैंड से मिली है, उसे गोपनीयता शर्तों के कारण साझा नहीं किया जा सकता। ऐसा पहली बार नहीं हुआ है। आरटीआइ के तहत पहले भी इस तरह की अर्जियां डाली गईं, लेकिन सरकार हमेशा मना करती रही। सरकार का गोपनीयता का तर्क अपनी जगह है, लेकिन ऐसे मामलों में अगर कोई मांगी गई जानकारी नहीं मिलती तो इससे संदेह ही पैदा होता है। लगता है सरकार असलियत को छुपा रही है।

कालेधन का मुद्दा हमेशा से संवेदनशील रहा है। खासकर आम चुनाव आते हैं, यह मुद्दा बोतल के जिन्न की तरह बाहर निकल आता है। सारे राजनीतिक दल कालेधन के मुद्दे को जोरशोर से उठाते रहे हैं, एक-दूसरे पर आरोप मढ़ते रहे हैं, और हर दल यही वादा करता रहा है कि सत्ता में आते ही वह विदेश में जमा कालाधन वापस लाएगा। आम जनता के लिए कालेधन का मसला भ्रष्टाचार जितना ही महत्त्वपूर्ण है। लोगों का मानना है कि अगर भारत इन दोनों समस्याओं से पार पा जाए तो देश में ख़ुशहाली आ सकती है। यही चुनावी घुट्टी लोगों को पिलाई जाती है। लेकिन उम्मीदें तब टूटती हैं, जब न विदेशों में कालाधन रखने वालों के नाम उजागर होते हैं न ही यह पता चलता है कि ऐसे आर्थिक अपराधियों के खिलाफ क्या कदम उठाए जा रहे हैं। पिछले आमचुनाव में लोगों को सपना दिखाया गया था कि कालाधन वापस लाया जाएगा और हरेक नागरिक के खाते में पैसे डाले जाएंगे, क्योंकि जो पैसा विदेशी बैंकों में जमा है वह देश की जनता का है। लेकिन क्या ऐसा हकीकत में हुआ?

इसलिए अगर सरकार गोपनीयता के नाम पर कोई जानकारी नहीं देती है तो संदेह और पुख्ता होते हैं। यह संदेश जाता है कि कहीं न कहीं ऐसे लोगों को बचाया जा रहा है जो भ्रष्टाचार में लिप्त हैं। आम धारणा यही है कि कर चोरी के जरिए जमा बिना हिसाब-किताब वाला पैसा कालाधन है और लोग उसे ऐसे दूसरे मुल्कों में सुरक्षित रखते हैं जहां कर कानून उदार और आसान हैं। कानून की नजर में ऐसे लोग आर्थिक अपराधियों की श्रेणी में आते हैं। तो फिर ऐसे लोगों के नाम उजागर होने में क्या दिक्कत होनी चाहिए? हालांकि सर्वोच्च अदालत ने कालेधन की जांच के लिए सिमिति भी बनाई थी, विशेष जांच दल को इसकी जांच भी सौंपी गई, कार्रवाई की दिशा में कदम भी बढ़े, लेकिन आज तक कोई नतीजा सामने नहीं आया। यह भी हैरान करने वाली बात है कि वित्त मंत्रालय को इस बात का अनुमान ही नहीं है कि अर्थव्यवस्था में और इसके बाहर कितना कालाधन चलन में है। इसलिए कालेधन की समस्या से निपटने में सरकार के प्रयास निराश करने वाले ही हैं।

बहा जात है पानी

गरमी के मौसम में देश के लगभग सभी इलाकों में जल संकट गहरा जाता है। कई जगहों पर पीने के पानी के लिए भी लोगों को काफी जद्दोजहद करनी पड़ती है। हर साल इस समस्या से पार पाने के उपायों पर विचार करने का भरोसा जगाया जाता है, मगर हकीकत यही है कि स्थिति सुधरने के बजाय बिगड़ती ही गई है। अब देश के बांधों में जल भंडारण का स्तर चिंताजनक स्तर तक नीचे आ गया है। इसके मद्देनजर केंद्रीय जल आयोग ने महाराष्ट्र, गुजरात, कर्नाटक, आंध्र प्रदेश, तेलंगाना और तमिलनाडु सरकारों को सलाह दी है कि वे पानी का समझदारी से उपयोग करें और जब तक इन बांधों में जल भंडारण संतोषजनक स्तर पर नहीं पहुंच जाता, तब तक केवल पेयजल के लिए इसका उपयोग किया जाए। इन राज्यों में ऐसे इक्यानबे बांध हैं, जिनके जरिए पीने के पानी और सिंचाई आदि के लिए आपूर्ति की जाती है। इन बांधों की निगरानी केंद्रीय जल आयोग करता है। देखना है, राज्य सरकारें जल आयोग की सलाह पर कितना अमल करती हैं।

बांधों में जल भंडारण पहाड़ी निदयों और बरसात के पानी से होता है। उस जल को एक तय सीमा के बाद सिंचाई, कारखानों और पेयजल के रूप में उपयोग के लिए छोड़ा जाता है। इन नदियों से इकटठा होने वाले पानी को लेकर राज्यों के बीच करार है। सबका हिस्सा तय है। पर जब जल संकट गहराता है, तो कई बार राज्यों के बीच तनातनी की स्थिति भी बन जाती है। समुचित पानी न मिल पाने के कारण किसान आंदोलन पर उतर आते हैं। इन सबके मद्देनजर किसी अप्रिय विवाद से बचने के लिए बांधों से अतिरिक्त पानी छोड़ दिया जाता है। इस तरह बांधों में पानी का स्तर नीचे चला जाता है। फिर कई बार मानसून ठीक न रहने, निदयों के रास्तों में अवरोध आ जाने या बीच में ही उनका पानी रोक लिए जाने की वजह से भी बांधों के जल भंडारण पर प्रतिकूल प्रभाव पड़ता है। पर इन कारणों के अलावा सबसे गंभीर कारण है, पानी का अतार्किक उपयोग। इस मामले में समुचित नियंत्रण न होने के कारण पानी का बहुत सारा हिस्सा तय क्षेत्रों को मिलने के बजाय व्यावसायिक-व्यापारिक हितों की भेंट चढ़ जाता है।

निदयों और बांधों के जल स्तर में गिरावट की कुछ वजहें साफ हैं। छिपी बात नहीं है कि जिस तेजी से बड़े कल-कारखानों को बढ़ावा दिया जा रहा है, उसी गति से उनमें पानी की खपत भी बढ़ रही है। आज स्थिति यह है कि जो पानी शहरी आबादी को पेयजल के रूप में और किसानों को सिंचाई के लिए मिलना चाहिए, वह चीनी मिलों, शीतल पेय या शराब बनाने वाले कारखानों और बोतलबंद पानी बनाने वाली कंपनियों को दे दिया जाता है। पहाड़ी इलाकों से गुजरने वाली कई निदयों में सीधे पाईप डाल कर बोतलबंद पानी के लिए जल खींच लिया जाता है। इस तरह न सिर्फ पेयजल की आपूर्ति बाधित होती है, बल्कि बांधों के जल स्तर को बनाए रखने में परेशानी पैदा होती है, क्योंकि कारोबारी लोगों का दबाव इन बांधों पर बना रहता है। गरमी में वैसे ही पानी की खपत बढ़ जाती है, पेयजल की आपूर्ति का दबाव रहता है, पर कारखानों को दिए जाने वाले पानी की मात्रा में कटौती नहीं की जाती। इसकी वजह से बांधों का जल स्तर गिरता है। इसे संतुलित किए बिना समस्या का समाधान संभव नहीं होगा।

कल्पमधा

खून की नदियां बहाने के बजाय एक आसू पोछने में अधिक सच्ची प्रसिद्धि है।

-बायरन

तेल संकट और भारत

जयंतीलाल भंडारी

तेल संकट से निपटने के लिए जरूरी है कि सरकार एकीकृत ऊर्जा नीति तैयार करे। देश में बिजली से चलने वाले वाहनों को बढ़ावा देना होगा। इलेक्ट्रिक कारों पर करों की दर घटानी होगी। बड़ी संख्या में बिजली-वाहनों का उपयोग करने से प्रदूषण भी घटेगा और कार्बन उर्त्जसन में भी कमी लाई जा सकती है। इसके अलावा जैव ईंधन का उपयोग बढ़ाना होगा।

मस समय अमेरिका और ईरान के बीच तनाव से ₹खाड़ी में गंभीर संकट की स्थित उत्पन्न हो गई है। पिछले हफ्ते संयुक्त अरब अमीरात की जल सीमा में अमेरिका के लिए कच्चा तेल ले जा रहे चार तेल टैंकरों पर हुए हमले के बाद जहां एक ओर रवैए२ ने भारत के समक्ष तेल कीमतों के तेजी से बढ़ने उच्चस्तरीय प्रतिनिधिमंडल ने भारत आकर कच्चे अमेरिका और ईरान में तनाव बढ़ गया है, वहीं दुसरी ओर दुनियाभर में कच्चे तेल की तेजी से कीमत बढने के हालात बनते जा रहे हैं। वस्तुतः वैश्विक तेल व्यापार में कोई भी रुकावट विश्व अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए हानिकारक है। इससे कई देशों में ऊर्जा संकट पैदा होगा। दो मई से ईरान से भारत सहित आठ देशों को कच्चा तेल आयात करने की अमेरिका की छूट खत्म हो जाने के बाद वैश्विक बाजार में कच्चे तेल की कीमतों में तेजी के आसार बनते जा रहे हैं। ईरान से भारत को सस्ते पेट्रोलियम पदार्थों की आपूर्ति बंद किए जाने के बाद अमेरिका से सस्ते पेट्रोलियम पदार्थों की आपूर्ति की उम्मीद

की जा रही थी। लेकिन सात मई को अमेरिका ने कहा कि वह भारत को सस्ते पेट्रोलियम पदार्थ नहीं दे पाएगा। ऐसे में अगले महीने से भारत के समक्ष कच्चे तेल के संकट का खतरा खड़ा हो सकता है। अब यदि तेल उत्पादक देशों के संगठन- ओपेक

और रूस जैसे देश कच्चे तेल की आपूर्ति नहीं बढ़ाते हैं, तो वैश्विक बाजार में कच्चे तेल के दाम बढ़ेंगे। आर्थिक-वित्तीय शोध संगठन-ऑक्सफोर्ड इकोनॉमिक्स की रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि अमेरिका के द्वारा ईरान से कच्चे तेल की आपूर्ति पर प्रतिबंध, ओपेक और सऊदी अरब के द्वारा कच्चे तेल का उत्पादन न बढ़ाने के फैसले से इस साल के आखिर तक कच्चे तेल सौ डॉलर प्रति बैरल तक पहुंच सकता है। महंगे कच्चे तेल का भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था पर प्रतिकूल प्रभाव पड़ेगा। चूंकि भारत अपनी जरूरत का करीब अस्सी फीसद कच्चा तेल आयात करता है और भारत अपनी जरूरत का दस फीसद कच्चा

तेल ईरान से आयात करता है, इसलिए कच्चे तेल की कीमतों के मामले में भारत की मुश्किलें बढ़ती हुई दिखाई दे रही हैं। ये मृश्किलें भारत में कच्चे तेल के उत्पादन में आ रही गिरावट से और बढ़ने वाली हैं। पिछले वित्त वर्ष 2018-19 में भारत का कच्चा तेल उत्पादन 4.15 फीसद घट कर 3.42 करोड टन रह गया, जो वित्त वर्ष 2017-18 के दौरान 3.57 करोड़ टन था। देश में कच्चा तेल के उत्पादन में गिरावट से आयात घटाने की सरकार की योजना पर भी प्रतिकूल प्रभाव पड़ेगा। वर्ष 2015 में एनडीए सरकार ने कच्चे तेल का घरेलू उत्पादन बढ़ा कर वर्ष 2022 तक कच्चे तेल के आयात में दस फीसद तक की कमी लाने की योजना बनाई थी।

यकीनन इस समय अमेरिका के आर्थिक की बड़ी आर्थिक चिंता खड़ी कर दी है। उल्लेखनीय है कि ईरान से कच्चा तेल लेना भारत के लिए फायदेमंद होता है। ईरान भारत को साठ दिन का उधार देता है। सऊदी अरब सहित अन्य देश भारत को यह स्विधा नहीं देते हैं। ईरान तेल के बदले भारत से कई वस्तुएं भी खरीदता है। यदि ईरान की अर्थव्यवस्था लड़खड़ाएगी तो हमारे निर्यात पर भी बुरा असर पड़ेगा।

ईरान से कच्चे तेल की आपूर्ति बंद होने से चालू वित्त वर्ष 2019-20 में भारत का चालू खाते का घाटा बढ़ेगा। रुपया कमजोर होगा। तेल के दाम दस फीसद बढ़े तो खुदरा महंगाई 0.24 फीसद तक बढ़ सकती है। पिछले वित्त वर्ष 2018-19 में भारत का

तेल आयात बिल एक सौ पच्चीस अरब डॉलर का था जो वर्ष 2017-18 के मुकाबले बयालीस फीसद ज्यादा था। यदि कच्चा तेल चालू वित्त वर्ष 2019-20 में महंगा हुआ तो तेल आयात बिल और बढ़ जाएगा। एक अनुमान के अनुसार यदि कच्चे तेल के भावों में एक डॉलर प्रति बैरल की बढ़ोत्तरी होती है तो भारत को करीब 10700 करोड़ रुपए की हानि होती है, अर्थात खरीद के लिए इतनी धनराशि और देनी पडेगी। ऐसे में भारत को कच्चे तेल की बढती कीमतों और आपूर्ति संबंधी कठिनाई का सामना करने के लिए कई बातों पर ध्यान देना होगा।

ऐसे में पूरी दुनिया कच्चे तेल को लेकर भारत और चीन द्वारा संयुक्त रूप से तैयार की जा रही रणनीति के तहत उपयुक्त कीमतों पर कच्चे तेल की उपलब्धता की संभावनाएं देख रही है। पिछले महीने चीन के नेशनल एनर्जी एडिमिनिस्ट्रेशन के



तेल की कीमतों को लेकर ओपेक की मनमानी पर लगाम लगाने की द्विपक्षीय भारत-चीन वार्ता को अंतिम दौर में पहुंचाया है। यह वार्ता पिछले वर्ष अप्रैल में नई दिल्ली में आयोजित इंटरनेशनल इनर्जी फोरम (आइईएफ) की सोलहवीं मंत्रीस्तरीय बैठक के बाद लगातार सफलतापूर्वक आगे बढ़ रही है।

अर्थविशेषज्ञों का मानना है कि अब चीन और भारत तेल कीमतों को लेकर अपनी नई साझेदारी के कारण कच्चे तेल के खरीदारों का एक समूह (ब्लॉक) बना सकते हैं। इससे वे तेल उत्पादक देशों से मोलभाव करके तेल की कीमत कुछ कम कराने में अवश्य सफल हो सकते हैं। चीन और भारत सबसे

पहले एशियाई तेल उत्पादक देशों द्वारा कच्चे तेल की बिक्री पर वसुले जाने वाले एशियाई प्रीमियम को खत्म करने के लिए दबाव बना सकते हैं। एशियाई देशों के लिए तेल आपूर्ति दुबई या ओमान के कच्चे तेल बाजार से जुड़ी है। इसलिए कच्चे तेल के दाम अपेक्षाकृत अधिक वसूले जाते हैं। कच्चे तेल की खरीद में यूरोप व उत्तरी अमेरिका के देशों की तुलना में एशियाई देशों को कुछ अधिक कीमत चुकानी पड़ती है, जिसे एशियाई प्रीमियम नाम दिया गया है। एशियाई प्रीमियम अमेरिका या यूरोपीय देशों की तुलना में प्रति बैरल करीब छह डॉलर अधिक है।

चीन और भारत दुनिया में बड़े तेल आयातक देश हैं। चीन की कच्चे तेल की खपत एक करोड़ बीस लाख बैरल सालाना है और कुल वैश्विक खपत में उसकी हिस्सेदारी तेरह फीसद है। जबकि भारत की सालाना खपत चालीस लाख बैरल है जो वैश्विक

खपत का करीब चार फीसद है। इस तरह वैश्विक स्तर पर कच्चे तेल का सत्रह फीसद उपभोग करने वाले चीन और भारत नई रणनीति के जरिए तेल उत्पादक देशों से कह सकते हैं कि वे तेल के सबसे बड़े खरीदार हैं, लिहाजा उनसे एशियाई प्रीमियम वसूल करने की बजाय उन्हें विशेष रियायत दी जानी चाहिए।

तेल संकट से निपटने के लिए जरूरी है कि सरकार एकीकृत ऊर्जा नीति तैयार करे। देश में बिजली से चलने वाले वाहनों को बढ़ावा देना होगा। इलेक्ट्रिक कारों पर करों की दर घटानी होगी। बड़ी संख्या में बिजली-वाहनों का उपयोग करने से प्रदूषण भी घटेगा और कार्बन उर्त्जसन में भी कमी लाई जा सकती है। इसके अलावा जैव ईंधन का उपयोग बढाना होगा। अभी पेट्रोल और डीजल में दस फीसद एथेनॉल मिलाया जाता है। 2030 तक इसे बढ़ा कर बीस

फीसद किए जाने का जो लक्ष्य रखा गया है. उसे हासिल करने के लिए जोरदार प्रयास करने होंगे। इससे पेट्रोल-डीजल की कीमत में चार से पांच रुपए प्रति लीटर की कमी लाई जा सकेगी।

इस समय यह भी जरूरी है कि भारत उपयुक्त दरों पर कच्चे तेल की आपूर्ति के लिए नए तेल बाजार खोजे। इस परिप्रेक्ष्य में रूस, मेक्सिको, संयुक्त अरब अमीरात, कुवैत और सऊदी अरब से अधिक कच्चा तेल आयात करने के विकल्पों पर ध्यान देना होगा। लोकसभा चुनाव के बाद गठित होने वाली नई सरकार के लिए सबसे बड़ी चुनौती देश की अर्थव्यवस्था को कच्चे तेल की बढ़ती कीमतों के खतरों से बचाने की होगी।

प्रतिभा की पहचान

श्रीप्रकाश शर्मा

चीम के महान दार्शनिक और विचारक कन्फ्यूशियस ने एक बार कहा था- 'आप अपने लिए उस कॉम या नौकरी को चुनिए, जिसे आप प्यार करते हैं और तब आपको एक दिन के लिए भी काम करने की जरूरत नहीं पडेगी!' आशय यह है कि जब किसी नौकरी या कॅरियर का चुनाव किसी व्यक्ति के जीवन के आधे हिस्से से भी अधिक समय तक साथ चलता रहता है तो ऐसी स्थिति में हमारे सामने एक अहम प्रश्न बार-बार उठ खड़ा होता है कि आखिर कॅरियर के चुनाव में तरजीह किसको दी जानी चाहिए- दिल को या दिमाग को! नौकरी से मिलने वाले पैसे, पद, सुविधा और पदोन्नति के आधार को या नौकरी के प्रति दिल में छिपे प्यार या आसिक्त को? अपने दिल की आवाज को अभिभावकों के दबाव को ? दोराहे पर खड़ी आधुनिक युवा पीढ़ी के मुतल्लिक आज इस प्रकार के अनगिनत प्रश्नों पर गंभीर आत्मचिंतन की दरकार है।

इस हकीकत को हम आसानी से नहीं झठला नहीं सकते हैं कि किसी व्यक्ति के लिए उसकी नौकरी महज उसके और उसके परिवार के लिए जीविका का माध्यम नहीं होता है, बल्कि यह उस परिवार के सभी सदस्यों

के जीवन, दर्शन, विचार और मनोविज्ञान को भी प्रभावित करता है। अपने लिए एक अच्छे कॅरियर का चुनाव महज यह निर्धारित नहीं करता है कि कोई व्यक्ति अपने जीवन के निर्वाह के लिए किस प्रकार के रोजगार का चुनाव करता है, बल्कि यह भी सुनिश्चित करता है कि व्यक्ति आने वाले वर्षों के लिए किस प्रकार के जीवन की योजना बनाता है, वह परिवार सहित अपने के लिए भी किस प्रकार की जीवन-शैली और जीवन के आदर्शों का चुनाव करता है।

दुनिया मेरे आगे गला–काट प्रतियोगिता के वर्तमान दौर में इस मामले में चुनाव के लिए विद्यार्थी अजीब संघर्ष और मानसिक तनाव की अवस्था से गुजर रहा है तो हमें इस समस्या पर बड़ी संजीदगी से सोचने की जरूरत है। बच्चों पर कॅरियर के चुनाव के लिए अभिभावकों द्वारा अपनी मर्जी थोपी जाती है तो यह और भी विकट समस्या का रूप ले लेता है और कालांतर में बेशुमार पारिवारिक-

सामाजिक समस्याओं का भी सबब बन जाता है। आज के भौतिकवादी समाज में जहां हर व्यक्ति किसी तांगे के घोड़े की तरह अपनी आंखों पर पट्टी बांधे एक-दूसरे से आगे बढ़ने की होड़ में लगा हुआ है तो ऐसे में उत्कृष्ट और मनपसंद कॅरियर चुनाव का माकूल उत्तर अपने ही प्रश्न में विलुप्त हो जाता है। अपने बच्चे

को पड़ोसी के बच्चों से आगे देखने और उसे रोजगार की दुनिया में मोटी तनख्वाह की नौकरी करते देखने की चाहत में हम सबसे यह तथ्य भूल जाते हैं कि इस दुनिया में हर व्यक्ति अपनी विलक्षण प्रतिभा के साथ जन्म लेता है। विश्व में करीब आठ सौ करोड़ आबादी में किसी भी दो व्यक्ति के चरित्र और गुणसूत्र आपस में नहीं मिलते। यही कारण है कि हर व्यक्ति अपने आप में उम्दा, असाधारण और अद्भुत है। लता मंगेश्कर जब गाती हैं तो ऐसा लगता है

गोया कानों में मिसरी घोली जा रही हो। उनके परिवार वालों ने अगर उनकी अंतर्निहित प्रतिभा का पहचान किए बगैर उन्हें डॉक्टर बनने या सरकारी नौकरी करने का दबाव डाला होता तो एक करिश्माई गायन प्रतिभा की हत्या हो गई होती। रवींद्रनाथ ठाकुर को स्कूल बिल्कुल अच्छा नहीं लगता था। वे प्रकृति को सबसे बड़ा शिक्षक मानते थे। वे प्रकृति को निहारते हुए विश्व के मशहूर दार्शनिक और साहित्यकार बन गए, जिनकी रचना नोबेल पुरस्कार से सम्मानित हुई। विश्व इतिहास के पन्ने ऐसे बेशुमार उदाहरणों से भरे हुए हैं जो महज इस सत्य को परिलक्षित करता है कि जीवन में सफलता की सबसे बड़ा कसौटी किसी व्यक्ति में स्वाभाविक प्रतिभा की पहचान करनी है।

सूचनाओं के समंदर के रूप में इंटरनेट तक हमारी पहुंच हर दिन और आसान होती जा रही है तो हम बच्चों को मशीन सरीखा और उनमें कुदरती काबिलियत को कंप्यूटर के सॉफ्टवेयर के रूप में तौले जाने का अपराध कर रहे हैं। यही कारण है कि किशोरों में अवसाद, मनोरोग और खुदकुशी की घटनाओं में सालों-साल इजाफा होता जा रहा है।

इस सत्य से शायद हम इनकार नहीं कर पाएं कि कॅरियर के चुनाव में पहला अधिकार विद्यार्थी का खुद का होना चाहिए। विवेकशील अभिभावक के रूप में हमें अपने संतानों को इस रूप में समझने की जरूरत है। कभी-कभी बच्चे को ख़ुद यह पता नहीं होता है कि उनकी अपनी पहचान क्या है और उनमें कौन-सी प्रतिभा है जो उन्हें औरों से अलग और असाधारण बनाती है। यहां शिक्षक के साथ-साथ अभिभावकों की भूमिका महत्त्वपूर्ण हो जाती है। लेकिन कई बार हमारी सोच काफी अवैज्ञानिक और गैर-मनोवैज्ञानिक होती है।

कॉलेज और विश्वविद्यालय की फाइनल परीक्षाओं में निरंतर बढ़ती असफलता और बीच में पढ़ाई छोड़ने के आंकड़े एक बड़े खतरे की ओर इशारा करते हैं। देश में बदतर होती जा रही बेरोजगारी की समस्या से लेकर निरंतर क्षीण होते जा रहे नैतिक मूल्य देश के भविष्य के रूप में बच्चों के दोषपूर्ण कॅरियर चुनाव का प्रतिबिंब है।

साख पर सवाल

इस बार (2019) का लोकसभा चुनाव जिन बातों 🔫 के लिए जाना जाएगा, उनमें एक बात चुनाव आयोग की भूमिका पर उठते सवाल हैं। आयोग की साख में गिरावट तो दो साल पहले से ही स्पष्ट नजर अने लगी थी। लेकिन तब न मीडिया ने और न ही विपक्ष ने समय रहते इसके आलोचना की। इसलिए निर्वाचन आयोग की कार्य पद्धित में भी सुधार नहीं हुआ। 2017 के गुजरात और हिमाचल प्रदेश के चुनावों की घोषणा की याद कीजिए। दोनों राज्यों के नतीजों की तिथि घोषित की गई, लेकिन चुनाव की घोषणा अलग-अलग की गई और गुजरात के चुनावों की घोषणा तब की गई जब गुजरात राज्य में प्रधानमंत्री के सारे उद्घाटन और शिलान्यास कार्य पूरे हो गए थे।

लेकिन लोकसभा के चुनाव की घोषणा के समय से ही निर्वाचन आयोग का आचरण सत्तारूढ़ दल की ओर झुकाव का रहा। चुनाव आयोग ने निष्पक्ष दिखने के लिए प्रधानमंत्री की बायोपिक के प्रदर्शन पर तो रोक लगाई, लेकिन नमो टीवी नामक मीडिया चैनल पर रोक नहीं लगाई। दूसरे नेताओं के अपशब्दों के लिए तो उन्हें दंडित किया गया, लेकिन प्रधानमंत्री के दुर्वचनों की कई बार शिकायत करने के बावजूद कोई फैसला नहीं लिया गया। अंत में सर्वोच्च न्यायालय की फटकार के बाद एक-एक करके शिकायतों का निपटारा किया गया और बाद में सब में उन्हें क्लीन चिट दी गई। हार्दिक पटेल का नामांकन रद्द करना और प्रज्ञा ठाकुर का स्वीकार करना और वाराणसी में तेज बहादुर यादव सहित कई नामांकनों को बहुत मामूली गलतियों के लिए अस्वीकार करना भी चर्चा में रहा।

चुनाव आयोग एक संवैधानिक संस्था है और चुनाव आयुक्त को एक बार नियुक्त करके उसको उसके पद से आसानी से हटाया नहीं जा सकता। अब समय आ गया है कि इसकी नियुक्ति प्रक्रिया में दर्ज करने से पहले कई बार सोचे। बदलाव लाया जाए।

• आनंद मालवीय, इलाहाबाद कठार कारवाई को जरूरत

आए दिन यौन शोषण, अमर्यादित व्यवहार और छेड़छाड़ के कई मामले दर्ज होते हैं। इनमें तीस से पैंतीस फीसद मामले फर्जी होते हैं, जो कि शिकायतकर्ता अपने निजी स्वार्थ के लिए लगाते हैं। हाल में एक महिला ने सुप्रीम कोर्ट के प्रधान न्यायाधीश पर अमर्यादित आचरण का आरोप • *शिवेंद्र सिंह, नोएडा* पर अपना मृंह खोलती है।

मुजफ्फरपुर कांड पर चुप्पी

लेकिन अफसोस कि इक्कीसवीं सदी में जब

बिहार के मुजफ्फरपुर के आश्रय गृह की चौंतीस बिच्चियों से दुष्कर्म और ग्यारह बिच्चियों की हत्या झकझोर देने वाली घटना है। लेकिन इस घटना से सत्ता पक्ष असहज नहीं हुआ, बल्कि जब तक इस कांड से पर्दा नहीं उठा तब तक इसके आरोपित ब्रजेश ठाकुर पर सरकार मेहरबान रही। उसके अखबार

'प्रातःकमल' को करोडों रुपए के

किसी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए-८, सेक्टर-7, नोएडा 201301, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश

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

लगाया था। मामले की जांच की गई, जिसमें मामला झूटा पाया गया और सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने प्रधान न्यायाधीश को क्लीन चिट दे दी।

लेकिन अब सवाल यह है कि क्या झूठा आरोप लगने वाला अपराधी नहीं है ? देश में झूठ बोल कर पुरुषों को फंसाने का अधिकार महिलाओं को है। और यदि वह फर्जी हो तो उसे दंड देने का अधिकार न्यायपालिका को क्यों नहीं है? अगर इसी तरह लोगों को झुठ का फायदा मिलता रहा और मामला झूठा होने पर शिकायतकर्ता के खिलाफ कोई ठोस कदम नहीं उठाया गया, तो लोगों का सच और न्यायपालिका दोनों से विश्वास उठ जाएगा। अतः न्यायपालिका को झूठे मामले दर्ज कराने वालों को कठोर दंड देना चाहिए, ताकि कोई भी फर्जी मामला

विज्ञापन मिलते रहे। मुजफ्फरपुर में ठाकुर का आवास सफेदपोशों का अतिथिशाला था। बिहार सरकार की पूर्व समाज कल्याण मंत्री के पति सहित अनेक राजनेताओं के इस कांड में शामिल होने की बात कही सामने आई है। चुनाव प्रचार के दौरान मुजफ्फरपुर में बड़े-बड़े राजनेताओं की सभा हुई, लेकिन इस कांड का जिक्र तक नहीं हुआ। मानो कुछ हुआ ही नहीं या ये सब घटनाएं होती रहेंगी। किसी की अंतरात्मा ने कुछ नहीं बोला, लेकिन बिहार की अंतरात्मा डोल गई। भले ही कोई सुशासन का दंभ भरे, लेकिन राजसत्ता के चेहरे पर कलंक की टीका लग गया। राजनेताओं पर से विश्वास उठ गया। अगर इस कलंक को धोना है और बिहार की उन बेटियों के कोई न्याय के पक्षधर हैं तो वे न्यायलय को जांच में सहयोग करें। इतने बड़े कांड की

जिम्मेवारी लेने को कोई तैयार नहीं है, न सरकार इस

 प्रसिद्ध यादव, बाबुचक, पटना छवि और विवाद

विश्व प्रसिद्ध पत्रिका 'टाइम' ने अपने हालिया संस्करण में 'इंडियाज डिवाइडर इन चीफ' शीर्षक से एक आवरण कथा छापी है जिसमे प्रधानमंत्री को भारत का विभाजक बताया गया है। 'टाइम' का यह शीर्षक और रिपोर्ट विवादों में घिर गई है। जहां एक ओर भाजपा इसे सिरे से खारिज कर रही है, वहीं अन्य दल इसे आड़े हाथों लेकर प्रधानमंत्री की असलियत बता रहे हैं।

सवाल है कि क्या यह तथ्यात्मक रूप से सही है..? इस लेख को लिखने वाले आतिश तासीर ने यह किस आधार पर कहा है? क्या प्रधानमंत्री ने सरकारी योजनाओं का वितरण जातिगत आधार पर किया है या फिर आए दिन सांप्रदायिक दंगे भड़क रहे हैं? क्या एक विशेष समुदाय देश छोड़ कर पलायन कर रहा है या फिर मस्जिदों और चर्चों पर हमले हो रहेहैं? अगर नहीं तो यह लेख और लेखक किस विभाजन की बात कर रहा है। रही बात कथित गो-रक्षकों की तो सनद रहे प्रधानमंत्री ने अपने मंच से ऐसे फर्जी लोगों को कडी हिदायत देते हुए चेताया भी है। सवाल यह है कि क्या ऐसी मशहूर पत्रिका को दुनिया के सबसे बड़े लोकतंत्र के पांच सालों को एक विवादित शीर्षक में कैद करना चाहिए जिसका कोई मजबूत आधार न हो? हाल ही में दो बड़े राष्ट्रों रूस और संयुक्त अरब अमीरात ने प्रधानमंत्री को सर्वोच्च नागरिक सम्मान से नवाजा है। कुछ महीने पहले दक्षिण कोरिया ने 'सिओल पीस प्राइज' और संयुक्त राष्ट्र ने 'चैंपियंस ऑफ द अर्थ' सम्मान प्रधानमंत्री को दिया था। तो क्या शांति पुरस्कार अशांति और सर्वोच्च सम्मान बंटवारे के लिए मिलता है..?

संजय दुबे, नई दिल्ली

लोकतंत्र का महापर्व

तिम चरण के मतदान के साथ ही दुनिया की सबसे बड़ी लोकतांत्रिक प्रक्रिया का सबसे अहम हिस्सा पूरा हुआ है और अब नतीजों का इंतजार है. हमारा देश उन गिने-चुने देशों में है, जहां औपनिवेशिक शासन से मुक्ति के बाद से सार्वभौम मताधिकार के सिद्धांत पर आधारित गणतांत्रिक व्यवस्था चली आ रही है. भारत में पंजीकृत मतदाताओं की मौजूदा संख्या लगभग 90 करोड़ है, जिनमें से अधिकतर ने मतदान प्रक्रिया में भाग लिया है. छिटपुट हिंसा और गड़बड़ियों को छोड़ दें, तो सात चरणों की यह प्रक्रिया शांतिपूर्ण ढंग से संपन्न हुई है. निश्चित रूप से चुनाव आयोग, सुरक्षाबलों, राजनीतिक दलों, उम्मीदवारों और मतदाताओं के लिए यह संतोष का विषय है. एक ओर जहां इस चुनाव की सफलता गौरव का विषय है, वहीं इसके अनुभवों से सीख लेते हुए हमें इसे उत्तरोत्तर कारगर और मजबूत बनाने की कवायद पर भी ध्यान देना चाहिए. प्रचार अभियान और मतदान में महिलाओं और युवाओं की बढ़ती भागीदारी एक स्वागतयोग्य पहलू है, परंतु उम्मीदवारी में इनकी हिस्सेदारी बढ़ाने के बारे में विभिन्न दलों को विचार करना चाहिए.

भाषायी और व्यावहारिक मर्यादाएं लाघी . देश को नेतृत्व देनेवाले व्यक्तियों और पार्टियों को ऐसे बर्ताव से बाज आना चाहिए.

आबादी के लिहाज से इन दोनों की तादाद बहुत प्रचार के दौरान नेताओं ने बड़ी है. हमारी राजनीति धनबल और बाहुबल के ग्रहण से लंबे समय से ग्रस्त रही है. इसमें कोई दो राय नहीं है कि इसमें कमी भी आ रही है, किंतु प्रचार के दौरान बेतहाशा खर्च और मतदाताओं को लुभाने के लिए पैसा, सामान व शराब बांटने की शिकायतें चिंताजनक है. गंभीर आपराधिक मामलों का सामना कर रहे उम्मीदवारों का चुनावी मैदान में होना भी एक बड़ा सवाल है. पार्टियों और प्रत्याशियों के बीच आरोप-प्रत्यारोप तथा परस्पर

टीका-टिप्पणी चुनाव का जरूरी आयाम है. इससे उम्मीदवारों के बारे में समझ बनाने में मतदाताओं को बड़ी मदद मिलती है. प्रचार के दौरान ऐसे कई मौके आये, जब बहस में नेताओं ने भाषायी और व्यावहारिक मर्यादा को लांघते हुए बयानबाजी की. देश को नेतृत्व देनेवाले व्यक्तियों और पार्टियों को ऐसे बर्ताव से बाज आना चाहिए. पारदर्शिता और प्रशासनिक निष्पक्षता के बिना चुनाव जैसी लोकतांत्रिक कार्यवाही को समुचित ढंग से पूरा नहीं किया जा सकता है. निर्वाचन आयोग, अधिकारियों तथा राजनीतिक दलों को आपसी समझ-बझ से ऐसे नियम और निर्देश तय करने चाहिए, जहां पक्षपात का प्रश्न ही पैदा न हो सके. ध्यान रहे, हमारे देश की बहुत बड़ी आबादी गरीब और निम्न आय वर्ग से है. मतदान में इसकी भागीदारी भी बढ़ चढ़कर होती है. ऐसे में मतदाता सूची में इस तबके के लोगों के नाम शामिल करने से लेकर उन्हें मर्जी से मतदान करने तक की सुविधा मुहैया कराना बड़ी प्राथमिकता होनी चाहिए. इस वर्ष गणतंत्र दिवस के अवसर पर राष्ट्र को संबोधित करते हुए राष्ट्रपति रामनाथ कोविंद ने कहा था कि लोकतंत्र में आम चुनाव एक पवित्र कर्मकांड के समान है. हर मत दूसरे मतदाता को प्रोत्साहित करता है और हर मत लोकतंत्र को शक्तिशाली बनाता है. महामहिम के इस विचार को आदर्श मानते हुए हमें चुनावी प्रक्रिया को लगातार बेहतर बनाने पर ध्यान देना चाहिए.



पने आश्रम में संन्यासियों को गुरु अपने साथ रहने की अनुमति पने आश्रम म सन्यासया का गुरु जनग राज्य रहें देते हैं. गुरु एक संन्यासी के अहंकार के मुखौटे को उसके पास ही छोड़ देते हैं, ताकि वह उसके साथ भी विभिन्न परिस्थितियों का सामना कर सके. लेकिन, गुरु परोक्ष रूप से अंततः उसे उसके अहंकार से मुक्त करने के लिए तैयार करते रहते हैं. संन्यासी के कर्मों के क्षय के लिए गुरु अपना खेल खेलते हैं, जिसे 'गुरु माया' कहते हैं. वे संन्यासी के व्यक्तित्व को अच्छी तरह समझते हैं और कर्मों का क्षय करने के लिए उसे विभिन्न गतिविधियों में संलग्न कर देते हैं. गुरु उसे किसी प्रकार के कर्मयोग में लगा देते हैं, जैसे, रसोईघर, बागवानी, छापाखाना या आश्रम की सफाई. इस तरह के कर्मयोग में भिन्न प्रकार की सजगता की आवश्यकता होती है, जिसका उपयोग आत्म-विश्लेषण के लिए किया जा सकता है. गुरु संन्यासी को कर्मयोग के क्रम में मौन रहने का निर्देश भी दे सकते हैं. संन्यासी के अंदर गहराई में दबे संस्कारों को सतह पर लाने का यह एक प्रभावकारी उपाय है, जिसके द्वारा उसे अपने कर्मों का क्षय करने में मदद मिलती है. इस प्रकार संन्यासी को विभिन्न प्रकार के कार्य देकर गुरु यह समझ जाते हैं कि स्वाभाविक रूप से कौन-से कार्य के द्वारा वह अपने कर्मों का क्षय कर पायेगा. संन्यासी अपनी सुप्त प्रवृत्तियों को एक योग शिक्षक, लेखक, गायक, शोधकर्ता, माली, रसोइया, प्रबंधक या सचिव जैसी भूमिकाओं में प्रकट कर सकता है. इस प्रकार संन्यासी जब गुरु की सेवा करता है, तो बिना नये कर्मों का संचय हुए, पुराने कर्मों का क्षय होता जाता है. दैनिक कामकाज के माध्यम से अपने ्सुप्त संस्कारों को प्रकट कर संन्यासी उच्चतर साधना के लिए आधार तैयार कर लेता है. गुरु सेवा द्वारा जैसे-जैसे संन्यासी के कर्मों का क्षय होता है, वह अधिक शांति और वैराग्य पाता है. जब मन एकाग्र एवं स्थिर हो जाता है, तब वह अधिक गहराई से अधिक देर तक ध्यान कर सकता है. संन्यासी का मन एक स्वच्छ दर्पण की तरह हो जाता है, जिसमें गुरु की शिक्षा प्रतिबिंबित होने लगती है. स्वामी निरंजनानंद सरस्वती

कुछ अलग

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भर्ती किये जायें

एक राज्य सरकार ने अपनी पाठ्य पुस्तकों में महाराणा प्रताप की महानता कम कर दी है, अकबर की बढ़ा दी है. वीर सावरकर के बारे में बताया गया है कि उन्हें सावरकर माना जा सकता है, पर वीर नहीं. ऊपर कहीं ये महान

आत्माएं बात करती होंगी, तो कुछ यूं वार्तालाप होता होगा-हां भई सावरकरजी, अब कहां-कहां महान हो? देखिये उन राज्यों में महान ना बचे. पर कुछ नये राज्यों में शायद

महान घोषित हो जायें. हां, भई वक्त बहुत पेचीदा हो गया है. महाराणा प्रताप भी अब

कुछ कम महान रह गये हैं. हां उस राज्य में दुदुमल खोपटिया नये महान हो गये हैं. सुना है कि खोपटियाजी के वंशजों ने बहुत भारी रकम चंदे में उस राजनीतिक दल को दी है, तो खोपटिया महान घोषित हो गये हैं. खोपटिया के वंशजों के पास बहुत पैसा है देने के लिए, तो वह महान हो लिए. नहीं ऐसा नहीं हो सकता है, आखिर तो महाराणा प्रताप महान

थे. वैसे महाराणा प्रताप में यह क्षमता तो अब भी है कि वे वोट दिलवा सकें. इसलिए उन्हें सिलेबस से ना हटाया जा सकता, हां उनकी महानता कम की जा सकती है.

तो क्या भविष्य में इस तरह के चुनावी वादे संभव हैं कि अगर हमारी सरकार आयी, तो हम चुन्नुमल खोपटिया को सौ पॉइंट का महान घोषित कर देंगे, बाकी सबको बाहर कर देंगे सिलेबस से? महानता के पॉइंट घोषित होंगे- सौ पॉइंट के महान, पचास पॉइंट के जूनियर टाइप के महान.

सदियों तक सत्ता परिवर्तन हमेशा रक्तरंजित रहा है, लेकिन लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था ने सत्ता परिवर्तन को सहज कर दिया है. लोकसभा चुनाव वास्तव में लोकतंत्र का महाकुंभ है. इतनी व्यापकता, इतनी विविधता की मिसाल दुनियाभर में कहीं नहीं है. यदि चुनावों की व्यापकता पर नजर डालें, तो 17वीं लोकसभा के लिए 90 करोड़ लोग मतदान के योग्य थे और इनमें से लगभग 60 फीसदी लोगों ने मतदान में हिस्सा लिया. महत्वपूर्ण बात यह है कि 18 से 19 साल के डेढ़ करोड़ मतदाताओं ने इस चुनाव में पहली बार हिस्सा लिया और लगभग आठ करोड़ 43 लाख नये मतदाताओं ने इस बार अपने मताधिकार का इस्तेमाल किया. सात चरणों में हुए मतदान में 10 लाख पोलिंग बूथ पर वोट डाले गये. लोकसभा के लिए मतदान सकुशल संपन्न हो गया और अब बस नतीजों का इंतजार है. नतीजे किस करवट बैठेंगे, इसको लेकर नेताओं और पार्टी समर्थकों की धड़कनें तेज हैं. चुनाव सात चरणों में और लगभग छह सप्ताह चला और यह सभी के लिए थकाऊ साबित हुआ. पिछले दो महीने से केंद्र सरकार और राज्य सरकारों की गतिविधियां ठप पड़ी हैं. पूरी मशीनरी चुनाव संपन्न कराने में व्यस्त है. नेता, मंत्री और संत्री सब चुनाव में जुटे हुए हैं. रही सही कसर चुनाव आचार संहिता ने पूरी कर दी. यह सही है कि निष्पक्ष चुनाव जरूरी है, लेकिन आचार संहिता के कारण पिछले दो महीने से सरकारी निर्णय अटके पड़े हैं. हमें इस पर विचार करना होगा कि कैसे चुनाव को सीमित समय में कराया जा सके क्योंकि इस दौरान देश लगभग स्वतः संचालित अवस्था में होता है. हर पार्टी के लिए आम चुनाव प्रतिष्ठा का प्रश्न होता है और पार्टियां पुरी ताकत झोंककर उसे जीतने की कोशिश

करती हैं. यही वजह है कि सभी राजनीतिक दल अपने

चुनावी अस्त्रागार में से किसी अस्त्र को दागने से नहीं चुकते

हैं. इस बार अंतिम दौर तक आते-आते बात मुद्दों तक नहीं

नाव किसी भी लोकतंत्र के आधार स्तंभ होते हैं.

हर आम चुनाव लोकतंत्र को समृद्ध कर जाता है.

संपादकीय प्रभात

रह गयी और नेताओं की बयानबाजी राजनीतिक मर्यादा को तार-तार कर गयी. चुनावों के दौरान पश्चिम बंगाल में हुई हिंसा ने लोकतांत्रिक प्रक्रिया की गरिमा को ठेस पहुंचायी है. जाने माने समाज सुधारक ईश्वरचंद्र विद्यासागर की मूर्ति को तोड़ा जाना शर्मनाक है. साथ ही महात्मा गांधी के हत्यारे गोडसे के पक्ष में प्रज्ञा ठाकुर का बयान मर्यादा की सभी हदों को पार कर गया. मेरा मानना है कि चुनाव की इतनी लंबी प्रक्रिया ठीक नहीं है. लंबे चुनाव के संचालन की अपनी अलग चुनौतियां हैं. चुनावों के दौरान जो घटनाएं घटित हुईं, जिनको लेकर बार-बार आयोग सवालों के घेरे में रहा. एक तरह से चुनाव आयोग का भी यह कड़ा इम्तिहान था. उसकी साख पर भी बार-बार सवाल उठाये गये. मेरा मानना है कि अगर चुनाव पांच चरणों में ही संपन्न होते तो शायद बेहतर होता.

यह सही है कि हरेक आम चुनाव राजनीति का एक नया संदेश देकर जाता है. पिछले लोकसभा चुनाव में प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी और विकास के उनके वादे पर लोगों ने वोट किया था. लेकिन, इस बार राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा आम चुनाव का मुख्य मुद्दा बन गया. यह सच्चाई है कि अब चुनाव जमीनी मुद्दों

पर नहीं लड़े जाते. चुनावों में किसानों की समस्याएं, रोजगार, स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं और शिक्षा की स्थिति जैसे विषय प्रमुख मुद्दे नहीं बनते. इस बार के चुनाव पर नजर डालें तो पूरा चुनाव प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी पर केंद्रित था या तो आप उनके साथ



सीमित चरणों में हों आम चूनाव

आशुतोष चतुर्वेदी

प्रधान संपादक, प्रभात खबर

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पश्चिम बंगाल की हिंसा ने लोकतांत्रिक प्रक्रिया को ठेस पहुंचायी प्रसिद्ध समाज सुधारक ईश्वरचंद्र विद्यासागर

की मूर्ति को तोड़ा जाना शर्मनाक है . महात्मा गांधी के हत्यारे गोडसे के पक्ष में प्रज्ञा टाकुर का बयान तो मर्यादा की सभी हदों को पार कर गया .

हैं. उनके समर्थक हैं अथवा आपका उनके धूर विरोधी हैं. कई स्थानों पर यह ध्रुवीकरण बहुत गहरा था. कई स्थानों पर ऐसा देखने में आया कि लोगों ने भाजपा उम्मीदवार को नहीं. बल्कि नरेंद्र मोदी को वोट दिया. चुनाव संसदीय प्रणाली की बजाए राष्ट्रपति प्रणाली जैसे ज्यादा नजर आया. जैसे दो उम्मीदवार ही मैदान में थे- एक नरेंद्र मोदी तो दूसरे राहुल गांधी. हालांकि, कई राज्यों में गठबंधन के नेताओं का दबदबा साफ नजर आया. चुनाव में इस बार कई अन्य दिलचस्प बातें देखने को आयीं. कांग्रेस ने अल्पसंख्यकों से दूरी बनाते हुए नरम हिंदुत्व की राह पकड़ी और दोनों भाई बहन- राहुल गांधी और प्रियंका गांधी वाड़ा मंदिरों में मत्था टेकते नजर आये, जबकि यह भाजपा का कार्यक्षेत्र रहा है. इसके पहले भाजपा कांग्रेस पर अल्पसंख्यकों की तरफदारी करने का आरोप लगाती रही है. लेकिन कांग्रेस ने इस बार उनसे दुरी बनाये रखी. सोशल मीडिया में भाजपा का पलड़ा हमेशा भारी रहता आया है, पर

इस बार ऐसा नहीं था. कांग्रेस भी सोशल

मीडिया में सक्रिय थी. कांग्रेस ने राफेल,

किसानों की नाराजगी, जीएसटी और

नोटबंदी के मुद्दे उठाये, वहीं भाजपा ने राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा, विकास और केंद्र सरकार की कल्याणकारी योजनाओं के अलावा अपने मजबूत संगठन के जरिये बूथ लेवल पर काम किया. सघन प्रचार और ध्रुवीकरण भाजपा का मजबूत पक्ष रहा. 2014 के लोकसभा चुनावों में हिंदी पट्टी के राज्यों यूपी, बिहार, मध्य प्रदेश, राजस्थान, छत्तीसगढ़ और झारखंड का केंद्र में भाजपा की सरकार बनवाने में बड़ा योगदान रहा है. चुनाव परिणामों से साफ होगा कि हिंदी पट्टी के ये गढ़ क्या अब भी भाजपा के साथ हैं अथवा महागठबंधन ने इनमें सेंध लगा ली है.

इस चुनाव में सोशल मीडिया पर फेक न्यूज की भरमार रही. यह भेद कर पाना बेहद कठिन था कि कौन सी खबर सच है और कौन सी खबर फर्जी है. व्हाट्सएप के दौर में सुबह से शाम तक खबरों का आदान-प्रदान होता है और पता ही नहीं चलता कि कितनी तेजी से फेक न्यूज के आप शिकार हो गये. एक ओर तो दुनिया कंप्यूटर और इंटरनेट के दौर से आगे निकल चुकी है. माना जा रहा है कि यह सदी आर्टिफिशियल इंटेलिजेंस की है. अब बात इंटरनेट से मतदान की चल रही है. ऐसे में हमारे कुछेक राजनेता हमें पुराने दौर में ले जाने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं. अब तो यह दस्तूर हो गया है कि हर चुनाव के पहले इवीएम पर सवाल उठाये जाते हैं. लेकिन, लोकतंत्र का बुनियादी तत्व है कि मतदान प्रक्रिया निष्पक्ष हो. मतदाता को यह भरोसा हो कि उसका वोट वहीं पड़ा है, जहां वह देना चाहता था. इतनी बड़ी चुनाव प्रक्रिया में कुछेक इवीएम में तकनीकी खराबी आ सकती है और उसे तत्काल बदला जाता है. लेकिन हर बार उसकी विश्वसनीयता पर सवाल उठाये जाने से लोगों के मन में संशय होता है. विपक्षी दल इवीएम को लेकर सुप्रीम कोर्ट तक गये, लेकिन वहां भी उनकी आपत्तियों को खारिज कर दिया गया. अनेक विपक्षी दल चाहते हैं कि मत पत्रों की पुरानी व्यवस्था को वापस लाया जाए. यह तथ्य भी सबके सामने है जब मत पत्रों का इस्तेमाल होता था तो सही स्थान मुहर न लगने के कारण लगभग 4 से 5 फीसदी वोट रद्द हो जाते थे. दूसरे यूपी, बिहार और पश्चिम बंगाल में बूथ कैप्चरिंग बड़ी समस्या थी. कुछ समय पहले राजस्थान, एमपी और छत्तीसगढ़ में कांग्रेस की सरकारें इसी इवीएम के माध्यम से हुए मतदान से ही बनीं. यह दलील कैसे चलेगी कि जब आप जीतें तो ठीक अन्यथा मशीन खराब है.

विद्यासागर और महात्मा गांधी



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ईश्वरचंद्र विद्यासागर के मूर्तिभंजक उन मूल्यों के विरुद्ध हैं, जिनके प्रति विद्यासागर समर्पित थे. देश की वर्तमान राजनीति को न तो विद्यासागर से मतलब है, न गांधी से.

महानता पर गर्व नहीं करना चाहिए, सब

कुछ अस्थायी है. आज महाराणा महान

हैं, कल खोपटियाजी महान होंगे. फिर

कोई सरकार आकर महापुरुष विनिवेश

मंत्रालय खोल सकती है. जो पुराने

महापुरुषों का विनिवेश कर देगा. पुराने

महापुरुष कबाड़ के भाव निकाल दिये जायें, नये खोपट, पोपट

महानता के सीजन हैं, कोई कभी महान है, कोई कभी महान है.

सार्वकालिक महानता के दौर गये. नेहरूजी ऊपर से देखते होंगे

कि हाय नीचे क्या-क्या मेरे नाम में लगाया जा रहा है. गांधी उन्हें

तसल्ली देते होंगे- चिंता ना करें, सैकड़ों भ्रष्ट नेता, महाभ्रष्ट

संस्थान मेरे नाम पर चल रहे हैं, सब कमा खा रहे हैं, मैं कुछ ना

महानता शेयर बाजार के भावों की तरह हो गयी है- कुछ वक्त

बाद महानता की रिपोर्ट बाजार रिपोर्ट की तर्ज पर आने लगे कुछ

इस तरह से- आज उस पार्टी के चुनाव जीतने के बाद चुन्नूमल

खोपटिया की महानता के भाव ऊंचे बोले गये. महात्मा गांधी

की महानता के भावों में कुछ नरमी देखी गयी. महात्मा गांधी के

नाम पर चलनेवाले करीब पांच हजार संस्थानों में इतने हजार

में निकम्मेपन और भ्रष्टाचार की जांच चल रही है. नये उभरते

महानों में खटियामल जोड़ के भाव बढ़ने की उम्मीद है, आप

खैर, अब तो महानता पर गर्व करने के दिन गये. बिग बॉस की

कर सकता. आप भी शांत होकर बैठिये.

जोड़-तोड़ गठबंधन के उस्ताद हैं.

तरह महानता के भी सीजन आने लगे हैं!

र महीने बाद महान शिक्षाविद, समाज सुधारक, दार्शनिक, लोकोपकारक, मुद्रक, प्रकाशक, उद्यमी, मानवतावादी, दानवीर, लेखक, अनुवादक, एकेडिमक, नारी शिक्षा के प्रबल समर्थक राजा राममोहन राय (22 मई, 1772- 27 सितंबर, 1833) के उत्तराधिकारी बंगाल नवजागरण के प्रमुख स्तंभ ईश्वरचंद्र विद्यासागर (26 सितंबर, 1820- 29 जुलाई, 1891) की द्विजन्मशती आरंभ हो रही है और अभी महात्मा गांधी (2 अक्तूबर, 1869- 30 जनवरी, 1948) की 150वीं जयंती मनायी जा रही है.

लगभग एक ही समय चुनाव-प्रचार के दौरान कोलकाता में ईश्वरचंद्र विद्यासागर की मूर्ति तोड़ी गयी और मालेगांव बम विस्फोटक की मुख्य आरोपी, भोपाल संसदीय निर्वाचन क्षेत्र से भाजपा प्रत्याशी प्रज्ञा ठाकुर ने गांधी के हत्यारे नाथुराम गोडसे (19 मई, 1910- 15 नवंबर,1949) को देशभक्त कहा- 'नाथुराम गोडसे देशभक्त थे, हैं और रहेंगे.' प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने प्रतिक्रिया व्यक्त की- 'साध्वी प्रज्ञा को कभी मन से माफ नहीं कर पाऊंगा.' बाद में प्रज्ञा ठाकुर ने माफी मांगी. हेमंत करकरे पर दिये अपने बयान के बाद भी उन्होंने माफी मांग ली थी. प्रज्ञा ठाकुर के गोडसे-संबंधी विचार को भाजपा ने उनका निजी विचार कहा और जनता को यह बताया कि पार्टी उनके साथ नहीं है. भाजपा अध्यक्ष अमित शाह ने दस दिन में अनुशासनात्मक कमेटी द्वारा फैसला लेने की बात कही है. जबिक मणिशंकर अय्यर को कांग्रेस ने प्रधानमंत्री को 'नीच' कहे जाने पर पार्टी से निलंबित कर दिया था. भाजपा ने प्रज्ञा ठाकुर को निलंबित क्यों नहीं किया ? प्रज्ञा ठाकुर के चुनाव लड़ने की बात विचारधारा और राष्ट्रहित के खातिर कही गयी है.

ईश्वरचंद्र विद्यासागर की मूर्ति किसने तोड़ी? उन्मादी भीड़ तो तृणमूल कांग्रेस और भाजपा दोनों की थी. बिना किसी ठोस प्रमाण के प्रधानमंत्री ने यह कहा है कि तृणमूल कांग्रेस के गुंडों ने यह मूर्ति तोड़ी. बंगाल में चुनावी हिंसा साठ के दशक के अंत से आरंभ हुई है. बंगाल का भद्र समाज ही नहीं, सामान्य जन भी अपने नायकों-महानायकों के गौरव को कभी नहीं भूलता. ईश्वर चंद्र विद्यासागर का मूर्तिभंजक वह समाज शायद ही हो सकता है. अहंकारियों, उन्मादियों, उपद्रवियों, विद्याहीनों, समाज संहारकों की बात अलग है. विद्यासागर ने सच्चे नागरिक का धर्म स्विहत से पहले समाजिहत और देशहित को माना था. उन्होंने संयम के साथ विद्यार्जन को महत्व दिया था और विद्या का संबंध सबके परोपकार से जोड़ा था. संयम से विवेक को, ध्यान को एकाग्रता से जोड़कर शांति, संतुष्टि और परोपकार को मनुष्यता से संबंध-स्थापन किया था. 'विद्या' को उन्होंने 'सबसे अनमोल धन' कहा है. उन्हें 'विद्यासागर' की उपाधि उनके कॉलेज ने प्रदान की. बाद में वे 'दयार सागर' भी कहलाये. माइकल मधुसूदन दत्त ने उनमें प्राचीन ऋषियों की-सी प्रतिभा और प्रज्ञा, अंग्रेजों की-सी ऊर्जा और बंग-माता की-सी सहृदयता देखी थी. गांधी ने उन्हें 1905 में केवल 'विद्या का सागर' न मानकर 'करुणा और उदारता आदि अनेक गुणों के सागर' भी कहा और रबींद्रनाथ ठाकुर ने उनका चारित्रिक गौरव केवल उनकी करुण और विद्या में न देखकर 'उनके निर्भांत मानवीय गुणों एवं उनके अटल साहस' में भी देखा.

विद्यासागर भुवनेश्वर विद्यालंकार के प्रपौत्र, रामजय तर्कभूषण के पौत्र और ठाकुर दास बंद्योपाध्याय के पुत्र थे. नाना तर्कशास्त्री रामकांत तर्कवागीश थे. शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में विद्यासागर ने क्रांतिकारी कार्य किये. साल 1856 में उनके प्रयत्नों से ही 'विधवा पुनर्विवाह कानून' बना बंगाली शिक्षा और संस्कृति के विकास में उनका अप्रतिम योगदान है. बालविवाह, बहुविवाह, सतीप्रथा के वे विरोधी थे. उनके एकमात्र पुत्र नारायण चंद्र वंद्योपाध्याय ने स्वेच्छा से भावसुंदरी से विधवा-विवाह किया. शिक्षा का स्तर ऊंचा करने के लिए प्रत्येक जिले में मॉडल स्कूल खोलने की विद्यासागर ने योजना बनायी और योग्य अध्यापकों के प्रशिक्षण के लिए नॉर्मल स्कूल खोले. उनके महत्व को समझने के लिए सुबत्र चंद्र मिश्रा की 675 पृष्ठों की, 36 अध्यायों में लिखी गयी पुस्तक 'ईश्वरचंद्र विद्यासागर एंड हिज इल्यूसिव माइलस्टोंस' (न्यू बंगाल प्रेस, 1902) विशेष महत्वपूर्ण है. विद्यासागर के निधन के बाद उनके स्त्री प्रशंसकों ने 'लेडीज विद्यासागर कमेटी' की स्थापना की. शांतिपुर के जुलाहों ने साड़ियों की किनारी पर विधवा पुनर्विवाह की प्रशंसा वाले पद्य को शामिल किया था, जो विद्यासागर साड़ियां कहलायीं.

ईश्वरचंद्र विद्यासागर के मूर्तिभंजक उन मूल्यों के विरुद्ध हैं, जिनके प्रति विद्यासागर समर्पित थे. पिछले कुछ वर्षों में देश के प्रमुख शिक्षा संस्थानों और विद्यानुगारियों पर हमले किसने किये? महात्मा गांधी अखंडता और राष्ट्रीय एकता के प्रतीक हैं. इसलिए गोडसे को देशभक्त कहनेवालों की मानसिकता हमें समझनी होंगी. हाल में 'टाइम' पत्रिका में आतिश तासीर ने नरेंद्र मोदी को 'डिवाइडर इन चीफ' कहा है. देश की वर्तमान राजनीति को न तो विद्यासागर से मतलब है, न गांधी से. गांधी शांति, सत्य और अहिंसा के पुजारी थे. भाजपा और उनके अनुयायी-समर्थक क्या सचमुच शांति, सत्य और अहिंसा के साथ हैं? फिर हमारे चारों ओर अशांति, झुठ और हिंसा क्यों है? प्रश्न बंगाली अस्मिता का ही नहीं, भारतीय अस्मिता की रक्षा का भी है. गांधी ने पुरे देश को एक किया, आज विभाजनकारी शक्तियां प्रबल हैं. सत्तालोलुपों ने देश को नरक-द्वार

पर ला खड़ा कर दिया है.

कार्टून कोना



साभार : कार्टूनमूवमेंटडॉटकॉम

अनमोल धरोहरों पर हमला! बंगाल में चुनावी हिंसा के बीच एक शिक्षण

आपके पत्र

संस्थान का रणक्षेत्र में तब्दील होना बेहद चिंताजनक है. सवाल यह नहीं है कि मूर्ति किसने तोड़ी, सवाल यह है कि राजनीति इस देश को कहां ले जा कर छोड़ेगी. चुनाव के दौरान हिंसा के लिए मशहूर बंगाल आज भी अपने कलंक से उबर नहीं पाया है. ईश्वरचंद विद्यासागर जितने महत्वपूर्ण देश के लिए थे, उतने शायद अकेला बंगप्रदेश के लिए भी थे. ऐसे में यह बात कल्पना के परे लगती है कि बंगाल के लोगों ने विद्यासागर की मूर्ति को क्षतिग्रस्त किया है. वे पत्थर चाहे अंदर के थे या बाहर के, मगर निश्चित रूप से राजनीतिक थे. देश की अनमोल धरोहरों पर हमला हमारी भावी राजनीति का चरित्र और चेहरा साफ उजागर करता है. भले ही ऐसे हमलों से किसी को सियासी लाभ मिले, मगर लोकतंत्र के बहते लहू को रोक पाना मुमकिन नहीं होगा. बेशक सत्ता की खींच-तान हो, मगर महापुरुषों की मूर्तियों पर की जाने वाली राजनीति देश को गर्त में न ले जाये.

एमके मिश्रा, रातू, रांची

मोदी के केदारनाथ दर्शन पर दोहरा रवैया क्यों

जिन लोगों को हिंदू नेताओं का जालीदार टोपी और हरे कुर्ते, दुपट्टे लगाकर इफ्तार में जाना ढोंग या नाटक न लगा, उन्हें मोदी का गेरुआ पहन कर साधना करना बुरा लग रहा है. अपनी इसी मूर्खता और विभाजन के कारण हिंदू समाज की न कोई इज्जत करता है, न उसके मत का या किसी मांग का आदर करता है. यह भी पहली बार देखा कि इस बार किसी राष्ट्रीय दल के नेता ने जालीदार टोपी पहनकर इफ्तार पार्टी की तस्वीरें जारी नहीं करवायी. वाकई अफसोस होता है ऐसे दोहरे रवैये पर. नियमित वेस्टर्न कपडे पहनने वाले इन दिनों तरह-तरह के वस्त्र, जनेऊ और धोती साड़ी पहनने का ड्रामा कर रहे हैं, उन पर कुछ नहीं कहते. जबिक मोदी का हिंदुत्व रुझान और उनकी आस्था कोई नयी बात नहीं है. वे तो प्रधानमंत्री बनने के बाद पशुपितनाथ भी गये थे और पिछले साल भी केदारनाथ बद्रीनाथ गये थे.

परिणाम की प्रतीक्षा!

2019 के इस इस बेहद हंगामेदार और लंबे लोकसभा चुनाव के परिणाम का अब जनता को बड़ी बेसब्री से प्रतीक्षा है. सभी के अलग-अलग अंदाज हैं. भाजपा नेता तीन सौ का आंकडा पार करने की पूरी आशा लगाये हुए हैं. वहीं दूसरी ओर विपक्षी पार्टियां और नेता तो अब मोदी को सत्ता से बाहर ही देख रहे हैं. कुछ लोगों को यह भी अंदाज है कि बहुमत किसी भी पार्टी को न मिले और मिलीजुली ही सरकार बन पाये. एक यह भी अंदाज है कि मत विभाजन का लाभ भाजपा को मिलेगा और अभी वही सत्ता में रहेगी भले ही पहले से उसकी सीटें कुछ कम हों. बड़ी अजीब और दुर्भाग्य की बात है कि बढ़ती जनसंख्या, बेरोजगारी और सुनियोजित विकास पर किसी का कोई ध्यान ही नहीं है. हर बार वही ढाक के तीन पात ही दिखाई देते हैं.

शिखर चंद जैन, स्ट्रैंड रोड, कोलकाता

वेद मामूरपुर, नरेला

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

देश दुनिया से

सुखे की चपेट में आ गया है उत्तर कोरिया

उत्तर कोरिया सदी के सबसे भयानक सूखे का सामना कर रहा है. यह खबर उत्तर कोरिया की सरकारी मीडिया ने दी है. कुछ दिन पहले ही वर्ल्ड फूड प्रोग्राम ने देश की स्थिति पर गहरी चिंता जतायी थी. दुनिया से अलग-थलग देश उत्तर कोरिया पर उसके परमाणु हथियारों और बैलिस्टिक मिसाइलों के कारण कई तरह के प्रतिबंध लगे हुए हैं. इन सब के बीच यह देश अपना पेट भरने के लिए संघर्ष कर रहा है, क्योंकि यहां खाने की कमी का इतिहास

पुराना है. चार दशक पहले

भी वहां ऐसी स्थिति थी, जब

बारिश कम होने से भोजन का संकट पैदा हो गया था. संयुक्त राष्ट्र के मुताबिक पिछले साल यहां जो पैदावार हुई, वह पिछले एक दशक में सबसे कम थी. अनुमान है कि कम-से-कम पांच लाख टन कम पैदावार हुई. जेएनयू के प्रो संदीप मिश्रा के मुताबिक, उत्तर कोरिया को अपनी पूरी आबादी के लिए करीब 50 लाख टन पैदावार की जरूरत होती है, लेकिन पिछले एक दशक से इसमें लगभग हर साल 5-6 लाख टन की कमी हो रही है. उत्तर कोरिया इसकी भरपाई संयुक्त राष्ट्र के वर्ल्ड फूड प्रोग्राम के अलावा अंतरराष्ट्रीय मदद के जरिये करता है. उसके पास दूसरे देशों से सप्लाई कम होती जा रही है और खाना खरीदने के लिए अंतरराष्ट्रीय मुद्रा भी पर्याप्त नहीं है.