

Don't be a dinosaur!

Failure to change with the times is making some of the best educational institutions of yesteryear lose their sheen



OUT OF THE BLUE

ANJALI BHARGAVA

When we were growing up in the late 70s and early 80s, it was common for many girls to study in what we then called convents. The Convent of Jesus and Mary (CJM), Loreto Convent (LC) and Carmel Convent were three well-known and respected institutions in Delhi. Boys were often sent to St. Columba's, St. Xavier's and Mount St Mary's. Mumbai

too had its own counterparts — Cathedral & John Connon, Queen Mary, Campion, branches of CJM and Loreto and Don Bosco to name a few. But no matter which school you attended, St Stephen's College in Delhi and Xavier's College in Mumbai were quite the place to be. By and large, both institutions were the first choice for any student who finished their board examinations and were headed to college.

But close to 30 years later, I find things have changed rather dramatically. Hardly anyone I know aspires to send their children to any of the schools I mention above. How many of you know children currently studying in St. Columba's or Loreto Convent in Delhi? CJM? Be it Delhi or Mumbai, the old names have been relegated to the backbenches.

In a certain set, the only names one hears of today are Sanskriti, Vasant Valley, The Shri Ram School, The British School and even The American Embassy School. These are considered

"the" places to be. Those who fail to make it to what is considered the A list go to Modern School (slipped down from being in the A list back then), DPS and Step by Step, to name a few.

In Mumbai, where fewer new schools have been added, Bombay Scottish, Bombay International and Cathedral still figure quite high in the list. A new aspirational addition has been Dhirubhai Ambani International School but many more wealthy Indian parents send their wards to the American, German and French schools in the city and even overseas to United World College, Singapore.

The college scenario too has changed drastically. Almost anyone who can comfortably afford it heads out of the country after school, mainly to the US to pursue an undergraduate usually funded by parents. This holds true for both science and engineering fields and for the humanities.

But even those who stay back seem less and less enamoured with St

Stephen's and St Xavier's. Why has this happened? What has led to the decline of these Christian institutions — be it at the school or college level — that were once considered absolutely the best. I asked a few alumni and some academicians and here's what they had to say.

One, they all argue that these institutions have simply refused to change with the times. For instance, I was horrified to learn that St Stephen's has failed to add any kind of liberal arts programme to its offerings. This at a time when several new private options like Symbiosis and Flame in Pune and Ashoka in Sonapat, offering a credible liberal arts degree, have sprung up. Why wouldn't a St. Stephen's manage to introduce a similar course and do a better job of it than the newbies?

In times as politically charged as today, I learnt to my surprise that St Stephen's doesn't even offer a degree in political science. In fact, the courses on offer were pretty much what they were 30 years ago when we went to college.

A former Xavier's student told me that he recently visited the college to speak at a function and was amazed to find how little had changed. To repeat his words: "Everything seemed at a stand-still and set in stone". While there's something to be said for consistency, it's alarming if an educational

institution appears to be unchanged for three decades. Almost all the alumni were of the view that these institutions have failed to invest in their faculty.

The same holds for the schools. The philosophy, content, delivery and ethos in these convent schools has remained stubbornly unchanged. Coupled with this is the fact that many parents no longer see any advantages in keeping the two sexes apart: When the world comprises both men and women, learning to deal with them from the word go makes more sense than them being suddenly thrust in your face.

A more worrying factor has been the decline of these Christian institutions that has set in primarily after they reserved a large percentage of their seats for their own community. This has ensured that many students who fail to make it on merit get admission, resulting in both a drop in the quality of minds that are entering and subsequently leaving the institution and a reduction in diversity.

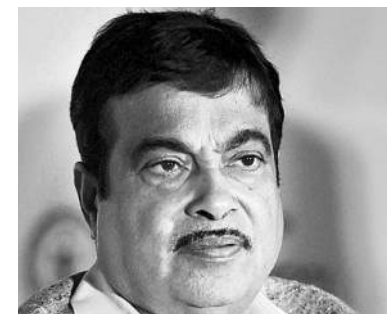
None of these moves bode well for the institutions. Reserving seats, refusal to let go of traditions and teaching styles that have long outlived their utility and a failure to change with the times are ensuring that these institutions lose their edge. It's a heavy price to pay.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Too much confusion

The announcement of the exit poll results has landed the regional satraps — at least in the south — in a state of disarray. With hardly two days to go before the results of the Lok Sabha election are announced, there is much confusion about a possible meeting of the Congress-allied regional parties with the party high command in Delhi on May 23. While Tamil Nadu Congress chief K S Alagiri said leaders of the regional major Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) would participate in the meeting on May 23, DMK President M K Stalin told party colleagues there was no such meeting on the cards that day. Later, Alagiri told journalists since he wasn't participating in the proposed meeting he wouldn't know when it had been scheduled.

Enough clarification



A day after nearly all exit polls predicted a comfortable majority for the Bharatiya Janata Party-led (BJP-led) National Democratic Alliance in the Lok Sabha polls, Union minister and senior BJP leader Nitin Gadkari (pictured) launched the poster of PM Narendra Modi, a biopic on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in Nagpur. Gadkari, who contested from the Nagpur Lok Sabha seat, said the exit polls were not the "final decision" but indicated that the BJP would once again come to power. Asked if his name was also being considered for the PM's post, Gadkari said, "I have clarified this around 50 times. We fought the elections under the leadership of Modi and he will certainly become the prime minister again. The people of the country are once again supporting the BJP, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the work done by us in the last five years. And the exit polls are an indication," he said. The makers of the biopic, announced earlier this month, said the film would be released countrywide on May 24, a day after the results of the general elections polls are declared.

The most aware state

Madhya Pradesh has emerged as the "most aware state" with the largest increase in the proportion of votes polled in the just concluded Lok Sabha election. The state recorded a 10 per cent increase in the votes polled compared to the 2014 election. According to the Chief Electoral Officer of the state, V L Kantarao, in 2014, Madhya Pradesh recorded 61 per cent voting but in 2019, it crossed 71 per cent. Andhra Pradesh recorded an 8.78 per cent point increase in voting and is in second position. Polling for the general elections concluded on Sunday. In the last phase Madhya Pradesh recorded more than 75 per cent voting.

ITC's post-Deveshwar challenges

Why Sanjiv Puri will have his work cut out achieving his late mentor's long-term goals

SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

In 2011, just after getting another five-year term as chairman of ITC, Yogesh Chandra Deveshwar (excluding cigarettes) elaborated his broad vision for the tobacco-to-Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) company in a free-wheeling interview with *Business Standard*. One, he wanted ITC to become the country's largest FMCG company (excluding cigarettes) overtaking its key rivals like Hindustan Unilever and Nestle in the next 10 to 15 years. Two, he envisioned that half of the group's profits would come from non-tobacco business within the same time period. Three, he was open to spinning off the FMCG business into a separate company maybe when it has revenues over ₹15,000 crore. A few years later, he added a fourth target: Revenues of ₹1 trillion for the FMCG business by 2030.

These ambitious plans will now be the responsibility of Sanjiv Puri who last week was appointed chairman, a man whom Deveshwar, who died earlier this month, had handpicked for the job. To say that achieving the targets his mentor set will be challenging would be an understatement.

To take the ₹49,000 crore ITC to the top slot in the highly competitive FMCG business will require some aggression. Hindustan Lever's revenues continues to be over three times those of ITC's FMCG (non-cigarette) revenues, and the gap is not really getting smaller. In FY2019, the gap

between ITC's non-cigarette FMCG revenues and Hindustan Lever's sales was over ₹25,000 crore, compared with ₹21,000 crore in FY2015.

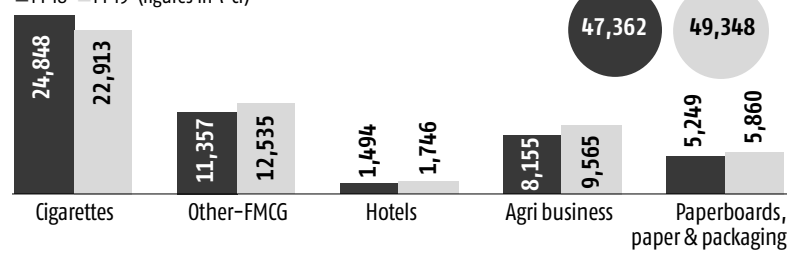
Indeed, Deveshwar's ambition to garner a larger share of profit from ITC's non-tobacco business still looks a tall ask. In FY19, tobacco accounted for around 80 per cent of ITC's profit before tax (PBT), even though the bulk of the capital outlay was invested in the non-tobacco businesses. FMCG's contribution is a mere 1.7 per cent to PBT. To be fair, Deveshwar had succeeded in garnering sufficient volumes from the FMCG business; it accounts for 25 per cent of company's gross revenues from sales. It also has been in the black for the past six years.

But Deveshwar's revenue target for 2030 for FMCG simply means that this business has to grow over eightfold in the next 11 years to reach that magic number. To offer an idea of the challenge: in FY2019, Deveshwar's last full year as chairman, ITC's non-cigarette FMCG revenues grew only 10 per cent.

Puri is well placed to understand the multiple challenges involved in ITC's transformation, having worked through various divisions from tobacco to consumer goods. Old ITC hands also say he'll likely have an easier time organisationally. Thanks to the management changes, which saw many senior and older executives leave or retire, Deveshwar has ensured that Puri has a free hand in running the show. "That is very different from when Deveshwar was appointed as chairman, which saw the old guard

CRUISING ALONG

■ FY 18 ■ FY 19 (figures in ₹ cr)



The key segmental revenues, does not include some others. Other FMCG include packaged foods, dairy and beverages, apparel, education and stationery products, personal care, safety matches and agarbattis. Source: Company

and contenders challenge him and split the board. He has ensured that his successor does not have to face the same challenge," says a former top executive of ITC who worked closely with Deveshwar.

But Puri's challenge is no longer just to ensure that the share of non-tobacco revenues grows year on year. He has to go to the next stage to ensure that the share of ITC's profits from the non-tobacco business grows exponentially to meet Deveshwar's target — from FMCG, hotels, paper boards, agri business amongst others.

The cornerstone of that strategy has to be the FMCG business where there is huge potential for volume expansion in new categories, deepening of distribution, as well as increasing the brand portfolio. That is why Puri is pushing the FMCG business into dairy, coffee, frozen and fresh vegetables as well as chocolates. But crowding the shop shelves is one thing; catching the consumer's attention is another. As an analyst pointed out, "In tobacco, ITC dominated the market and there was hardly any credible challenger. Those who came either

failed to enter or closed operations (Japan Tobacco, Rothmans and so on) or made no dent due to regulatory and foreign direct investment restrictions and the ban on manufacturing."

FMCG, however, is another ballgame. ITC does not enjoy protection from competition here, and faces not just global giants but even domestic biggies like Patanjali and Dabur. "Each segment of the FMCG market has entrenched players where ITC is just a new challenger — for instance, in juices it faces PepsiCo as well as Dabur," an analyst who has tracked the FMCG space points out.

Still, concentrating on the non-tobacco business is imperative for ITC's long-term survival: Cigarette sales are slowing, margins are being squeezed with the government increasing duties by over 200 per cent and the anti-tobacco lobby is pushing in for more restrictions.

That is yet another area that Puri has to handle: Managing the environment, whether it is with the government, which has relentlessly increased duties or when it periodically reviews FDI policy in tobacco.

ON THE JOB

Palliatives are no solutions



MAHESH VYAS

Early in his tenure as Prime Minister, Narendra Modi had called the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme as a living monument of the failure of the country's effort to tackle poverty. The heavy sarcasm was, of course, directed at the Congress. By the end of his tenure, the Modi government had progressively increased the allocations for MGNREGA and to top it, also announced the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-KSNY) to transfer ₹6,000 per year unilaterally into the accounts of farmers.

This is perhaps, the most eloquent evidence of an admittance of the failure of the Modi government to raise the well-being of rural folk. If MGNREGA was a monument of failure, what is the PM-KSNY on top of a bloated MGNREGA if not band-aid over a festering wound?

NYAY by the Congress raises the bar of support to ₹6,000 per month. And there is a growing argument that the MGNREGA should be extended to urban regions.

One suggestion is that employment may be guaranteed and that it may be guaranteed at living wages, not just minimum wages. This is possibly a better means of achieving the minimum

income guarantee that what NYAY seems to suggest.

A mere transfer, that NYAY seems to suggest, would be a bad idea. If the source of household incomes is largely benevolent transfers from government, who will be willing to work? Wouldn't it get a lot more difficult to raise the labour force participation rate if households have fewer reasons to look for jobs? India's labour force participation rate is among the lowest in the world.

Political parties are competing to provide direct transfers to households because they have failed to address the problem of lack of quality jobs. But, competitive unilateral transfers to households is a race to the bottom. A far more promising and sustainable way of providing quality jobs that may be expected to pay living wages is to spur investments by the private corporate sector.

The Indian private corporate sector has stopped, for all practical purposes, creating new fixed assets. Growth in net fixed assets was at its lowest in 2017-18 and there is no reason to believe that the situation could have improved during 2018-19.

Net fixed assets of the private corporate sector grew by 6.5 per cent in 2017-18 and before that, at 7.2 per cent in 2016-17. These are the two lowest annual growth rates of net fixed assets in the private sector in the past 14 years. Growth in plant and machinery assets was even lower at 7.1 per cent and 5.7 per cent in 2016-17 and 2017-18, respectively.

Let's place these statistics in some perspective. During the first four years of the Modi government, the average annual growth of plant and machinery of the private sector was 9.2 per cent. In UPA II, it was 13 per cent and in UPA I, it was 19.5 per cent.

The impact of the sharp fall in investments on employment by the private corporate sector is direct. The growth in compensation to employees fell from 23 per cent per annum during UPA I to 18.8 per cent per annum in UPA II to 11.4 per cent per annum during the Modi government. The growth in employment in the private corporate sector was worse. This grew at 10.5 per cent per annum during UPA I. It then dropped to 6.5 per cent per annum during UPA II and further to a mere 1.3 per cent per annum during the Modi regime.

The Indian private sector is the best provider of quality jobs. And to ensure that the private sector does continue to provide quality jobs, it may be a good idea to review the impact of increased contractualisation on quality jobs by the corporate sector.

It is likely that contractualisation has not helped much in growing employment in the private corporate sector. But, even if it has helped a little or substantially, it may not be a good idea. Contractual jobs are not good quality jobs like regular corporate jobs. If the private corporate sector does not provide quality jobs then there would be no quality jobs in India. The government is outsourcing jobs and the private sector is contracting out jobs. If this continues, India may be turned into the sweat shop of the world. This is not the future that we may aspire to.

If labour has to be motivated to gain education and skills, then it needs assurance that the end outcome would be quality jobs.

Employment guarantee and income transfer schemes could be a short-term palliative to extreme distress but these are not a solution to the need for quality jobs.

The author is the MD & CEO of CMIE

LETTERS

Introspect, don't accuse



The much-coveted exit polls predict the return of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). It is understandable that the parties which find the predictions disappointing remain sceptical about the exit poll predictions. Such parties dismiss the predictions and term the predictions as something which "isn't exact poll". They would like to be optimistic till the official announcement of results. Most of the time exit polls have predicted accurately which way the wind was blowing even if it hasn't been on point when it came to predicting the exact number of seats won by the parties. There are a few isolated cases where exit polls have gone wrong. If these predictions come true, Narendra Modi will be the prime minister for a second term and all the parties that lose the electoral battle will indulge in a drama where they grudgingly concede the defeat first and then pretend to introspect about the results of the defeat. After doing all this, they will start accusing the victorious party of hacking the EVMs and of indulging in electoral malpractices with money and muscle power.

According to exit poll trends, N Chandrababu Naidu is on his way out, losing ground to Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy of the Yuvajana Shramika Raithu Congress (YSRC). Naidu

deserves defeat. Naidu joined NDA and left it in 2018 when Modi did not consider his plea for special status to his state. Now the Andhra Pradesh chief minister has warmed up with the parties which he had opposed during his stay in NDA. This only makes him an opportunist politician who is ideologically bankrupt and people alone can teach a lesson to such politicians.

K V Seetharamaihah Hassan

Proceed with caution

Whether it's about television rating points (TRP) or the love for PM Narendra Modi is the matter of debate but the news channels started declaring the exit poll results within seconds of the last votes polled (6.30pm). The six main pollsters showed that for the second time, Modi's National Democratic Alliance (NDA) will rule, winning anywhere between 287 and 336 seats. What's funny is that the final tally each survey predicted was varied but were uniformly well above the 272 seats needed to form a government. As if to provide some relief to the Opposition, two surveys showed the NDA falling short — by between five and 30 seats. Surprisingly, Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu has mocked the exit polls, saying "exit polls do not mean exact polls. We have to understand that. Since 1999, most of the exit polls have gone wrong".

I agree with Naidu and want to men-

tion here that exit polls after the 2004 Lok Sabha polls had given 68 more seats to the NDA than it got. But after the results, we had the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) ruling India for the next 10 years. It has also been observed that when forecasters made mistakes in a few states but got the bigger picture right, the error in one state was cancelled out by the error in another; if the NDA or the UPA did not rise to the expectations in one state, it excelled in another. Hence there is nothing wrong with Naidu devaluing exit polls.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee
Faridabad

Checks and balances

It's good that this impatient nation gets a few days to ponder over the ethos, evolution and the economy of the period that we are passing through now. Nationalism cannot be reduced to gross majoritarianism. Likewise, politics does have its genesis in confrontation but the reverse would be the very antithesis of socio-political evolution. The "us versus them" needs to yield to the notion of "we and the problem".

R Narayanan Navi Mumbai

Letters can be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to: The Editor, Business Standard, Nehru House, 4 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110 002. Fax: (011) 2372 0201. E-mail: letters@bsmail.in. All letters must have a postal address and telephone number.



Cheer in the markets

But caution is warranted about headwinds

The stock markets responded positively to predictions in the exit polls that the incumbent National Democratic Alliance government would easily win re-election. Over the course of trading on Monday, market indices hit new all-time highs and posted their biggest one-day gains in 10 years. The rupee appreciated by 49 paise, the biggest single-day gain in two months, to close at 69.74 against the US dollar. Some exuberance at the prospect of a stable government is understandable. However, it is relevant to ask whether an over-reaction to opinion polls — or even to the final results on May 23 — is a product purely of sentiment or a rational response to the underlying fundamentals. Naturally, markets will react to any new information, such as was delivered by the exit polls. But the possibility of some volatility following the actual results should not be discounted. The markets have already rallied considerably, so investors will know there is scope for a correction.

The fundamentals deserve some attention. Emerging market shares have suffered as a result of renewed trade tension between the United States and China. Corporate India is still in the midst of its quarterly results season for the March quarter, but in spite of mixed results, analysts have pointed towards a trend of constrained demand. Analysts have reported a major shift in tone for the worse on the short-term demand narrative of companies reporting. Emerging from this situation will not be easy. Another brokerage firm reported that 60 per cent of the firms that it covered had reported lower-than-expected earnings. A demand slowdown in the automobile sector has received particular attention; and IT companies continue to struggle with their margins. It is not easy to identify the next big sources of earnings growth. Given that, and given also that the indices are already close to record levels, a certain degree of caution till the political and policy environment stabilises after the election seems warranted.

The question that will be asked on May 23 and after is: What the next government can and will do to support growth and earnings? If the markets are rising on hope, the new government has to deliver to keep that hope going. Once the noise around election results die down, the new government's policy and reform agenda to stimulate demand, boost consumption, revive capex and revive economic growth will thus be closely watched. The experience after the NDA government's assumption of power in 2014 was that there were no immediate big-bang reforms implemented. It is not likely that the first weeks and months would be any different this time even if the government were re-elected as the exit polls suggest. It will take some time to identify the policy priorities of the government, and even longer for those priorities to translate into action on the ground. Thus, any positive policy shock will take time to show up in the fundamentals. Till then, regardless of political volatility, the underlying trends of the market may well continue to be determined by broader, and global, factors. The trade and tariff war between the US and China, the developments in the Gulf and the prospects of a slowdown in the global economy are really as positive for the markets as the news from the exit polls.

Commission & omissions

EC has not upheld the spirit of the law

Whatever the final results for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, it is fair to say that the Election Commission (EC) has emerged from the 36-day exercise with a marked diminution of its prestige. Having been prodded to consider complaints against gross transgressions by both ruling party and Opposition candidates in one of the least edifying campaigns on record, it now presents the spectacle of internal discord. One of the election commissioners, Ashok Lavasa, has recused himself from attending the EC meetings to discuss violations of the Model Code of Conduct, saying his minority dissenting view had gone unrecorded. Mr Lavasa has been at the centre of a controversy, having opposed five clearances that the EC gave to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and party president Amit Shah for making obvious references to religion in the course of their campaigns and invoking the Balakot strikes. Under EC rules, majority decisions prevail and the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) has argued that minority decisions do not get recorded because code violations are not quasi-judicial decisions.

This view may hew to the letter of the EC's mandate but not to its spirit. It is an open question, for instance, whether it should have approved the use of government resources to televise the prime minister's visit to Kedarnath at a time when all campaigning had mandatorily ended; this would not have been an issue had the visit occurred during campaigning. It is also worth wondering why it allowed both Mr Modi and Mamata Banerjee a whole day to campaign in Bengal before it shortened the campaigning period over some reprehensible poll violence the day before.

Given the fierce whataboutery that dominates the public debate in recent years, it is fair to say that previous ECs have not exactly covered themselves in glory either, nor have political establishments in dealing with them. There is the 2009 example of CEC N Gopalaswami recommending the removal of his colleague Navin Chawla for political partisanship (Mr Chawla was considered close to the Congress party). In 2002, Mr Modi, then chief minister of Gujarat, had suggested that then CEC J M Lyngdoh had turned down his request to call early Assembly elections after communal riots in the state because he was Christian. The introduction of the three-member committee in 1989 was the result of the display of some unwarranted independence by then EC R V S Peri Sastri, who is credited with introducing some wide-ranging electoral reforms in his time. This was struck down by the Supreme Court only to be revived in 1993 to rein in T N Seshan, who displayed an inconvenient predilection for independent action that discomfited politicians of all hues. Both Peri Sastri and Mr Seshan set new standards of objectivity for the EC — till then a somewhat pliant institution — that earned it considerable public respect for institutional impartiality. This hard-won reputation has been whittled away since the 2000s. At least part of the weakness lies in the fact that EC appointments are in the hands of the executive that the EC has to govern. In that sense, Mr Lavasa has shown courage in speaking truth to power. It's a pity the EC has chosen to ignore his well-considered view.

ILLUSTRATION: AJAY MOHANTY



A second balance sheet deleveraging

This time round, it is the promoters who are grappling with intense liquidity shock

In India, over the past few years, we have seen an intense balance sheet deleveraging among large corporate houses. The infamous Credit Suisse "House of Debt" reports had chronicled how several large Indian companies had unsustainable capital structures, with no free cash flow, and a desperate need to deleverage. Their debt burden had to come down. This deleveraging has taken place over the past six to seven years, through asset sales, bank write-offs and in certain cases change in control. Both the banking system (with the non-performing assets peaking at near 15 per cent) and the economy have borne the pain of this debt workout. Just when we thought we were coming near the end of this deleveraging cycle, and could look forward to a pickup in private sector investment, we are now faced once again with excess leverage.

This excess leverage and balance sheet deleveraging will now be at the promoter level, at their personal balance sheet. This is where there is intense stress today, stress which can damage the credit markets and once again short circuit any potential recovery in private sector investments. All balance sheet deleveraging cycles involve debt pay-downs, which reduce investments and inevitably slow down the economy. If you are scrambling to deliver free cash flow, you will cut investments to the bone.

Post the IL&FS default in September, we have seen intense pressure on all except a handful of Non-bank-

ing Financial Companies (NBFs). They have had their access to long-term funds constrained and costs of funding have risen 100-200 basis points. Many NBFs have had simply no choice but to sell down assets to meet debt maturities. Most have limited ability to lend as they are unable to raise fresh funding. These same NBFs were major players in promoter funding and structured credit. With their inability to



AKASH PRAKASH

lend, they are no longer willing to role over maturing promoter funding structures, forcing promoters to scramble to raise the cash needed to pay off their liabilities. This has come as a shock to promoters used to rolling over their liabilities. A second source of promoter funding has been the debt mutual funds. Through various structures, we have seen funds subscribe to the debt of many promoter holding company entities, collateralised against listed company shares of the promoter. Market scuttlebutt has it that such funding is more ₹1 trillion. This is spooking the markets, as we do not know exactly where this promoter funding is sitting. We also do not know whether it is being marked-to-market accurately. Debt funds have had to take a markdown for their exposure to IL&FS paper, and it seems possible that more such markdowns may happen as more promoter funding structures come to light.

Most investors did not seem to realise the risks being taken by some funds on their behalf. Consequent to this realisation many debt funds are

Save wind energy from the doldrums

Public interest in renewable energy in India has picked up only in recent years. But the silhouettes of windmills on the horizon are no novelty to the country, having been around for more than two decades. With an installed capacity of 35.6 gigawatts (GW) and a total potential for over 300 GW at conservative estimates, onshore wind in India can accelerate the country's clean energy ambitions.

However, wind speeds have been slowing in the sector, causing much angst for developers and manufacturers. New capacity addition was less than 2 GW for the last two years. Despite a project pipeline of over 10 GW, the trend in low annual capacity addition is expected to continue this year. Wind turbine manufacturers are operating at unsustainable capacity utilisation rates of less than 20 per cent. According to the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), workforce needs in wind project implementation dropped to 1,140 in 2018, 73 per cent lower than in 2016. How can we save our homegrown wind industry before it is too late?

The first signs of trouble appeared soon after the sector shifted to reverse auctions, from the 15-year-old feed-in-tariff (FIT) regime. With an aggressive bid within the first year, the sector achieved the lowest tariff discovered for renewable power in the country, ₹2.43/kWh (in December 2017). After the auction, developers started scrambling to procure land and secure connectivity to evacuation infrastructure. Wind power relies on geographically concentrated resources where getting contiguous land can be arduous. More than 60 per cent of the capacity auctioned in 2017 has not yet been commissioned and is behind schedule owing to land and connectivity issues.

While these challenges seem common to both wind and solar photovoltaic, there are two reasons why the wind sector needs some urgent attention. One, even though there are seven wind-rich states, only two of them have sites with mean wind speeds high enough to provide the expected low tariffs

(₹2.85/kWh), causing stress on existing land and evacuation facilities. Two, unlike solar PV, the wind sector has a globally competitive domestic supply chain in India. Low annual capacity additions are gravely impacting small domestic turbine and parts manufacturers, while bigger (mostly international) players can survive the turbulence.

How do we solve these issues? Policymakers must choose between two approaches: To distribute the capacity or distribute the energy generated.

Distributing capacity means tapping into wind resources available in medium-to-low wind power density (WPD) regions. While Tamil Nadu and Gujarat have the highest wind speeds and account for 39 per cent of the total wind potential in India, (according to the National Institute of Wind Energy), there is an aggregate potential of 184 GW in other medium-to-low WPD regions. Commissioning wind farms in these states could reduce stress on land and evacuation facilities, potentially reduce the investment required for inter-state transmission infrastructure, and reduce the overall cost of

integrating wind power into the grid. However, lower wind speeds would mean higher levelised cost of electricity. CEEW analysis indicates a 6 to 36 per cent increase from current ceiling tariffs but comparable with the national average power purchase cost for conventional generation. In order to optimise energy production from low-WPD sites, there is need for policy support to give incentives to develop advanced turbine technologies, which could tap low wind speeds.

For the second approach — distributing the energy generated — to work, effective mechanisms are necessary to transfer power from point of generation to the nearest transmission network and to the periphery of oftakers' networks. The Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO) mechanism is meant to facilitate the inter-state transfer of power. But compliance of distribution companies with RPOs is staggeringly low,



INFLEXION POINTS

ARUNABHA GHOSH & SELNA SAJI

now facing redemption pressures. The regulator also seems to be taking a dim view of this type of lending. It is fair to say that going forward, debt funds will pull back their exposure to such promoter funding structures. There is no question of these structures being rolled over. Once again the promoters are being asked to repay maturing structures, there is no rollover.

The third source of funding for promoters was the structured credit book of private corporate banks. These banks are under intense pressure from investors to curtail such types of risk exposures. It is unlikely that this source of funding will continue to be extended. The biggest player in this space has serious capital and management challenges. It also seems determined to undergo a business model change, and de-risk its lending book.

There is therefore a severe liquidity shock for promoter balance sheets. Most business families are scrambling to cut their promoter funding exposures given the lack of alternative funding sources.

This promoter balance sheet deleveraging has many unintended consequences.

First of all, in certain cases, markets have hammered the stocks of the companies whose shares have been pledged. In many cases, wherever we see large pledged share exposures, the stocks have been hammered so as to trigger a default event, and create forced selling of the shares pledged as security for the loan. Companies which have no underlying operating issues, have seen their shares fall by 50-60 per cent because of these pledges.

Secondly, we have seen attempts by promoter families to sell large blocks of stocks to raise the cash to reduce their personal debt. These block sales will be much more common and may put pressure on stocks.

Thirdly, this scramble to reduce personal leverage has also driven most promoters to attempt to sell assets. In most cases all this leverage was taken to build infrastructure businesses or assets in their personal capacity. Once again, we have a buyer's market for assets, as numerous infrastructure and real estate assets are put up for sale by various promoter families. Given the amount of wealth destruction seen in infrastructure, it is amazing to me that anyone actually expects the private sector to invest again in greenfield assets in this space.

With this new balance sheet deleveraging cycle, just like the one we have just gone through, it will take time to repair balance sheets, and rebuild risk appetite. It will take time for the financial intermediaries to get comfortable. For the majority of Indian promoters, there is no chance they will invest in a hurry.

We are unfortunately back to where we were seven years ago. The government will have to drive and front-load investments in the economy, and the financial intermediaries in the system will take time to regain confidence. One can only hope that this work-out gets completed faster. We cannot afford another seven years of single digit earnings growth. The private sector has to rebound faster than the first balance sheet deleveraging cycle.

The writer is with Amansa Capital

Paeon to big business



BOOK REVIEW

MATHEW BISHOP

Anti-business feelings in America now run so strong that even some leading bankers and hedge-fund bosses want capitalism reformed. Socialism (of some kind) is espoused by a growing number of Democratic politicians. A Harvard University study found 51 per cent of 18- to 29-year-old Americans do not support capitalism. The business bashing is not solely from the political left; Donald Trump has tweet-attacked plenty of companies for offending his populist instincts. Voices demanding higher taxes, and tougher regulations grow louder. Echoing the vigorous trust busting of the

Progressive era, there are calls to break up Facebook and Google, the increasingly dominant tech platforms, while the titans of Silicon Valley are rebranded as 21st-century robber barons.

Amid so much criticism, who would dare dispute that there is something rotten about the state of corporate America today? Enter Tyler Cowen, an economics professor who has written a determinedly positive book about business. Mr Cowen did not become one of the world's most-read bloggers on economics without understanding the value of a well-timed contrarian blast. He showed this to great effect in 2011 in a best-selling e-book, *The Great Stagnation*, arguing that the rate of increase in median income had slowed since the early 1970s as a direct consequence of a falling rate of innovation in the American economy, which was thus likely to continue to struggle to grow for the foreseeable future. Now instincts. Voices demanding higher taxes, and tougher regulations grow louder. suade you that it deserves more of your love and less hate."

If you are hoping for a billet-doux to set your heart aflutter, remember that the author is a practitioner of the dismal science; the romance in his love letter is less *Harry Met Sally* than Demand Meets Supply. Still, there is no shortage of passion from Mr Cowen. His beloved is the source of "most of the stuff we enjoy and consume" and gives "most of us jobs." Mr Cowen also argues, persuasively, that America tops the world in the quality of its corporate management — if Chinese firms were managed equally well, they would be up to 50 per cent more productive. American business is also the leading innovator globally in many areas.

Some of his defence of business is less certain than his positive headline message suggests. He devotes a chapter to refuting accusations that Big Tech companies are evil, only to confess to worrying about the threat they pose to personal privacy, which he fears will get dramatically worse as facial recognition and voice-recording technologies become ever more ubiquitous. He

argues that business should be trusted more, despite so many high-profile scandals, because it is less prone to lying and cheating than governments or nonprofits. This could be read not as a ringing endorsement but as damning with faint praise.

For Mr Cowen, the real reason business is so unpopular is that we humans tend to anthropomorphise companies, turning corporations "into people in our minds, and also in our hearts" (and even writing love letters to them). Companies play along in this charade, because it pays them to do so, branding themselves with human characteristics like being friendly and listening to our concerns. Inevitably, we feel let down when they turn out instead to be "abstract, sharklike legal entities devoted to commercial profit."

Mr Cowen's explanation is not particularly convincing. Nor is his two-part advice for clearing the current atmosphere of distrust. First, the public should accept that business will always fall short of our unreasonably high expectations, and get over it. Second, rather unexpectedly from a member of the famously libertarian economics faculty at George Mason University, he wants business to try harder

at being socially responsible.

In 1970, *The New York Times Magazine* published an extraordinarily controversial article by Milton Friedman, titled "The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits." At the time, this shocked even much of corporate America, never mind the regular *New York Times* reader. The article was intended to defend business against heavy-handed government regulation, including of prices and wages, that threatened to squeeze dynamism and innovation out of corporate America. Yet over the years, as deregulation spread across America and then the world, Friedman's words were, I believe, twisted into a simplistic justification for doing anything that increased profits regardless of the consequences for society and the planet.

Mr Cowen rejects Friedman's definition, arguing instead that the "social responsibility of business is to come up with the magic of a vision that will help us trust it more, whether as consumers or workers." For Mr Cowen, business at its best is a "fundamentally ethical enterprise" and (preserving his libertarian credentials by citing Ayn Rand in support of it) "can be a vehicle for the achievement of heroic goals."

This would have been a far better book had Mr Cowen focused more on how to overcome the negative consequences of the spread of the Friedman Doctrine, which I believe has helped socially irresponsible, greedy, unheroic business leaders flourish at the expense of the heroic kind.

Happily, a new generation of more socially responsible business leaders is emerging, like Marc Benioff of Salesforce, the Chobani founder Hamdi Ulukaya and Indra Nooyi (until recently at the helm of PepsiCo). If only Mr Cowen had shown less unconditional love for corporate America and instead concentrated on what needs to be done to ensure that being ethical and heroic becomes business as usual. That "love letter" would have left most readers hopeful that there might yet be a Happily Ever After.

©2019 The New York Times News Service

BIG BUSINESS:
A Love Letter to an American Anti-Hero

Tyler Cowen
St. Martin's Press; 272 pages, \$28.99

Opinion

TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2019

SHOBHANA SUBRAMANIAN
shobhana.subramanian
@expressindia.com

Decisive Modi, Balakot worked for the NDA

A raft of social welfare schemes helped the voter beat farm blues; for India Inc, prospects for economy trumped Hindutva discomfort

GOING BY THE exit polls, the NDA is set to make a big comeback. Even if it tally doesn't quite match what some pollsters have predicted, it looks set to get the numbers to form the next government. And as many commentators have pointed out, this victory for the BJP, led by prime minister Narendra Modi, would be far more remarkable than the one in 2014. After all, this time around, voters have taken a far more informed view of the PM and his team. And if they want him back at the helm, they are convinced there is no one better to lead the country.

Even if the NDA hasn't done all that it promised, especially in terms of creating more jobs, the voters believe the PM has tried. Importantly, they believe he is more capable of delivering the goods than any other leader. The short point: no one's willing to risk a *khichdi* cabinet, petty political squabbling and a prime minister with no experience in government. On the ground, many are impressed with the PM as an individual and his ability to work hard, his modest upbringing and concern for the under-privileged.

One would have thought the severe distress in rural India—first, due to two consecutive poor monsoons and, later, due to the collapse in crop prices—would have caused resentment in the farm community. The NDA did very little by way of agri-reforms and, while it did raise support prices sharply last year, little was procured. But, the ₹6,000 payment to farmers, most of whom received at least one installment in February, seems to have revived the faith and assuaged their concerns for the moment. Indeed, if the exit poll numbers are to be believed, even the pain of demonetisation and GST have been brushed aside, if not forgotten. Some say the poor appreciate the crusade against corruption and are content to see the better-off suffer.

Even the losses to farmers from the tens of thousands of straying cows—which have damaged the crop, and have required farmers to spend ₹10,000-15,000 on fencing their fields—doesn't seem to have angered them. It is possible this will cost the BJP a few seats, but, by and large, farmers seem to be willing to forgive the government. If the exit poll numbers are right, the NDA is perceived to be a government that cares for the poor. The several social welfare schemes—Ujjwala, Swachh Bharat, Ayushman Bharat and the eleventh-hour Kisan Samman Yojana—have been appreciated. To be sure, these schemes may not have been the big success they are made out to be. But, the effort has been appreciated.

Also, the PM focusing the discourse on national issues has worked with the masses. To be sure, making the Balakot strikes an election issue and references to the army as *Modi sena* were strictly avoidable, as was the PM asking for votes in the name of the army. But, the tough-on-terror narrative, after the Pulwama attack in which 44 jawans were killed, seems to have struck a chord. Perhaps, what the recent military action between India and Pakistan has done is to make people more conscious of the problems on the border. There may be no real military threat at this point, but people want to feel safe and secure. Again, the exit polls suggest the electorate clearly believes Modi is a strong, decisive leader capable of protecting the country, even if he is considered to be autocratic.

The numbers also suggests that much of the electorate is ignoring the NDA's Hindutva agenda. While, in some parts of the country (West Bengal, for instance), the appeasement of minorities has upset the majority community—and could cost the TMC more seats than it may have anticipated—there seems to be little concern on Hindutva. It is possible that the lack of jobs and the general weak state of the economy is compelling people to be practical.

Even the corporate community in Mumbai, which is largely not comfortable with the NDA's Hindutva agenda, knows the economy needs to be in strong hands. So, they are setting aside their secular ideals and their discomfort with the BJP fielding the likes of a Pragya Singh Thakur, a terror accused, as a candidate. Of course, the business community is small. In general, though, the exit polls suggest the electorate is not overly concerned about issues that other have highlighted—for instance, the devaluation of institutions.

One can't really say that the Modi government has done a great job on the economy—there has been very little progress or none at all in reforming labour laws and a lot more could have been done to attract foreign capital where the approach has been unduly conservative. Despite all the noise on MUDRA loans, it doesn't look like small businesses are flourishing. Growth is decelerating, demand is weak and there is little private investment. But, there is little doubt the IBC has been a game-changer, without which the banks would have remained riddled with bad assets with the promoters continuing to take them for a ride. If the markets have rallied and the rupee has rebounded, it is evident India Inc wants a second NDA innings.

RainbowRUNNER

Dutee Chand coming out as gay must be celebrated as that will drive greater acceptance of LGBTQI rights and expression

INDIAN SPINTER DUTEE Chand's is a singular story of struggle. Born in a poor family in one of India's poorest states, surviving in athletics—much less making her mark—should have seemed impossible. But, Chand did much more than make her mark. She took on the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) over its hyperandrogenism rule. "Hyperandrogenism" is a sanitised, impersonal term—Chand's was a deeply personal fight for dignity, one in which her gender and, by extension, her achievements as an athlete were questioned. She emerged from it stronger, in her own words, although she had felt unfathomable vulnerability while the controversy was unfolding. That experience and the strength that it left her richer with is perhaps what has helped her now to come out as gay, looking forward to a life together with her soulmate, a girl from her village. Chand will be running into walls of opposition not just from the deeply conservative society of her home state but also her family—her mother has reportedly refused to accept Chand's homosexuality.

Though homosexuality is no longer illegal in India, it is still taboo. This is why pushing acceptability of homosexuality and LGBTQI individuals in India will require more public figures to support LGBTQI rights—and if they are themselves part of the rainbow collective, all the more better. In the last few years, a handful of people in public life, including business leaders, Bollywood figures, writers, etc, have come out of the closet. That has helped move the conversation along. Chand's coming out is, however, unique because, though she has received fame and international exposure as an athlete, her growing up years—when most LGBTQI individuals have to grapple with painful questions pertaining to their sexuality—were spent in a milieu that is antagonistic to LGBTQI expression and rights. To have overcome that, and battled questions on gender, is what perhaps arms Chand with a nuanced understanding of the fears and anxieties of LGBTQI individuals from the economically weaker sections. Chand's coming out, therefore, must be celebrated. It will go a long way in making LGBTQI rights a part of the mainstream conversation and, eventually, help drive their acceptance.



IRAN & NUCLEAR THREAT

US president Donald Trump

I just don't want them to have nuclear weapons, and they can't be threatening us. ... I'm not somebody that wants to go into war... But you do have situations like Iran, you can't let them have nuclear weapons

NO PROOF REQUIRED

IF THE EXIT POLLS ARE RIGHT, THEN THEY RIGHTFULLY MARK A STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN INDIAN POLITICS—THE END OF CONGRESS DYNASTIC RULE

2019 election: The beginning of the end?

SURJIT S BHALLA
Contributing editor, Financial Express
and consultant, Network 18
Views are personal Twitter: @surjitbhalla

roads, toilets, LPG gas, houses, health insurance, bank accounts, bank transfers. A lot of individuals claimed they had never been "touched" by government policies, except now. Another aspect often mentioned was the absolute quality of leadership provided by PM Modi (i.e. not just that he was much better than the rest). They trusted him, and despite several faults, wanted to vote for him. Give him another chance, and maybe another. And yes, and somewhat surprisingly for me, the rural voter often mentioned that Mr. Modi had enhanced India's standing in the world. I say surprising because I belong to DLLK, and we elite find it difficult to understand why a rural voter should be worried about India's standing in the world.

That is a cardinal mistake, and vividly illustrates why DLLK got this election so wrong (again, assuming exit polls are right—I believe they will be). This is a changed, educated, aspiring, middle-class India. Those who are not yet truly middle-class (about 50% of the population) want to get there, and want to know the means to get there.

These are some of the fundamental reasons for why to me a Modi victory was not a surprise. There is a major "technical" reason why those expecting a genuine fight-back by the political opposition were likely to be disappointed. One important factor behind the "structural change" Modi election of 2014 (some disparagingly, and dismissively, called it an exceptional "Black Swan" election) was the margin of victory in some key states. In Gujarat, in 24 of 26 seats, the BJP won by a margin of more than 10%. In Madhya Pradesh, 22 of 29 seats; in Maharashtra 22 of 23 BJP wins were with 10+ margin; and in Rajasthan 20 of 25 fights. All these states there was no alliance to consider—they were straight fights between the Congress and BJP. I also conjectured in Citizen Raj that perhaps the most unfortunate even to befall the Congress (and DKLL members) was that the Congress won three states in December 2018. This lulled them into thinking that they had a good chance of making a come-back in these states, and therefore all India. Congress supporters

were serious in believing that they could get within inches of their long term post-1991 median of around 140 seats it helped that the DKLL media was dominantly on their side and they did not have to counter questions about the basis for the Congress mustering a ten percentage point swing in head-to-head competition with the Modi led BJP.

There was something else that hurt the Congress besides hope. It is that the odds of a dynast from the freedom-fighter era would still work charms. I have said it before many times (even when Manmohan Singh was PM, and before) the Congress needs to shed the dynasty tag. That won't guarantee them a revival—but it is an absolutely necessary condition. Understanding this may have been the major reason why I got the exit polls right. In the inside flap of *Citizen Raj*, I state, "Will the Rahul Gandhi led Congress emerge as the single largest Opposition party; or will it become irrelevant and be relegated to electoral history? Most likely, and in the same order".

Election 2019: Does BJP do better than the exit polls?

	Total seats	Congress alone			BJP alone		
		Won in 2014	Citizen Raj	Updated	Won in 2014	Citizen Raj	Updated
Big states	502	39	54	41	256	244	258
Andhra Pradesh	25	2	2	0	2	3	2
Assam	14	3	2	2	7	9	9
Bihar	40	2	1	1	22	19	17
Chhattisgarh	11	1	6	4	10	5	6
Gujarat	26	0	3	0	26	24	26
Haryana	10	1	1	1	7	7	9
Jharkhand	14	0	1	3	12	8	10
Karnataka	28	9	10	6	17	12	21
Kerala	20	8	6	9	0	2	2
Madhya Pradesh	29	2	4	5	27	25	24
Maharashtra	48	2	2	2	23	23	23
Orissa	21	0	0	0	1	6	13
Punjab	13	3	4	8	2	4	2
Rajasthan	25	0	5	2	25	20	24
Tamil Nadu	39	0	0	0	1	3	3
Telangana	17	0	1	0	1	2	2
Uttar Pradesh	80	2	4	2	71	62	55
West Bengal	42	4	2	0	2	10	15
Small states	41	5	3	2	26	30	30
Total	543	44	57	47	282	274	293

Source: EC; authors database on Indian Elections as used in Citizen Raj
Notes: The Congress forecast is reported on page 197 of Citizen Raj and the BJP forecast on page 211

GST & INTER-BRANCH TRANSACTIONS

Fraught with potential litigation

The lenience on valuing inter-branch transactions allowed in GST could lead to litigation if businesses adopt a nil or a drastically reduced value, prompting disputes with the taxman

IT IS IMPERATIVE that businesses obtain a registration in each state where they have an establishment or any business activity is undertaken even if such activities are only provided to the head office of such businesses. Here, we discuss some of the key issues surrounding the valuation to be adopted for taxing such support services under GST.

With the levy of tax on inter-branch/office transactions, every supply of goods or services or between the establishments of the same business, but located in different states or having separate registrations, would now be required to be tracked by the businesses for the purpose of payment of tax.

As these transactions are within the same legal entity, it would typically not involve any consideration and thereby carry no value to estimate the GST liability. Consequently, there arises a need for attributing an appropriate value for these transactions. This is for the purpose of arriving at the amount of tax liability to be discharged thereon.

With regard to this, the GST law has prescribed the following values to be adopted for such transactions, in the following order, as mentioned below:

- 'Open Market Value' of such supplies; or
- Value of supply of goods or services of like kind and quality; or
- 100% and 10% of the cost of production or manufacture or the cost of acquisition of such goods or the cost of

provision of such services; or

- Value determined using reasonable means, consistent with the principles and provisions under the GST law.

In addition to the above, the provisions also state that wherever the recipient is eligible for full input tax credit of the GST applicable on such inter-branch/office transactions, the value declared in the invoice raised by the supplying branch/office, shall be deemed to be the 'Open Market Value' of the goods or services. On a conjoint reading of these provisions, it can be understood that where the recipient/receiving branch/office is eligible for availing the full credit of the GST chargeable on such supplies, whatever value is charged in the invoice by the supplier/supplying branch shall be considered to be the 'Open Market Value' of such supply.

Also, as the supplies undertaken at the branch locations are essentially input services provided to the receiving branch for the furtherance of business, such supplies shall be eligible for the full credit of the GST discharged on the value of these supplies. Accordingly, as the full credit is available, businesses can adopt any reasonable estimate of the costs of as the value for payment of GST.

Interesting to note is, as the above provisions provide a certain amount of lenience in the value to be adopted, businesses may choose to adopt nil or values which are far lesser than the costs of such supplies. This could then be dis-

puted by tax authorities, leading to litigations in some cases. Further, such practices could also result in the supplying branch/office locations not being able to make use of the Input Tax Credit of the goods or services or both received by them from third parties.

For instance, if the cost of goods produced is ₹100 and the GST paid thereon is ₹18 (i.e., @ 18%), and these goods have been transferred to another branch of the entity for a value of ₹50 with GST of ₹9 (@ 18%), then the receiving branch would only be able to avail the credit of GST of ₹9 declared in the tax invoice by the transferring branch. The balance credit of ₹9 shall remain with the transferring branch and not be available for utilisation by the receiving branch towards the output of GST on the subsequent supply of the said goods. This declaration of lower values in the invoices, more often than not, could lead to accumulation of credits at the transferring branch. On the contrary, a declaration of higher values in the invoices, could result in accumulation of credits at the receiving branch in the absence of any substantial output tax liability.

In order to avoid such scenarios leading to possible litigation and unutilised credits, it would be advisable for businesses to consider adopting appropriate valuation mechanisms, based on evaluating the facts on a case-to-case basis.

With contributions from
N Vijay Kumar, CA

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A much-needed respite

It is good that this impatient nation gets a few days to ponder over the ethos, evolution and the economy of the period that we are passing through. Nationalism can not be reduced to gross majoritarianism, nor liberalism the sole measure of a progressive democracy. Similarly, politics does have its genesis in confrontation, but the reverse would be the very antithesis of socio-political evolution. The "Us vs Them" needs to yield to the notion—We and the problem. As innovation and technology skew distribution of wealth and income, inclusiveness can not be sole mantra of a rewarding economy. As newer economic theories get misapplied, attempts at political correction follow and so would the opposite. It is to be hoped that while a strong opposition may be known to provide the checks and balances in informed governance, wisdom gained hard would not be easily swept away by a runaway majority either.

— R Narayanan, Navi Mumbai

Exit polls' reliability

Indian TV channels conducted their exit poll survey on only 2 lakh people across the country, whose voice extrapolate to predict the outcome of the Lok Sabha elections. This is laughable and proves that the exit poll prediction or survey cannot be trusted.

— Bhagwan Thadani, on e-mail

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com



ILLUSTRATION: SHYAM KUMAR PRASAD

KV SESHASAYEE & TV RAMACHANDRAN

Seshasayee is founder & president of WIN Broadband; Ramachandran is president of Broadband India Forum. Views are personal

Eliminating circular arguments around 5G

What is the clear path forward so that India doesn't fall behind? Digital India will have little meaning without 5G

THE NEW-AGE 5G technology has the potential for a major societal transformation in India. This visionary statement was presented two years ago at the Government High Level 5G India 2020 Forum. Since then, there has been much hype about bringing 5G to the country. At the forum, it was emphasised that this time India would not miss the boat on implementing advanced technologies in communications, like the country did with 3G and 4G. This filled us with ebullient hopes of a truly Digital India at the forefront of the 5G revolution. However, the ground reality, as it relates to implementation, has been a different story—one fraught with conflicting stakeholder positions, and inability to trigger the huge investments required for 5G implementation.

Globally, 5G rollout has begun. As many as 211 operators in 87 countries

have invested in 5G technology. As of March 2019, 15 operators around the world have been offering commercial 5G services. In India, not a single large live trial has been initiated, and the guidelines for the release of experimental or trial spectrum are still work in process. With a minimum of 6-12 months of intensive 5G live trials required prior to release, we are already over a year behind other nations.

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has laid out a 100-day 5G action plan that includes the commencement of 5G trials and policy surrounding this technology. While this is a welcome start, even if spectrum is provided readily and trials are completed rapidly, are we ready to introduce 5G? I'm afraid we are not, particularly with regards to critical infrastructure comprising of optical fibre, thousands of small cells and street furniture in a dense network, millions of

public WiFi hotspots, as these have to be created. And what about investments? Deloitte estimates that India needs a massive ₹5 lakh crore (\$70 billion) investment to bring in 5G. Where will this investment come from?

Let's look at one of the most important stakeholders—the telecommunication service providers (TSPs) who constitute the backbone of the sector. They are fighting to keep their heads above water. The collective debt of TSPs stands at ₹4.2 lakh crore (according to ICRA). Once at the forefront of global innovation, TSPs are now focused on survival in the face of challenges like the extremely high duties and levies they are subject to, astronomical spectrum pricing, outmoded regulatory framework and a fierce market battle resulting in one of the lowest user tariffs globally. The will may be strong, but where would they find the business case for huge 5G investments?

So, what can be done to facilitate a more attractive business environment? Spectrum allocation and pricing play the most significant role—Indian spectrum prices are some of the highest in the world and the allocated quantity well below global best practices, while 40% of the spectrum is lying unsold. There is an urgent need to review the auction design and the setting of the reserve prices, as pointed out by expert research agency ICRIER. The spectrum issue needs to be immediately resolved, else our foray into 5G will continue to be very challenging.

Here the government might also like to take a page from Singapore, which decided not to levy any spectrum fees in order to free operators and bring in advanced technologies. This is an excellent strategy to foster an ecosystem for innovation and, in the end, consumers, TSPs and the government will benefit.

The next major issue to discuss is infrastructure. To realise the potential of 5G, we require a dense, high-quality, bend- and pressure-resistant optical fibre network. This enables much faster and reliable speeds that empower 5G technology. Only one operator in India currently has a 4G network that can be upgraded to 5G fairly quickly. The rest, having started operations in 1995, run on legacy networks of 2G, 3G and 4G. While we pleasantly dream of a homogeneous Digital India, the unfortunate fact

is that much of our infrastructure is an amorphous mix of technologies with much of it analogue, and cannot support the speeds that 5G needs.

It is evident that the road to 5G is laden with some obstacles. The good news is that we do not have to embark on a voyage of discovery to figure our way out. The solutions are clearly defined in the world-class National Digital Communications Policy 2018. To reiterate—the first step towards 5G implementation in India is raising the investments. Recently, two global bodies have strongly advised this and commented on the need for a 5G investment-friendly environment prior to its implementation.

The first, the esteemed International Telecommunication Union (ITU) recently released a report (*Setting the Scene for 5G: Opportunities and Challenges*) that, among other things, states, "5G is expected to play a key role in digital economies, improving economic growth, enhancing citizens' experiences, and creating new business opportunities. Despite such benefits, care must be taken in establishing the commercial case, and whether 5G is a real priority for the economy. Until the investment case is compelling, the industry and policymakers should approach investment with caution while enhancing the quality and availability of 4G networks." ITU further stresses that 5G is likely to increase the global digital divide—since viability is likely to be in dense urban areas.

The second authority, the GSMA, the apex world body for mobile communications, released recommendations in its report *'India: Becoming 5G-ready'*. It emphasises the need for a supportive investment and taxation policy and the necessity to move away from legacy regulatory structures and towards a whole new government paradigm. Indeed, here's one example of how arbitrary taxes and levies affect TSPs today. Mobile devices are taxed at 12% while the telecom service, which is the key driving technology, is subject to 18%. Both need to be aligned to an even 12%. GSMA also points out "the current state of mobile coverage in India does not warrant the 5% USOF levy, particularly compared to universal service levies in other countries." It recommends that the current levy be reduced or phased out gradually.

So, does India have a choice whether to adopt 5G or wait it out? *We believe not.* As the High Level 5G India 2020 Forum pointed out, there are huge economic benefits to be realised across various verticals that we cannot afford to let go away. Illustratively, a recent study modelling Pune as a 'smart city' estimated that it can unlock an incremental value of 30% GDP valued at ₹80,000 crore over six years. This is for an area of 331 sq km and a population of 3.5 million. This study enabled the city to drive numerous digital service initiatives to capture the resulting growth potential of 15% CAGR (Purushottam Kaushik, L&T). And this is about just one city—imagine this evaluation across the country. We can reap mind-boggling benefits!

Since the setting-up, in the fourth quarter of 2017, of the High Level 5G India 2020 Forum, much was accomplished by the group, but far more could have been done in creating awareness as well as infrastructure and issuing the required policies. Even large-scale trials that were planned from December 2018 onwards could have been completed by now, and India could well be auctioning spectrum after correcting the pricing and getting ready to launch 5G services shortly—at least in some locations with requisite infrastructure. Unfortunately, we have missed that bus and will have to race at double speed to try and ensure that the gap already created between us and other nations does not widen further. Moreover, Digital India will have little meaning without 5G.

(Chandana Bala assisted with research inputs)

The road to 5G is full of obstacles. However, we do not have to embark on a voyage of discovery to figure our way out. The solutions are clearly defined in NDCP 2018

IBC has passed many litmus tests

SUMANT BATRA

Managing partner & head, Insolvency Practice, Kesar Dass B & Associates



It will continue to weather rough storms

LACK OF CLOSURE IN many insolvency cases in the mandatory 270 days is being interpreted by some as a sign of the looming dark storm over the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). The scepticism, to say the least, is unfair.

There are many causes behind missed timelines. A sound legislation, IBC was hastily drafted. Gaps were spotted following operationalisation in December 2016, prompting stakeholders to frequently approach the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) to seek clarifications. The NCLT started functioning with scant infrastructure. Established out of a vacuum, the NCLT had no institutional experience. A dozen NPAs, comprising 25% of total NPAs, were pushed into IBC by RBI at the nascent stage (July 2017) of the law. Another three dozen big cases followed. The stakes were high in these cases and they captured the mindscape of the nation. But the success of IBC was not to be measured only from the outcome of these 12 cases. This, surely, was not the intent.

The government amended IBC twice and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India tweaked the regulations under a dozen times. On top of that, section 29A was introduced in November 2017 when many cases had made significant progress. Disqualification of promoters caused disruptions, requiring recommencement of process in many cases. India does not have a developed market for distressed assets. With promoters disqualified, the pool of bidders shrunk further. This, too, caused slowdown of closure. The cadre of insolvency professionals was built from scratch. It is only normal they take a reasonable time to gain a grip on the insolvency process. Promoters struggled to reconcile with the reality of losing control of their companies, leading to litigation in many cases. Bankers, too, took time to comprehend their new role in the creditor-in-control avatar of IBC. It was well known that IBC will have to sail through some rough currents in initial days. Why be so terribly disappointed?

Notwithstanding the odds, IBC has progressed leaps and bounds. In a little over two years, 14,000 cases have been filed, of which the NCLT ordered commencement of resolution process in 1,858 cases, 152 were closed on appeal, review or settlement, 91 were withdrawn on account of settlement under section 12A, 94 yielded resolutions and 378 resulted in liquidation. As on March 31, 2019, 1,143 cases were undergoing resolution process. The resolution process yielded resolution of 94 cases, resulting in the settlement of claims of financial creditors of ₹1,73,359 crore. These cases include six out of the 12 large accounts. The overall recovery is 43% (₹74,497 crore) to financial creditors, while the corresponding liquidation value is ₹38,443 crore. This is, by no means, a small feat to achieve in a little over two years.

Comparing it with the painfully slow speed of cases in the pre-IBC regime, the progress made by IBC in 27 months appears to be a sprint. Earlier, the average life of cases recommended for restructuring was 4-8 years and those recommended for winding up even longer. The recovery rate (cents on the dollar) in India was 25.7, as opposed to 71.9 in high-income countries. In 2014, India ranked at number 134 on the list of 189 countries in 'closing a business index', which jumped many notches up to 108 after IBC.

Judging IBC from the prism of failed enterprises in a few initial cases is taking a narrow view of the law. A good insolvency law enables market participants to accurately price, manage and control default risks and corporate failure, and encourage sound credit practice. It enhances access to credit while reducing its cost. An effective exit law promotes responsible corporate behaviour by encouraging higher standards of corporate governance and financial discipline to avoid consequences of insolvency. With the introduction of IBC, the defaulter's paradise is lost. A behavioural change can be seen amongst borrowers. Default is now taken seriously and debtors are cuffing out money to clear their dues.

IBC has weathered initial storms. There is no reason to be alarmed because timelines have been missed in some cases. Setting a 180-day timeline was, in any case, an immensely aspirational (though commendable) goal, as such short timelines do not exist even in the UK, where it takes 1-2 years for cases to close. This is not to say we should wait and watch. As Joyce Meyer said, "Patience is not the ability to wait, it's how we behave while we're waiting." Some calm, composed and objective measures are required, without indulging in finger pointing. The infrastructure of the NCLT has improved significantly, and with the appointment of 32 new members, proceedings are expected to only speed up.

IBC has passed many litmus tests. There is no reason why it will not continue to weather rough storms and march with greater strides. The view from the high road is only sweet.

Uplifting the poor Indian farmer

Now, a MeToo for farmers' redressal as well

PP SANGAL

The author is a former ISS and UN consultant



MeToo—A MANIFESTATION of women power—originated in the wake of sexual harassment of women especially in the film industry and at workplaces, but here I do not intend to deal with any such concern. I have just thought of borrowing this phrase and use it for political parties—pan-India or regional—who are now vying with each other to woo the poor farmer by announcing direct cash transfers or some sort of a minimum income guarantee scheme. This new kind of 'MeToo' movement has emerged during last year or so, with an eye on winning the elections, both at the central and state levels.

Before cash transfer schemes, loan waivers was the weapon used by political parties. These loan waivers were never fully implemented due to lack of resources, non-availability of correct information about poor farmers, inefficient implementation machinery at ground and at the state-level, and the absence of political will after the elections were over.

Now we see a MeToo movement of cash transfers by political parties. There are five states in this group (Telangana, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Sikkim). The ruling BJP-led NDA-2 at the Centre had launched the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-KISAN) and the Congress announced the Nyuntam Aay Yojana (NYAY) in its election manifesto if voted to expand at the Centre. This group would be expanding as and when various

state assembly elections are announced in the future, and would continue to swell until the bubble bursts, as it happened with loan waivers, which no party talked about in these general elections.

I may sound pessimistic, but it should be noted that all cash transfer schemes are based on the concept of the Universal Basic Income (UBI), which originated in some western countries long ago. The UBI was never implemented in its full meaning out there, and only experimented for short periods in some countries and then was abandoned. Even in Madhya Pradesh, the SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association), in collaboration with the UNICEF, took up such a pilot project in nine villages (including one tribal

village) in 2014 (under the BJP regime), but it was not replicated in other villages despite the protagonists of the UBI calling it a successful experiment. Why is this so? Has any scientific evaluation been done? These are unanswered questions yet.

Now, since this MeToo movement of direct cash transfers to the poor has generated so much public interest as well as fury (after all, it is taxpayers' money), let's evaluate the pros and cons of the two major schemes, i.e. PM-KISAN and NYAY.

Let me first dwell on salient features of both the schemes. Under PM-KISAN, every small and marginal farmer (excluding landless agricultural labourers) would get ₹6,000 per year in three equal instalments, the scheme would cover 12 crore

farmers, and the estimated expenditure for the financial year would be ₹75,000 crore, which is about 0.3% of our GDP.

Instead, NYAY would provide ₹72,000 yearly (₹6,000 per month) to the bottom 20% of the poor, covering 5 crore families (about 25 crore people). This scheme entails an expenditure of nearly ₹3.6 lakh crore annually (1.5-2% of GDP).

Assuming that the BJP-led government regains power at the Centre when the results of the general elections are announced on May 23, the moot question that will arise is whether PM-KISAN would achieve the objective of doubling farmers' income by 2022 and also of the landless agricultural labourers (who constitute a sizeable 25% of poor farmers)? I think

both these objectives seem unlikely to be achieved simply because the amount ₹6,000 per year is too meagre and limited to landowning farmers and not landless agricultural labourers. It is also thought that such a small amount may not even impress the poor farmers and, therefore, the BJP may not have gotten extra votes on account of this scheme in the general elections. If the Rythu Bandhu Pathakam in Telangana greatly helped the incumbent TRS government to win the state assembly elections with a two-thirds majority in December 2018, it was because the benefit under the Rythu Bandhu was ₹25,000 per hectare of land (with no cap on land-holding size, unlike PM-KISAN).

Now, coming to the Congress's NYAY, it

envisages assuring a monthly income of ₹12,000 to a household by providing ₹6,000 per month to the head women (a step towards women empowerment) of the family. Although the amount appears reasonable, there is no clarity on how such a heavy expenditure of ₹3.6 lakh crore would be managed when we are fiscally so tight. Will the Congress-led government, supposing it comes to power at the Centre, resort to enhanced taxes, which it can ill-afford, or will it cut down on existing farmer subsidies like on water, electricity, seeds, fertiliser, etc, which would be counterproductive? Another alternative would be to cut down expenditure on the ongoing projects and programmes. I do not think there can be any such items without affecting the country's development and security in many ways, there is no clarity on the implementation aspect, there is no clarity on how the scheme would be implemented in phases. It would have implications for deciding annual outlays, year-on-year, if and when the scheme is rolled out.

It may be remarked in passing that some economists seem sceptical of the success of both PM-KISAN and NYAY, as these provide money without any useful contribution by beneficiaries. It's against the fundamental principles of economics.

In view of all this, the poor of the country would want to know "Kab aayenge acche din?" from the BJP and "Kya ab hoga Nyay?" from the Congress. The MeToo group of our worthy politicians should answer these pertinent questions soon.



@ieExplained

#ExpressExplained

If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@expressindia.com

FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY

HOW THE KILOGRAM HAS CHANGED, WHY YOUR BODY MASS HAS NOT

KABIR FIRAQUE
NEW DELHI, MAY 20

THE KILOGRAM is no longer what it used to be. It still means the same amount of mass as before, but the way it is defined changed across the world on Monday, World Metrology Day.

In India, schools and technical institutes have been advised to incorporate the change in their syllabi. The National Physical Laboratory (NPL), custodian of the fundamental units of measurement, has sent recommendations to the NCERT, the All India Council for Technical Education, the IITs, the NITs, and other institutions.

How has the definition changed? Will it affect the way we measure body mass or weigh our groceries?

Why the change

The global standards for measurement are set by the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM), of which India became a member in 1957. At BIPM in Sèvres, near Paris, stands a cylinder of platinum-iridium locked in a jar. Since 1889, the kilogram has been defined as the mass of this cylinder, called Le Grand K, or International Prototype Kilogram (IPK). In India, NPL maintains the National Prototype Kilogram (NPK-57), which is calibrated with IPK.

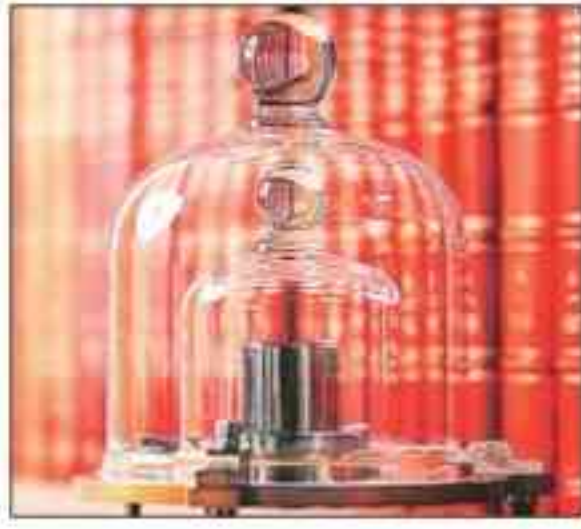
The IPK was the last physical artifact used to define any of the fundamental units. "What guarantee is there that the IPK kept at BIPM has not changed?" NPL Director Dinesh K Aswal told *The Indian Express*. IPK would put on a little extra mass when tiny dust particles settled on it; when cleaned, it would shed some of its original mass.

Scientists have long stressed that the fundamental units should be defined in terms of natural constants. On November 16, 2018, following a vote at BIPM, representatives of 60 countries agreed that the kilogram should be defined in terms of the Planck constant, Aswal said. The Planck constant is a quantity that relates a light particle's energy to its frequency.

Using a machine called a Kibble balance, in which the weight of a test mass is offset by an electromagnetic force, the value of the Planck constant was fixed, the kilogram was redefined, and the date for the new definition was fixed for May 20, 2019, Aswal said.

What does not change

What was 1 kg earlier is still 1 kg today. A person hoping to lose weight would still need to shed the same num-



A replica of Le Grand K at BIPM in France. From 1889 until Monday, the cylindrical piece of metal was the standard for the kilogram. Reuters

ber of kilos she had targeted earlier, and a shopper would not be paying any more or less for their groceries.

All that has changed is the definition, for the sake of accuracy. As Aswal explained, a mass measured as 1 kg earlier would have meant 1 kg, plus or minus 15-20 micrograms. Using the new definition, a mass measured as 1 kg will mean "1 kg, plus or minus 1 or 2 nanograms".

Measure for measure

The new definition for kilogram fits in with the modern definitions for the units of time (second) and distance (metre). Today, the second is defined as the time it takes for a certain amount of energy to be released as radiation from atoms of Caesium-133. Once the second was defined, the metre fell into place. By its modern definition, a metre is the distance travelled by light in vacuum in 1/299,792,458 of a second (which is already defined).

This is where the Planck constant comes in. It has been measured precisely at $6.626069... \times 10^{-34}$ kilograms per second per square metre. With the second and the metre already defined, a very precise definition for the kilogram follows.

Along with the units of time and distance, the unit of luminous intensity (candela) is already defined in terms of a natural constant. On Monday, along with the kilogram, the units of current (ampere), temperature (kelvin), and amount of substance (mole) too took on new definitions. That covers all seven fundamental units.

The modern definition of the second has already helped ease communication across the world via technologies like GPS and the Internet. Scientists have often been quoted as saying the change in the kilogram's definition will be better for technology, retail and health.

'Efficiency' & promotion quota

Supreme Court has upheld a Karnataka law that provides for seniority as a consequence of promotion via reservation. The past arguments around this, and how SC has settled the debate on 'efficiency' in Art 335



FAIZAN MUSTAFA

A TWO-JUDGE Bench of the Supreme Court last week pronounced a historic judgment on reservation in promotions in favour of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The court was dealing with a 2018 Karnataka law that provided for reservation with consequential seniority — a person promoted would also get seniority as a consequence. In *B K Pavitra* (2017), a similar law was struck down by a Bench of Justice A K Goel and Justice U U Lalit, who in March 2018 diluted some provisions of the SC/ST Act, 1989. The central government brought a law to overturn the judgment; the court is yet to pronounce its judgment on the review petition. In the latest case, Justice D Y Chandrachud authored the judgment and Justice Lalit concurred.

History of quota in promotions

In general, courts have opposed reservation in promotions, and favoured reservation at initial appointment. In 1963, the government notified that there shall be no reservation in promotions to Class I and Class II positions; a five-judge Bench headed by then CJI K N Wanchoo upheld this policy in *CA Rajendran* (1968). In *State of Kerala vs N M Thomas* (1975), the Supreme Court extended the benefit of reservation to promotions, while upholding a rule giving a two-year extension to pass a special test for promotion of SC/ST employees. Justice H R Khanna, however, authored a minority judgment holding such exemption as violative of "efficiency in administration".

In *Indra Sawhney* (1992), a nine-judge Bench held that in future there should be no reservation in promotions.

Reservation in promotions for SCs/STs was introduced in Karnataka on April 27, 1978 in Class I. In the 1992 case, the court saved promotions already made and allowed continuance of promotions for another five years from the date of judgment. Parliament responded with the 77th Amendment in 1995 to overturn the judgment. The amendment came into effect on June 17, 1995.

Catch-up, consequential seniority

Many general candidates who were recruited along with SC/ST candidates, or were senior to them, were frustrated when their SC/ST colleagues became senior to them due to reservation in promotion. To address this, the Supreme Court in *Virpal Chauhan* (1995)

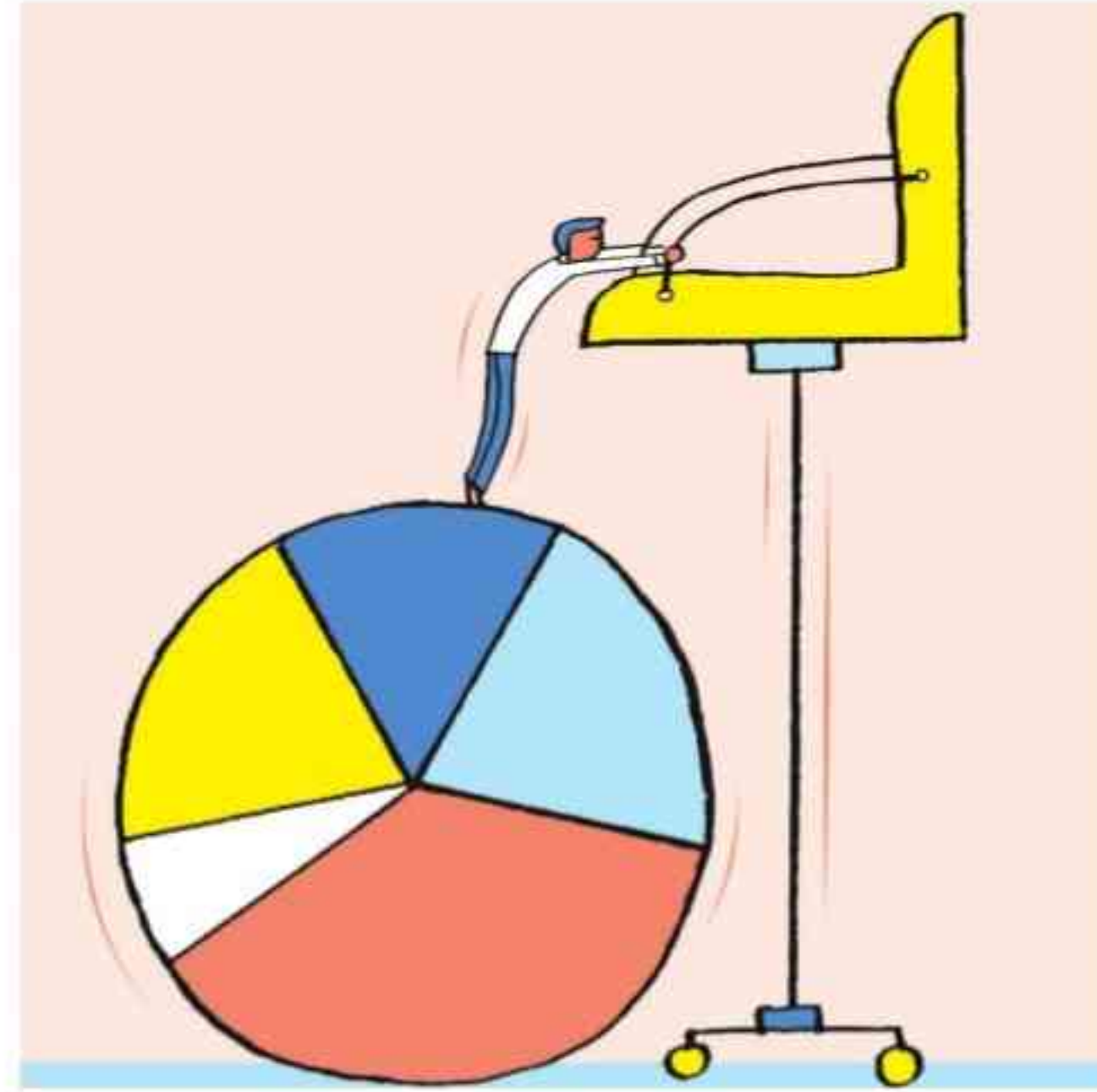


Illustration: CR Sasikumar

held that once a general candidate is promoted, he would become senior to an already promoted SC/ST candidate if he/she had been senior in the lower cadre. This was termed the "catch-up" rule. In *Ajit Singh* (1996), the court said seniority of the lower cadre will remain intact to avoid "reverse discrimination".

On February 3, 1999, Karnataka enacted the law laying down that reservation in promotion would continue until representation of SCs and STs reached 15% and 3% respectively. In *Ajit Singh II* (1999), the Supreme Court clarified the seniority rule — a general employee will regain seniority over an earlier promoted SC/ST employee if the former is promoted prior to the latter to the next higher cadre.

Parliament intervened again in 2001, with the 85th Constitutional Amendment that retrospectively came into effect from June 17, 1995, simultaneously with the 77th Amendment. In 2002, Karnataka too made its law effective from June 17, 1995, incorporating consequential seniority for SCs/STs promoted under reservation in promotions.

The two Amendments were challenged in *M Nagraj* (2006) but the Supreme Court held both to be valid. It rejected the argument that replacement of "catch-up rule" with "consequential seniority rule" violates the basic structure of the Constitution. It said Article 16(4A) is just an enabling provision, and the state is not bound to provide for reservation in promotion

— but if it wants to do so, it must meet the requirement of collection of quantifiable data on three aspects: backwardness of the class, inadequacy of representation, and that general efficiency of services not be affected.

In fact, the backwardness of SCs needs no quantitative proof; the fact that certain castes are notified as SCs is the ultimate proof. Inadequacy of representation needs no proof either, as the country has not yet filled 22.5% positions reserved for SCs and STs.

The Karnataka law

In *B K Pavitra*, the Supreme Court had struck down the Karnataka law as it did not comply with the above three conditions. The state constituted the Ratna Prabha Committee, which submitted its report on May 5, 2017. From data of 1984-2016 across 31 departments, the committee found that SC and STs constituted just 10.65% and 2.92% respectively of filled posts. Based on the report, the 2018 law was enacted. The Presidential assent came on June 5, 2018.

In *Jarnail Singh* (2018), the Supreme Court was requested to reconsider and refer *Nagraj* to a seven-judge Bench. A five-judge Bench headed by then CJI Dipak Misra rejected the request, but diluted *Nagraj*. It observed that there is no longer need to collect quantifiable data on the backwardness of SCs and STs.

In the latest case, Justice Chandrachud said *B K Pavitra* in no way stopped the government from providing reservation in pro-

motion after complying with the *Nagraj* conditions, and held that the Karnataka law is not a brazen overruling of the *Pavitra* judgment. He also observed that adequacy of representation is part of subjective satisfaction of the government.

Interpretation of efficiency

Justice Chandrachud demolished the whole argument of "efficiency" under Article 335. The Article not only protects reservation in promotion, but also allows for lowering the standards of evaluation. This recognises the need for creating a level playing field; thus, in the name of efficiency, fetters are not to be put in the path of correcting historical wrongs and injustices, he ruled.

"Efficiency of administration in the affairs of the Union or a State", Justice Chandrachud said, "must be defined in an inclusive sense, where diverse segments of society find representation as a true aspiration of governance by and for the people... inclusion together with the recognition of plurality and diversity of the nation constitutes a valid constitutional basis for defining efficiency".

Reservation is not necessarily anti-merit; a system that produces or continues with inequalities is anti-merit. A system that promotes substantive equality really promotes merit. Inclusion and reflection of social diversity in the state's institutions furthers, and does not diminish, the cause of merit. This is the innovative meaning of merit as given by the judge.

The court has settled the law on "efficiency" and "merit". Nobody's efficiency can be ascertained prior to appointment. Moreover, no scientific research has ever proved that SC/ST employees are less efficient in the performance of duties than general category employees.

In *K C Vasanth Kumar* (1985), Justice Chinnappa Reddy had already demolished the "efficiency" argument. In observations quoted by Justice Chandrachud, Justice Reddy had stated: "Efficiency is very much on the lip service of the privileged whenever reservation is mentioned. Efficiency, it seems, will be impaired if reservation exceeds 50%; efficiency, it seems, will suffer if carry forward rule is adopted; efficiency, it seems, will be injured, if the rule of reservation is extended to promotional posts." He went on to say that "the underlying assumption that those belonging of upper castes and classes, who are appointed to non-reserved posts, because of their 'presumed merit', naturally perform better than those who have been appointed to reserved posts and the clear stream of efficiency would be polluted by the infiltration of latter into the sacred precincts is a vicious assumption, typical of superior approach of elitist classes."

(The author is a well-known expert of constitutional law)

THE SEVEN FUNDAMENTAL UNITS

UNIT	QUANTITY	HOW IT IS CALCULATED
Metre	Distance	Based on speed of light
Kilogram	Mass	Calculated from Planck constant
Second	Time	Based on radiation of caesium-33 atom
Ampere	Current	Based on electron's charge
Kelvin	Temperature	Based on Boltzmann constant
Mole	Amount of substance	Based on Avogadro constant
Candela	Luminous intensity	From efficacy of light of specific frequency

TELLING NUMBERS

BJP outspent all else on digital ads; on Twitter, Congress spent the most

KARISHMA MEHROTRA

NEW DELHI, MAY 20

FINAL DATA on digital ad spends on public company portals show how different parties prioritised different platforms during the election campaign. So, while the BJP outspent all parties on Google and Facebook, the Congress spent nine times as much as the BJP on Twitter.

Top Facebook spenders were the pages BJP (Rs 4.3 crore), INC (Rs 1.8 crore), My First Vote For Modi (Rs 1.17 crore), and Bharat Ke Mann

BIG SPENDERS

	BJP (OFFICIAL)	CONGRESS (OFFICIAL)
Google	Rs 17,10,61,750 (for 12,002 ads)	Rs 2,71,15,750 (for 425 ads)
Facebook	Rs 4,32,82,039 (for 2,649 ads)	Rs 1,82,95,046 (for 3,686 ads)
Twitter	Rs 1,51,100	Rs 9,40,300

Ki Baat (Rs 1.15 crore). Another set of ads for Bharat Ke Mann Ki Baat (Rs 1 crore) were removed because they ran without a disclaimer.

The top Google advertisers were the BJP (Rs 17.1 crore), DMK (Rs 4.1 crore), Congress (Rs 2.7 crore), YSRCP (Rs 2.3 crore), and

was a little over Rs 27 crore. Facebook spending amounted to Rs 27.6 crore for roughly 1 lakh ads.

The southern states saw some of the highest spending on digital ads. On Google, Andhra Pradesh saw Rs 5.2 crore worth of ads, followed by Tamil Nadu (Rs 4.4 crore), Delhi (Rs 2.8 crore), and Telangana (Rs 2 crore).

Out of the roughly 40 BJP Google ads seen by over 10 million people, the most viewed was a video titled "Ensuring dignity of the poor!" that cost more than Rs 2.5 lakh. Only four YSRCP videos were viewed more than this BJP ad, according to the portal.

Google has suspended business with Huawei. Why is this important?

SHRUTI DHAPOLA & ANUJ BHATIA
NEW DELHI, MAY 20

GOOGLE IS suspending some business with Huawei, and this could impact the future of Android on smartphones made by the Chinese company and its sub-brand, Honor. The news was first reported by Reuters Monday. Neither Google nor Huawei has issued a detailed official statement.

What has Google done?

According to Reuters, Google has suspended business that "requires the transfer of hardware, software and technical services" with Huawei. Everything is impacted, except features available via open source licencing. In effect, Google has cancelled Huawei's Android licence.

Google acted after the Donald Trump administration added Huawei to a trade blacklist that bars American companies from doing business with blacklisted companies without "explicit approval" from the government. "We are complying with the

order and reviewing the implications," Google said in a statement.

What happens to people who have Huawei phones?

Unless Huawei is taken off the "Entity List", there is a good chance its phones will not be able to run Android's proprietary services and apps like Gmail, YouTube, and Chrome in the future. While Android will continue to work for now, it is unclear what happens next — including whether existing Huawei phones will ever get an Android update again. Android has monthly security updates and yearly operating system updates.

Huawei can still use Android from the Android Open Source Project, but proprietary services cannot be accessed without a commercial licence from Google. Future Huawei phones may not come with Google and Android services.

Google's Android account tweeted: "For Huawei users' questions regarding our steps to comply with the recent US government actions: We assure you while we are complying with all US govt requirements, serv-



Future Huawei smartphones may not be able to run apps like Google Play, Gmail, YouTube, and Chrome. Reuters

ices like Google Play & security from Google Play Protect will keep functioning on your existing Huawei device."

But again, Play Store and Play Protect are proprietary services, and Google has not said what will happen in the future. Access to Play Store is an important part of the Android experience, and is crucial for Huawei in markets outside China. In China, Google and its services are banned, so Huawei phones there

are unlikely to be impacted.

What has Huawei said on the situation?

A spokesperson for the company said: "Huawei will continue to provide security updates and after-sales services to all existing Huawei and Honor smartphone and tablet products, covering those that have been sold and that are still in stock globally. We will continue to build a safe and sustainable software ecosystem, in order to provide the best experience for all users globally."

What it did not confirm was whether existing Huawei phones would be updated to the next version of Android, and whether future phones would run the operating system.

Huawei phones also run EMUI, the company's own OS, on top of Android. It comes its own unique user interface and personalised apps. This is a common approach in the Android world — companies often add their own user interface to Android, although the core Google services are part of all devices.

Senior Huawei executive Richard Yu recently told the German daily *Die Welt* that the company was preparing its "own operating system".

"Should it ever happen that we can no longer use these systems, we would be prepared. That's our plan B. But of course, we prefer to work with the ecosystems of Google and Microsoft," he said.

How will Huawei be impacted?

In the first quarter of 2019, Huawei became the world's second largest smartphone manufacturer. According to numbers from research firm International Data Corporation (IDC), Huawei is ahead of Apple, behind only Samsung in the list of smartphone vendors. The company saw a year-over-year growth of 50.3% in the quarter, with 59.1 million units being shipped. Canalsy, another big research firm, said 50.6% of Huawei's shipments were in China; the rest in international markets.

Huawei's flagship phones, P30 Pro and Mate 20 Pro, have got excellent reviews. Honor is a more affordable, mid-range



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Politics from the pulpit

Prime Minister Modi crafts messages for the public where he is the preacher, the giver



SUHAS PALSHIKAR

DUTEE'S SPRINT

She shows how breezily revolutions can become real, how easy it is to speak of 'the love that cannot be named'

NOT ALL HEROES wear capes. This one wears running shoes, and her heart on her sleeve. The fastest woman in India, Dutee Chand, has declared that she is in love with another woman, becoming the first Indian sports-person to come out as queer. The Supreme Court's landmark judgment last year expanded the constitutional promise of equality by decriminalising homosexuality in India. Nevertheless, for innumerable LGBTQ people, it remains difficult to step out of the anonymous darkness of the closet. For women who identify as queer, the consequences are even grimmer. But true to her spunk, Dutee Chand has bravely sprinted off, blazing a trail for others to follow.

Chand's journey from impoverished circumstances in a village in Odisha to becoming a silver medalist at the Asian Games is not the typical dream run that sports throws up. It threw up disturbing, existential questions about her gender — owing to the "abnormal" levels of naturally occurring testosterone in her body — that could have devastated any other athlete. She chose to fight, approaching the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) to challenge the hyperandrogenism guidelines which ban women athletes with elevated levels of the hormone from competing in track and field events. For her, at stake was the autonomy to assert her identity (as a woman) and defend her credentials (as a world-class athlete). She won.

Radical change can only be incremental, something which the long history of the queer rights movement in India will attest. But all revolutions need their icons, who can turn theoretical arguments into something stirring, made of flesh and blood — who could forget American boxer Muhammad Ali in the ring, making his body a lightning rod for the black rights movement? Even if far less flamboyant, Chand's dogged determination to not let sporting rules define who she was has held out transformative hope for the LGBTQ community. But that's not all — she is also an icon for the entire sporting fraternity in India, where popular sports remains an overwhelming macho performance. Will she inspire a more honest conversation about sexuality in locker-rooms? Could she inspire young men to step out of toxic masculinity — and, perhaps, even out of the closet? For now, it is enough to listen to a woman in love, who believes that "everyone should have the freedom to love", that no one has the right to judge her for committing to another woman. There is joy in this declaration, a sense of wonder at finding a "soulmate". Most importantly, here is Dutee Chand, who once ran like the wind on the banks of a river, showing us how breezily revolutions can become real, how easy it is to speak of "the love that cannot be named".

RIPPLES OF A CRISIS

The RBI needs to urgently address the liquidity issues plaguing the NBFC sector

THE TROUBLES OF the non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) continue to reverberate through the financial system, with the ripple effects of the crisis being felt in the broader economy, as seen in the sharp decline in car sales. Part of the problem can be traced to the continuing liquidity deficit in the system.

The average liquidity deficit in the banking system widened during the week ended May 17 to Rs 43,001 crore, up Rs 3,191 crore from the previous week, notes CARE Ratings. To be sure, the liquidity deficit has come down from mid-April to the first week of May, when the net outstanding liquidity deficit averaged Rs 92,979 crore. This decline is largely due to an infusion by the RBI through open market operations (OMOs) and currency swaps. And while the liquidity deficit is likely to ease up further as government spending ramps up in the coming months, the fundamental question is whether this rise in systemic liquidity will translate to operational liquidity for NBFCs? Some NBFCs such as HDFC and public sector entities are likely to find it easier to raise funds. But the rest will find it challenging, as banks and mutual funds are likely to continue to be risk averse. With rating agencies downgrading debt papers of several NBFCs, in some cases by several notches, it has further weakened their ability to raise fresh funds. Add to this the rise in the risk premium demanded by the market, and the situation is grim.

There are some options available to the RBI to address this issue. It could, as has been reported, open a special borrowing window for the NBFCs. But there are questions over how this would work. For one, what would be the collateral against which the RBI would lend to the NBFCs? And how would it be valued? Perhaps, the RBI will route liquidity through banks, as it has done in the past. It is also possible that the current crisis will see some of the weaker NBFCs shut shop. Some could be merged with banks, while a few could be granted bank licences. Obviously, this will require the blessings of the central bank which is holding its board meeting this week to look into these issues. The RBI needs to act quickly to prevent the NBFC crisis from growing bigger.

THE TENTH LIFE

Grumpy Cat, who brought the world joy in a troubled decade, has gone to the hereafter. Her frown will be sorely missed

FIRST, THERE WERE lolcats, portraits of cats with linguistically mangled slogans like, "I can haz cheeseburger?" They appeared on internet image boards in 2005 and paved the way to fame for Tardar Sauce, better known as Grumpy Cat, who reached out to the world through a Reddit post in 2012. Her timing couldn't have been better. The world was still tossing in the wake of the Wall Street crisis, the Occupy movement was on, even the Olympics had become controversial because Dow Chemical was a sponsor, and the Mayan Long Count Calendar predicted that the world would end on December 12. An irritable world instantly connected with the picture of Grumpy Cat posted by her family, looking down witheringly on human stupidity.

Grumpy Cat inspired a starburst of memes, including one talking down to the maker of the other pop culture phenomenon of 2012, Gangnam Style: "Congrats, Psy, but you still don't have nine lives." In the years since, she collected millions of fans on social media, starred in the film Grumpy Cat's Worst Christmas Ever, and became the only cat ever to find a place in Madame Tussaud's. On the internet, which is infested with cat images and videos, she was the top cat. When she died before her time in her Arizona home, aged seven, the world mourned.

Grumpy Cat's family have always insisted that she was quite sweet-tempered. An underbite and feline dwarfism accounted for her forbidding aspect. But it made her a satirical symbol of a time when the world frowned upon the capitalist world order, which had narrowly escaped collapse. Now, she has gone to the great cat's cradle in the sky, leaving us to ponder one of her most enduring memes: "If I have said or done anything to hurt you, I don't care."

LAST FRIDAY'S DUD press conference by Narendra Modi-Amit Shah might be seen as yet more proof that the prime minister doesn't face the media impromptu. But that episode and Modi's unwillingness to be more accessible to the media is instructive for a very different reason. It has brought forward the issue of the relationship between political leaders and the public in a democracy.

During the past few weeks, it has been widely commented that the PM shies away from media interactions. He was being compared to Rahul Gandhi on this score. To rebut these charges, Modi began a well-orchestrated media exercise and since that was sure to give good TRPs, media houses lapped it up.

The non-political interview by Akshay Kumar was supposed to be a masterstroke. It could beat the model code of conduct and at the same time, ensure that the image of the leader was carefully projected. One is not sure how many viewers genuinely appreciated that interview — where Modi was ill at ease and the interviewer clueless.

All this while, a question kept cropping up — why not a routine, standard practice of interacting with media persons or holding a press conference? The grapevine has it that the PM probably wanted to avoid awkward questions. Critics said that Modi holds the media in contempt and therefore chooses to ignore them. Both might well be plausible explanations. It looks like the PM was being protected from the media while simultaneously using the media to put across the messages he wanted to communicate to his audience.

But there seems to be a larger issue here. More than fear or contempt (the two can be interconnected), it is a question of leadership style. Modi has brought into practice a style that consists of one-way communication: Giving out messages. He is a leader who does not like to enter into dialogue, doesn't want an exchange with the media. He won't brook hard questioning; soft probing, like Akshay Kumar's, was admissible. Earlier, a demonstration of this genre of interview was given by Praseon Joshi in a "reality show" performed abroad. But no real questioning. After all, there are not many leaders with the distinction of having left an interview mid-way.

Modi has taken the tendency to avoid a two-way traffic with the public to the level of an artful skill. He crafts messages for the public where he is the preacher — the giver. In public speeches, there are the crowds, appropriately excited, and Modi arrives with a set speech, a pre-planned punch line that would arouse response, and the rest would be done by the IT army and the Twitter public that is more loyal than the king. Mann ki Baat has been another instance. In it, again, he is the only messenger, there is no interaction.

Political leaders and the media have a relationship riddled with tension. Leaders get accustomed to deference. Media persons are often expected to stay within limits. Nevertheless, democracy has the potential of introducing a levelling effect whereby the leader gets the taste of political equality. Any journalist can hurl a tough and even personal or awkward question at the leader. Leaders in democracies have to take this in their stride.

They, of course, would make attempts to cultivate a friendly media; they would occasionally browbeat the media. But in spite of all this, media persons with even limited amounts of professionalism are often likely to prove difficult. Political leaders most often appreciate this fact of democratic life and live with it. This allows examination and public questioning of leaders — not just in India but across the globe.

Modi represents a section of political leaders who refuse to submit to such examination, who are unwilling to be tested. They prefer the pulpit. Naveen Patnaik is famous for his reclusive ways, Mayawati rarely allows herself to be grilled, Jayalalitha wove an enigma around herself. They all have won and lost elections and have survived splits or defections from their parties. But they would still remain, as leaders, deeply uncomfortable with questioning by the commoners. The media can be only an instrument to build their image; they would not recognise that it is also the citizen's tool for bridging the gap between the elite and non-elite.

Modi has taken this tendency to avoid a two-way traffic with the public to the level of an artful skill. He crafts messages for the public where he is the preacher — the giver. In public speeches, there are the crowds, appropriately excited, and Modi arrives with a set speech, a pre-planned punch line that would arouse response, and the rest would be done by the IT army and the Twitter public that is more loyal than the king. Mann ki Baat has been another instance. In it, again, he is the only messenger, there is no interaction.

But party politics and electoral competition are strange things. Despite the obvious creation of power hierarchies, they tend

to also strive for political equality of sorts — where the non-powerful have the vicarious satisfaction of bringing the powerholders down from the pulpit. It seems that this campaign exposed this major limitation of Modi — his unwillingness to step down from the pulpit, even momentarily. And the poetic justice of this was that this limitation was drawn out by none other than the "Pappu" he had created.

Most public personalities, but more so politicians, adapt themselves to the ways of an intransigent media, whose excesses and tendency to peep into private lives are legendary (not so much in India, though). This submission of the elite to media scrutiny, with all its evils, needs to be seen as a culture of democracy compensating for the absence of citizen scrutiny. Politicians in democracies come to terms with this democratic culture — and that is why Trump is seen as an aberration.

The question that Modi's extreme reluctance to face such media scrutiny raises is not limited to the persona of Modi, his vanity or to his self-belief in being a new architect of the fate of India — a *bhagyavidhata*. Modi has been in the upper echelons of the power hierarchy for a fairly long time. Yet, he has steadfastly refused to imbibe the primary test of democratic politics — allowing tough questions and trying to answer them. He probably believes that he doesn't need the media to project his image because his power derives from the people. He forgets that without the prolonged love affair that the media had with him, his image could not have been built in the way it was between 2013 and 2018.

But the issue is not confined to Modi's dependence on the media or his autonomy from it; Modi's awkward response to democracy's requirement of willing submission to public scrutiny draws attention to the larger issue: If leaders were to avoid media scrutiny, what does that tell us about their commitment to the democratic culture of political equality?

The writer was professor of political science and is based at Pune



DHARMAKIRTI JOSHI AND PANKHURI TANDON

BAG A BARGAIN

India can benefit from the US-China tariff war if it plays its cards well

A YEAR INTO the US-China tariff war, its implications for India are still unfolding. The glass, as it were, could be seen as half empty, or half full. What we know is India is losing its surplus with the US. It is gaining exports, and hence, narrowing its deficit with China. What we are yet to find out is if India can take the space vacated by the warring partners.

Here are some points to consider. No doubt, the simmering tensions between the world's two largest economies has wrought a knock-on effect, taking down global growth, disrupting trading arrangements and production systems and, above all, injecting uncertainty into the already fragile global environment and weakening investor sentiment. India hasn't escaped unhurt. Its exports slowed to 5.5 per cent in the second half of fiscal 2019, compared with 12.7 per cent in the first half. Overall growth for the fiscal printed at 8.6 per cent on-year, lower than 10 per cent in the previous year. These overall figures, however, hide some crucial details, which tell us not all is lost. Specifically, India's exports with US and China have seen sharp reversals.

India's trade surplus with the US had increased significantly since fiscal 2012. However, this surplus started to shrink in fiscal 2019, as export growth slowed to 9.5 per cent from 13.4 per cent in fiscal 2018, while import growth rose sharply to 32.6 per cent from 19.3 per cent. Protectionist measures by the US were beginning to tell on India's ex-

ports. Key items hit by US tariffs last year were iron, steel, and aluminum. The impact, though, was not significant, as these account for less than 1 per cent of India's total exports.

The opposite was the case with China. India's trade deficit with China has risen rapidly over the past decade. However, this deficit narrowed in fiscal 2019, as exports to China galloped 25.6 per cent, while imports declined by 7.9 per cent. In fact, the top exported commodities to China in fiscal 2019 — petroleum products, cotton, chemicals and plastic products — were products on which China imposed import tariffs on the US last year. A word of caution here, though. Declining imports from China were accompanied by a rise in same products from Hong Kong. Such instances have signalled that the current trade war could lead to trade diversion rather than trade destruction. Until now, the tariff actions by US and China have been one-on-one, making imports from each other expensive. What that has done, quite unintentionally, is also to improve relative competitiveness of other economies exporting the same products.

If this trade war continues over a longer horizon, it could even result in shift of production bases and restructuring of global supply chains. Chinese firms are already moving production to their plants in other countries. India also figures in the list of such probables.

But such opportunities for growing exports have come and passed earlier too. Even before

the trade war, low-end manufacturing (ready-made garments, leather garments and footwear) had started moving out from China, as labour costs rose and it moved to more sophisticated manufacturing. However, India fell behind countries like Vietnam and Bangladesh in capturing export share in these sectors because of higher costs and lower incentives.

That brings us to a more fundamental issue. What hinders India from becoming an export powerhouse? First, it lags in competitiveness. At 58, India still ranks below China (28) in World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Rankings for 2018. In World Bank's Logistics Performance Index 2018, it ranks 44, below China (26) and Vietnam (39). Land and labour reforms are still pending, hindering largescale investments in export sectors. Two, India remains a tightly regulated market. Under the World Bank's Doing Business rankings, India ranks 77, compared with China at 46 and Vietnam at 69. Three, India's slow progress in drafting trade agreements impacts its ability to participate in global value chains, affecting export growth.

India must proactively address these concerns. Reaping every opportunity that presents itself has become more crucial now, given that the global environment is in for even more challenging times.

Joshi is chief economist and Tandon is junior economist, CRISIL Ltd



MAY 21, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

DESAI TO CMS

PRIME MINISTER MORARJI Desai rejected the demand from a majority of the affluent states to include corporation tax and the surcharge on income tax in the divisible pool. Speaking at the chief ministers' conference in Delhi, Desai, however, bowed to the states' plea for a review of the existing rates of additional excise duties levied on textiles, tobacco and sugar in lieu of the sales tax as well as for a review of the grant-in-aid in lieu of the railway passenger tax. The PM also conceded the states' stand against imposition of additional excise duties in lieu of sales tax in respect of four more commodities, namely cement, vanaspati, drugs and petroleum products,

as recommended by the Jha committee on indirect taxation. Desai said if the Centre's resources are diluted further, it would not be able to fulfil its responsibilities towards the weaker states.

BASU'S RESPONSE

WEST BENGAL CHIEF Minister Jyoti Basu suggested that the dialogue on the state governments' demand for a share in the proceeds of corporation tax and surcharge on income tax should continue despite the rejection by the PM of their viewpoint. Basu regretted that Morarji Desai, who had been the finance minister when many of the decisions were taken now being objected to by the states had been taken dur-

ing the one-party Congress regime, was viewing the problem subjectively and as a personal matter. He urged the PM to take an objective view.

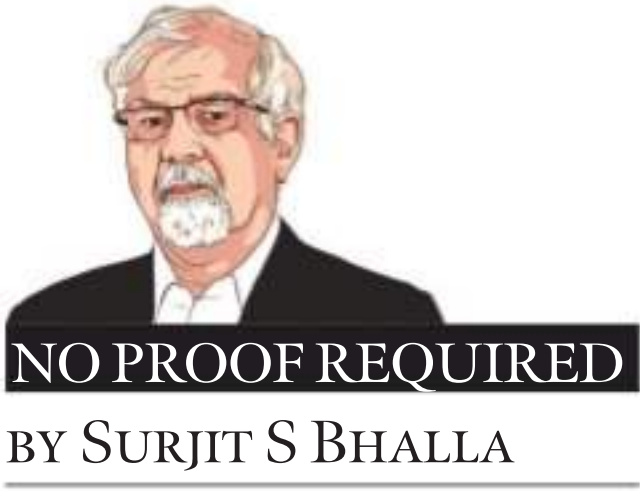
TN NOT FOR INDIRA

INDIRA GANDHI WILL not contest the Lok Sabha by-election from the Thanjavur constituency in Tamil Nadu. The Congress-I president was all set for filing her nomination papers. What was needed was a fair assurance from the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, M G Ramachandran, that with Anna DMK support she will win the seat. MGR's reluctance to give the assurance about her victory ultimately made her change her mind.

13 THE IDEAS PAGE

Beginning of the end

If the exit polls are right, then Election 2019 marks a structural change in Indian politics — the end of Congress's dynastic rule



NO PROOF REQUIRED
BY SURJIT S BHALLA

AT THE END of exit poll night, my co-panelist and political scientist/psephologist at CNN-IBN, Rahul Verma, turned to me and quipped: "Congratulations, You got the exit polls right"! By the strangest of coincidences, the election forecast (for the BJP and Congress alone) contained in my book *Citizen Raj* (and reproduced below), the exit polls seemed to centre around 270-280 seats for the BJP and around 50-60 seats for the Congress. My attempt (and the forecast made in February-March) was 274 and 57 seats respectively for the BJP and Congress.

It is no "triumph" to forecast correctly the exit polls. What matters is the real McCoy—which we will all know on May 23. Until then, we can speculate, and update as I do below. And we can begin to discuss what Election 2019 may have all been about (as needless to say, we have all been doing for the last six months).

The first point to be made is that this election was different as witnessed on the major English TV networks. Briefly, we have been told that this election was about voting your caste; that, unfortunately, it was not about economic development and what matters to the poor; that it was not about unemployment, job losses, and farmer distress; unfortunately, it was not about the palpable fear among Indians, especially among intellectuals and those belonging to the minorities and the scheduled castes; that it was not about data suppression, manipulation of data, and not about fudging of data (as claimed by the political opposition to Modi).

I travelled to Karnataka in April 2018; to Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan in November 2018; to West Bengal and UP in May 2018. I have talked to many a taxi driver and many a non-elite voter. Indeed, constantly, the discussion with voters has revolved around economic issues. Farmer distress was often talked about in UP, though unemployment discussion was spotty. In UP, the one state where the polls are suggesting the BJP will lose only 10-15 seats from the record 71 level in 2014, almost every rural voter, young, and old, and even those too young to vote, mentioned the menace of the holy cow. And no one seemed fearful of expressing any opinion, and doing so openly.

At the same time, and in direct contrast to the expectations of Delhi-Lutyens-Liberal-Khan Market media, the delivery of social services to "poor" individuals (those belonging to the bottom 70 per cent layer of the income pyramid) was often talked about. List the benefits — roads, toilets, LPG gas, houses, health insurance, bank accounts, bank transfers. A lot of individuals claimed they had never been "touched" by government policies, except now. Another aspect often mentioned was the absolute quality of leadership provided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi (i.e. not just that he was much better than the rest). They trusted him, and despite several faults, wanted to vote for him. Give him another chance, and may be another. And yes, and somewhat surprisingly for me, the rural voter often mentioned that Modi had en-

ELECTION 2019: DOES BJP DO BETTER THAN THE EXIT POLLS?

	Congress alone				BJP alone			
	Total Seats	Won in 2014	Citizen Raj	Updated	Won in 2014	Citizen Raj	Updated	
Big States	502	39	54	41	256	244	258	
Andhra Pradesh	25	2	2	0	2	3	2	
Assam	14	3	2	2	7	9	9	
Bihar	40	2	1	1	22	19	17	
Chhattisgarh	11	1	6	4	10	5	6	
Gujarat	26	0	3	0	26	24	26	
Haryana	10	1	1	1	7	7	9	
Jharkhand	14	0	1	3	12	8	10	
Karnataka	28	9	10	6	17	12	21	
Kerala	20	8	6	9	0	2	2	
Madhya Pradesh	29	2	4	5	27	25	24	
Maharashtra	48	2	2	2	23	23	23	
Odisha	21	0	0	0	1	6	13	
Punjab	13	3	4	8	2	4	2	
Rajasthan	25	0	5	2	25	20	24	
Tamil Nadu	39	0	0	0	1	3	3	
Telangana	17	0	1	0	1	2	2	
Uttar Pradesh	80	2	4	2	71	62	55	
West Bengal	42	4	2	0	2	10	15	
Small States	41	5	3	2	26	30	30	
Total	543	44	57	47	282	274	293	

Source: ECI; authors database on Indian Elections as used in Citizen Raj
Notes: The Congress forecast is reported on page 197 of Citizen Raj and the BJP forecast on page 211



CR Sasikumar

hanced India's standing in the world. I say surprising because I belong to DLLK, and we elite find it difficult to understand why a rural voter should be worried about India's standing in the world.

That is a cardinal mistake, and vividly illustrates why DLLK got this election so wrong (again, assuming exit polls are right — I believe they will be). This is a changed, educated, aspiring, middle-class India. Those who are not yet truly middle-class (about 50 per cent of the population) want to get there, and want to know the means to get there.

These are some of the fundamental reasons for why to me a Modi victory was not a surprise. There is a major "technical" reason why those expecting a genuine fight-back by the political opposition were likely to be disappointed. One important factor behind the "structural change" of the Modi election of 2014 (some disparagingly, and dismissively, called it an exceptional "Black Swan" election) was the margin of victory in some key states. In Gujarat, in 24 of 26 seats, the BJP won by a margin of more than 10 per cent. In Madhya Pradesh, 22 of 29 seats; in Maharashtra 22 of 23 BJP wins were with 10 plus margin; and in Rajasthan 20 of 25 fights. All these states there was no alliance to consider — they were straight fights between the Congress and BJP. I also conjectured in *Citizen Raj* that, perhaps, the most unfortunate event to befall the Congress (and DKLL members) was that the party won three states in December 2018. This lulled them into thinking that they had a good chance of making a come back in these states, and therefore, across India. Congress supporters were serious in believing that they could get within inches of their long-term post-1991 median of around 140 seats. It helped that the DKLL media was dominantly on their side and they did not have to counter questions about the basis for the claim that the Congress was mustering a ten percentage point swing in a head-to-head competition with the Modi-led BJP.

There was something else that hurt the Congress besides hope. It is that the odds of a

There was something else that hurt the Congress besides hope. It is that the odds of a dynast from the freedom-fighter era would still work charms. I have said it before many times (even when Manmohan Singh was PM, and before) the Congress needs to shed the dynasty tag. That won't guarantee them a revival — but it is an absolutely necessary condition.

There was something else that hurt the Congress besides hope. It is that the odds of a dynast from the freedom-fighter era would still work charms. I have said it before many times (even when Manmohan Singh was PM, and before) the Congress needs to shed the dynasty tag. That won't guarantee them a revival — but it is an absolutely necessary condition.

There was something else that hurt the Congress besides hope. It is that the odds of a dynast from the freedom-fighter era would still work charms. I have said it before many times (even when Manmohan Singh was PM, and before) the Congress needs to shed the dynasty tag. That won't guarantee them a revival — but it is an absolutely necessary condition.

There was something else that hurt the Congress besides hope. It is that the odds of a dynast from the freedom-fighter era would still work charms. I have said it before many times (even when Manmohan Singh was PM, and before) the Congress needs to shed the dynasty tag. That won't guarantee them a revival — but it is an absolutely necessary condition.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express, and consulting editor, Network 18

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"While China has a quite different political system and ideology than Europe and Japan, China has given both much more respect than they have received from the US."
— GLOBAL TIMES CHINA

The case for informal regional diplomacy

Routine meetings between leaders of the Subcontinent will liberate the region from the formalism of summits



RAJA-MANDALA
BY C RAJA MOHAN

WITH NARENDRA MODI looking set to return as India's prime minister, might he want to start his second tenure by inviting all leaders of the neighbouring countries for his inauguration? Five years ago, in May 2014, Modi surprised the region and the world with his invite and spent the first day in office talking to the visiting leaders from the neighbourhood, including the eight South Asian countries as well as Mauritius.

If the 2014 invite generated much diplomatic buzz, it will certainly look less dramatic the second time around. But the invitation for the 2019 swearing-in would hopefully make it a custom and an integral part of Delhi's political renewal every five years.

It is not that the new Indian PM will sit down for negotiations on contentious issues with the visiting leaders. The purpose of having an open-house for leaders from the neighbourhood at the launch of a new government in Delhi is about informal diplomacy — of establishing or renewing personal contact, building mutual trust and generating the political will for resolving the multitude of problems that exist between neighbours.

Others in our neighbourhood too seem to like the idea. When he was sworn in as president of Maldives last November, Ibrahim Mohamed Solih invited the Indian PM to be present. Modi readily accepted and traveled down to Male for a few hours to be at the ceremony.

Earlier in August 2018, when Imran Khan was taking charge as Pakistan's Prime Minister, he toyed with the idea of emulating Modi by inviting foreign leaders for his swearing in ceremony. But the proposal did not fly and Imran limited himself to inviting friends from India — including former cricketer and Congress leader, Navjot Singh Sidhu.

If Modi used the invitation in 2014 to signal his commitment to South Asian regionalism, he was also quick to see the limitations of SAARC (the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation) at the Kathmandu summit in 2014. The summit had failed to sign off on the connectivity agreements that were painfully negotiated by senior officials, because Pakistan chose to pull out at the last stage. Apparently Rawalpindi was not ready for trade and economic cooperation with India.

At Kathmandu, Modi recognised that South Asian regionalism can't be allowed to become a hostage to Pakistan. To be sure, Islamabad had the sovereign right to decide on the need, nature and pace of its integration with the rest of the subcontinent. The only sensible course, then, is for the rest of the SAARC to move forward wherever

they can and let Pakistan join the process whenever it feels comfortable.

Since then Delhi has emphasised other multilateral mechanisms — including sub-regional cooperation between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal and trans-regional cooperation in the east — the littoral of the Bay of Bengal including Burma and Thailand. Modi also revived the bilateral engagement with countries like Sri Lanka that were constrained in the UPA years — thanks to Tamil Nadu's veto over the engagement with Colombo.

Regular official visits to the neighbouring capitals have become the norm at all levels. Early on in his tenure, Modi chose to travel to most neighbouring countries as well as Mauritius and Seychelles. It has become the convention for any new foreign secretary to travel first to all the neighbouring capitals.

Beyond the formal visits, Modi found opportunities to drop by in the neighbourhood — to pray at the Pashupatinath temple in Kathmandu during 2014 and visiting Nawaz Sharif at his home outside Lahore on the occasion of his birthday at the end of 2015. There is also the tradition of South Asian leaders making unofficial visits to temples and dargahs in India.

The Subcontinent can do with more of this kind of engagement — leaders seeing each other on short notice for informal consultations or just watch a cricket match or join a social or spiritual occasion. Informal diplomacy in South Asia will make it easier for India to sustain high-level engagement with the neighbourhood, given the increasingly crowded formal diplomatic calendar of the PM. These include pre-set multilateral summits — from BRICS and SCO to the ASEAN, G-20 and the UN — as well as annual meetings with friendly nations through the year.

Meanwhile, some of these multilateral summits could throw up the possibilities of a meeting with the Pakistani leadership. There is already speculation on the prospects of a meeting between Modi and Imran on the margins of the SCO summit in Central Asia next month. Is it not much simpler to meet Imran in Delhi next week rather than Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan at the end of June?

There is no rule which says an Indian PM can't meet his Pakistani counterpart without it involving a negotiation of differences. If meetings with Pakistan's leadership become routine and informal, Delhi will be able to prevent each encounter seem like a gladiatorial contest that must address all issues and produce joint statements, every word of which is analysed to death.

While Pakistan is a special case, informal high level diplomacy could also help liberate the region from the stuffy and unproductive formalism of the SAARC. Rather than pray for the success of SAARC, the new government in Delhi should double down on informal diplomacy that could help pave the way for more purposeful regional cooperation — both bilateral and multilateral.

The writer is director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, and contributing editor, international affairs for The Indian Express

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

EC'S TASKS
THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Monitor's test' (IE, May 20). The dissent within the Election Commission of India by one of its election commissioners, Ashok Lavasa, is healthy for the future of the institution. Dissent is one of the vital barometers to check the health of any democracy. However, the poll panel's clean chit to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP President Amit Shah on more than one occasion should surprise those who have observed the EC closely. In the 1990s, T N Seshan introduced landmark reforms that gave credibility to the institution. The EC must not only introspect its latest actions but also take actions to allay the fears of the opposition parties. Time has also come to act more seriously against candidates with criminal cases. More than 1,000 candidates in the current general elections declared crimes of serious nature.
Pranay Shome, Kolkata

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

Commission may have decided thousands of cases of model code of conduct violations during elections and it will be specious to assume that each one of them was unanimous. Ashok Lavasa is the first ever election commissioner who has protested his dissent not being recorded on the clearances given to PM Narendra Modi and BJP president Amit Shah. Neither the rules nor tradition support Lavasa's behaviour. His motive, therefore, seem suspect.
MC Joshi, Lucknow

WHY THE DISSENT?
THIS REFERS TO the report, 'On eve of last phase, EC split wide open' (IE, May 19). In the past 30 years, the

The writer, a senior Congress leader, is a former Union minister

A polity for our times

Coalitions allow a diversity of voices to be heard, keep fundamentalism at bay



KAPIL SIBAL

DEMOCRACY IN INDIA is evolving. It has not yet matured. It is buffeted by elements, which are inconsistent with what it stands for. A fair electoral process is just the first step in realising democratic values. It occasionally throws up a culture of power, which threatens the fundamentals of our constitutional imperatives.

An absolute majority in favour of a political party has the tendency to threaten democratic values. We are essentially a "maibaap" (feudal) country and easily accept the trappings of patronage. A hierarchical social structure caters to this. For thousands of years, we have not been able to empower Dalits and the marginalised vis-a-vis the dominant Brahminical culture. Absolute majorities tend to exploit this cultural milieu.

This dominance also seeks a supplicant bureaucratic culture through patronage. After Independence, the elite ICS cadre was not subjected to the pressures of politics. With the expansion of education and rising aspirations within caste-ridden communities, the nature of bureaucracy was being transformed with the political empowerment of caste based agglomerations. After Mandal, such pressures became far more urgent and telling. Those in the bureaucracy belonging to a particular caste and community would cater to their respective interests and depend on political patronage in doing

so. There was an element of quid pro quo since political patronage was used to advance the prospects of interest groups for electoral success. Mayawati would largely cater to the interests of Dalits and the Samajwadi Party to the interests of Yadavs. The present dispensation in Uttar Pradesh caters to the Hindutva agenda, again for electoral gain and seeks the obedience of the bureaucracy for that purpose. The ones in the bureaucracy, who are ready to oblige are noticed and empowered. They willingly offer obedience even if, in the process, constitutional values are jettisoned — survival within the system becomes an end in itself. The dominance of an absolute majority, therefore, weakens constitutional values. In the long-term, liberal constitutional values are sacrificed at the altar of vested interests and political expediency.

In the past 70 years, political structures have responded to the needs of a highly complex societal structure. The creamy layer of the backward communities do not cater to the needs of its most backward. This is also true of the creamy layer within the Dalits. Brahminical structures are inherently antithetical to the backward communities and Dalits since they consider merit as the only yardstick for equal treatment. Therefore, the debate on reservation for the backward classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled

Tribes rages on. The dominant political structure may pay lip-service to reservation for electoral gain, but would welcome outcomes in which the dominant class seeks admissions to educational institutions and public employment on the basis of merit alone.

Of late, our constitutional values have also been diminished by a majoritarian state which has captured institutions for serving majoritarian purposes. In a highly complex socio-political milieu, there is no policy prescription which can cater to the needs of all sections of the community. A healthcare policy prescription does not have the capacity to deal with the complexity of our healthcare needs. Policy prescriptions in education cannot cater, in one stroke, to the demands of higher education and the imperatives of basic quality education at the secondary and senior secondary levels. Part of the problem, of course, is the absence of both infrastructure and adequate human resource. Wilfully, the political class enjoying absolute majority looks to cater to the interests of those who, in turn, will advance the political interests of the establishment.

The Hindu majority represented by a Hindutva culture will have the political strength to foist upon a highly complex social structure, its vision. All institutions serve the ends of this majoritarian mindset.

The majority, therefore, is the zamindar of

political power. It seeks obedience and uses brute force against those who dare to dissent. Its representatives are rent-seekers, who demand their share as "zamindari" from both industry and trade. Patronage is distributed to serve political objectives.

Believe India, as a nation, is a coalition. It is a coalition of shared values, of interests that may be in competition, but they must still be served. It is a coalition of different mindsets with different cultural values. It is a coalition where languages identify culture, yet the commonly-valued identification is that of being an Indian. It is this coalition that has to be represented, if democracy is to survive in the political structure that seeks to take India forward.

It is my belief that coalition politics helps different interest groups to be heard. It allows policies to evolve, seeking to serve multifarious needs. We have to evolve from an illiberal mindset based on patronage to one which is tolerant and inclusive. Coalition politics alone can cater to this constitutional value. That alone will keep fundamentalism of any form at arm's length. The coalition of minds and of politics must go hand in hand. They have served us well in the past. Their future depends on what happens on May 23.

The writer, a senior Congress leader, is a former Union minister



Eye on the monsoon

States must set up new recharging wells and improve existing ones on a war footing

As India awaits the arrival of the annual summer monsoon, hopes are particularly high for normal rainfall that is so vital for agriculture, the health of forests, rivers and wetlands. The India Meteorological Department has forecast normal rainfall of 96% of the long period average of 89 cm rain, with an onset date in the first week of June in Kerala. It has also signalled a significant possibility of a deficit. The monsoon bounty is crucial for the 60% of gross cropped area in farming that is rain-fed, and represents, in the assessment of the National Commission on Farmers, 45% of agricultural output. Given the erratic patterns of rainfall witnessed over the past few decades and their possible connection to atmospheric changes caused by a variety of pollutants, the distribution of monsoon 2019 will add to the insights. The southwest monsoon is a determinant of India's overall prosperity, and sustained efforts to make the best use of rainfall are absolutely important for farms, cities and industry. Considering that there has been a 52% decline in groundwater levels based on tests conducted last year over the previous decadal average, State governments should have pursued the setting up of new recharging wells and made improvements to existing ones on a war footing. They also have lagged in building structures to harvest surface water and helping farmers raise the efficiency of irrigation. The approach to the farming sector, however, has been influenced more by the imperatives of an election year, and the Centre's biggest intervention was to announce a cash handout to specified categories of small farmers.

A normal summer monsoon over the subcontinent brings widespread prosperity, but does not guarantee a uniform spread. This, as scientists point out, may be due to the effect of particulates released through various industrial and agricultural processes. Some of these aerosols suppress the rainfall and disperse it across the land, causing long breaks in precipitation, while others absorb heat and lead to a convection phenomenon that increases rainfall in some places. Such evidence points to the need for India to clean up its act on rising industrial emissions, and burning of fossil fuels and biomass in order to improve the stability of the monsoon. An equally key area of concern is freshwater availability for households, which, NITI Aayog says, account for 4% of available supplies, besides 12% used by industry. Urbanisation trends and the severe water stress that residents experience underscore the need for mandatory rainwater harvesting policies and augmented efforts by States to preserve surface water by building new reservoirs. Yet, governments are adopting a commodity approach to the vital resource, displaying deplorable indifference to the pollution and loss of rivers, wetlands and lakes that hold precious waters. This is no way to treat a life-giving resource.

Yemen's woes

The Saudi airstrikes on Sanaa risk tipping the country back to pre-ceasefire days

The withdrawal of Houthi rebels from three of Yemen's ports as part of the December 2018 ceasefire agreement should have been the basis for further talks to expand the truce to other parts of the country. But while the withdrawal was under way last week, Houthis, who are reportedly getting support from Iran, carried out a drone attack on a Saudi pipeline, and in retaliation Riyadh launched airstrikes on Sanaa, the capital city controlled by the rebels, killing at least six civilians, including children. Yemen now risks falling back to the pre-ceasefire days of conflict with fighting having broken out in parts of the government-controlled south. What makes the resumption of hostilities more dangerous is the regional angle. Tensions are on the rise in West Asia over the U.S.-Iran standoff. The U.S. had earlier warned against possible attacks by either Iran or Iran-backed militias against American interests or its allies in the region, and has deployed an aircraft carrier and a bomber squad to the Gulf. Immediately after the pipeline was attacked, the Saudis blamed Iran for ordering it, an allegation which both Tehran and the Houthis have refuted. Whether Iran was actually behind the attack or not, the incident and the subsequent Saudi airstrikes show how the Yemeni conflict is entangled with the regional rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia started its Yemen military campaign in March 2015 with the goal of driving Houthis out of territories they captured. Four years of war have devastated the country. According to the UN, at least 7,000 civilians have been killed. Thousands of others have died due to disease, poor health care and malnutrition. The blockade Saudi Arabia imposed on Yemen steadily worsened the country's hunger problem and health-care crisis. The country is on the brink of a famine. It's a shame that even when the ceasefire was holding, the Saudis did not halt bombing Yemen. Saudi Arabia appears to be frustrated that it is not able to defeat the Houthis even after years of heavy bombing. The Houthis, on their part, continue to provoke the Saudis through cross-border rocket and drone attacks. The Yemenis are stuck in between. The way forward is the Hodeida model. The December ceasefire took effect in the Red Sea port city and both the rebels and government forces stuck to it till the rebels pulled out last week. They should continue talks under international mediation and replicate the Hodeida model elsewhere in Yemen. For this to be achieved, the Houthis should decouple themselves from the regional politics, and stay focused on resolving differences with the government and rebuilding the war-torn country, while Saudi Arabia should get out of Yemen.

Why the BJP is not invincible in Uttar Pradesh

The SP-BSP's social arithmetic signposts Hindutva's failure to subsume identity politics



ZOAYA HASAN

There is little doubt that the final outcome of the 2019 general election will be determined in great part by the vote in Uttar Pradesh. The battleground State is home to 80 of 543 Lok Sabha constituencies, enough to make or break governments. The jury is still out on the final outcome. What is clear is that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is having a hard time replicating its 2014 performance in U.P. in 2019. Anti-incumbency caused by a combination of economic factors and the Opposition on the ground propelled by the mahagathbandhan – alliance of the Samajwadi Party (SP), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) – has created an unexpected new political dynamic. This alliance has been formed with an explicit anti-BJP focus and is likely to have a significant impact on the outcome of the 2019 election.

Two issues will determine the result in the State. These are: Hindu voter consolidation and caste mobilisation. These issues can also serve as a lens to track the shifts in the State's politics more broadly.

Shaky narrative

The BJP's stunning victory in the 2014 Lok Sabha election relied heavily on U.P. Till a couple of months ago, the BJP had the political momentum in its favour but in the dying phases of the long campaign it was struggling to regain momentum. In 2014, the BJP was an outsider; in 2019, it is the incumbent at both the State and national levels, making an anti-esta-

blishment campaign untenable. Economic issues have played an important role in shifting the ground. The BJP doesn't have a great story to tell the voters of U.P.; hence, it has focussed on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's muscular leadership, national security and Hindu-Muslim divisions.

Travelling through the heart of eastern and central U.P. during the election campaign, it was hard to detect a Modi wave. But it was equally difficult to overlook his popularity among the upper castes, youth and non-Yadav backward castes who want him back as Prime Minister. Mr. Modi had promised much on the development front to U.P. but there is disappointment about how little he has delivered. Big cities such as Lucknow, Varanasi and Allahabad have experienced economic expansion even as the older parts of these cities and peripheries are stagnating. Driven by real estate development, economic expansion basically means widening of roads (it was aptly described as 'Sadak Chaap vikas', or superficial development, by someone in Allahabad), swanky shopping malls and dazzling showrooms signalling changing lifestyles in urban U.P. But nearly 78% of U.P.'s population lives in rural areas, and this sizeable rural majority has not fared well as the Central and State governments have failed to address their needs. The deepening distress in the agricultural sector has hardly been addressed. Nor has the problem of stray cattle, which is damaging crops in the rural areas, been addressed.

There is much talk about government schemes which have benefited some people. However, differential access to government schemes such as toilets, gas connections and loans to build homes was highlighted in several conversations in central U.P., and this has contributed to growing anger, par-



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

ticularly among Dalits and Muslims, who feel that they've been left out. We asked a group of women in Faizabad if they supported Mr. Modi. They said they did, but not with a certainty that withstood further probing. Soon enough they admitted that they said so out of fear and would not vote for him because his government had not delivered on promises, especially employment opportunities essential for their material well-being.

The 2014 singularity

The 2014 election ushered in the era of BJP-dominance in U.P. The party had gained ground in the State after the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 and the campaign to construct a Ram temple in Ayodhya. This helped in the long run to win political power and gave a boost to its majoritarian project. The year 2017 saw the BJP deepen its electoral dominance of U.P. by winning a three-fourths majority in the Assembly elections. Yogi Adityanath's appointment as Chief Minister was a turning point in State politics with disenfranchisement and polarisation being weaponised to strengthen the process of Hindu consolidation. He has played a key part in polarising the electorate by openly speaking about the 80-20 equation (20% being Muslims).

The BJP's rise has been marked by the strong resurgence in the representation of traditional elite groups by virtue of being over-

represented within the BJP. The upper castes harboured strong resentment over their displacement in the post-Mandal era. BJP rule has been the vehicle for their comeback, as upper castes have regained positions of authority and influence. Simultaneously, the BJP has expanded its outreach to lower castes by leveraging social services provided by the government and giving representation to non-Yadav castes, which has enhanced recognition of these castes owing to their proximity to power. Adding them to the core upper caste voters has helped the party in building a formidable coalition in the State.

The rising power of the BJP has also led to a significant change in the behaviour of non-BJP, non-Congress parties. There is a realisation that the canvas of politics has to be much larger and the scope much broader to stall further expansion of the BJP. The success in the Gorakhpur, Phulpur and Kairana by-elections showed the way to the SP and BSP, the two social justice parties, that they must do business together. Bitter rivals for decades, they decided to bury the hatchet and join ranks to form an alliance driven by the overwhelming objective of defeating the BJP. The coming together of these two forces is what makes 2019 different from 2014.

Mandal 2.0

The new coalition of Yadavs, Jatavs and Muslims poses a serious challenge to Mr. Modi as he seeks re-election. The defining feature of Mandal 2.0, the second avatar of identity politics, is political power and social arithmetic, and not social justice, leave alone combining social justice and secularism. Even so, the counter-polemic has shaken the foundations of the BJP's caste politics as it signposts Hindutva's failure to subsume identity politics. The party's caste dilem-

ma persists because its own electoral success is predicated on caste-based social engineering. The role of Muslims in Mandal 2.0 is critical. It is clear that they are determined to vote out the BJP and are likely to have voted strategically and largely in favour of the mahagathbandhan. The numerical heft of Muslims in the mahagathbandhan underlines their relevance in U.P. politics, but it also underlines the limits of the BJP strategy of keeping them out.

There's a stark gap between the BJP's rhetoric of caste inclusion and the reality. It has consistently over-represented upper castes in its highest ranks in U.P. In the State Assembly, the overall representation of upper castes increased from 32.7% in 2012 to 44.4% in 2017. This contradicts the claim that the BJP has become an inclusive social platform. In spite of the five-year rule of a party ostensibly committed to vikas (development) for everyone, U.P. remains unequal and poor. In fact, even talk of vikas is off the table as the BJP is pushing voters to look beyond their material well-being.

Original battleground

The U.P. model has been central to the Sangh's Hindutva agenda much before the Gujarat model gained prominence. U.P. is still the key to the BJP's electoral fortunes and to the future creation of a Hindu state. Whatever the 2019 verdict, we must place the BJP's recent advances within the longer history of U.P. politics, which has witnessed momentous changes in the last hundred years. In the shifting sands of U.P. politics, Hindu nationalism has certainly gained primacy in recent decades but this too will change.

Zoaya Hasan is Professor Emerita, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Distinguished Professor, Council for Social Development, New Delhi

Moral ambiguity on the Rohingya

India must break its silence on the gross human rights violations by Myanmar



ANGSHUMAN CHOUDHURY

India's abstention from voting on a UN Human Rights Council draft resolution, in March this year, on the "situation of human rights in Myanmar" needs closer examination. Co-sponsored by the European Union (EU) and Bangladesh, the resolution "expresses grave concern at continuing reports of serious human rights violations and abuses in Myanmar", particularly in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan States, and calls for a full inquiry into these by the Council's own mechanism and the International Criminal Court (ICC).

In its follow-up explanatory statement, India's permanent representative to the UN in Geneva, Rajiv Kumar Chander, said that it would "only be counter-productive" to support "extensive recommendations regarding legislative and policy actions" and "threatening Myanmar with punitive action, including at the ICC, to which that state is not a signatory".

It is understandable that as a non-signatory of the Rome Statute, New Delhi would register its dissent against any punitive interventions by the ICC on another non-signatory country (Myanmar).

However, what is deeply unfortunate is India's continued diplomatic and moral passivity on the Rohingya crisis.

Despite the Myanmar Army facing charges of serious war crimes, including genocide – according to a UN Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and several other international human rights organisations – India refuses to take a strong moral stand for the sake of maintaining cordial bilateral relations with Naypyidaw.

A deference

India continues to toe Myanmar's line on the issue, which harps on the "complexity" of the whole situation, lays emphasis on economic development rather than political rights for the Rohingya, lays stress on internal inquiries instead of international mechanisms, and even refuses to call the Rohingya community by its name.

In fact, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has not even publicly condemned the horrible atrocities that the Rohingya have faced at the hands of Myanmar's security forces. On his last visit to Myanmar in September 2017, he simply expressed concern at the "loss of lives of security forces and innocent people due to the extremist violence in Rakhine State". There was no reference to the excessive and arbitrary force used by security forces on Rohingya civilians in response to the "extremist violence".

Radhika Coomaraswamy, who



was a part of the three-member UN FFM, during a recent briefing, said, "Acknowledging that human rights violations have been committed, holding people accountable and reforming the Tatmadaw is the only way forward." India, for its part, continues to maintain ties with the Myanmar armed forces (Tatmadaw), supplying them with combat hardware and imparting UN peacekeeping training. An edition of the India-Myanmar bilateral army exercise, IMBEX 2018-19, took place this January at Chandimandir.

Arms and business ties

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), India is one of Myanmar's top arms suppliers, and weapons sales includes military aircraft, artillery, naval vessels and reconnaissance equipment, armoured vehicles, anti-submarine torpedoes and missiles.

One analysis by the Dutch advocacy group, Stop Wapenhandel

(Stop Arms Trade), claims that India transferred combat equipment in violation of international embargoes.

India's core logic here is to "modernise" the Tatmadaw with the intent of securing its 1,640-km plus border with Myanmar and forge a sustainable strategic partnership at China's doorstep. But, in this inflexible realpolitik approach, there is little space for end-user accountability and human rights. Whether Myanmar is using some of its India-supplied weapons to maim non-combatant civilians in Rakhine State and other ethnic regions is a question that New Delhi has not asked so far. Further, Indian companies continue to invest in Myanmar, with several having direct links with Tatmadaw-owned businesses.

Through Dhaka's lens

India has so far refused to exert any pressure on Myanmar, instead choosing to balance ties with Dhaka and Naypyidaw by sending humanitarian aid to both. But India's soft, backfoot approach is being increasingly seen by Bangladesh, which is hosting nearly a million Rohingya refugees, to be tilted in Myanmar's favour.

Bangladeshi journalist Humayun Kabir Bhuiyan argues that "Indian policy regarding the Rohingya crisis has always favoured Myanmar." He also flagged India's recent abstention as another sign of New Delhi's no-support for Dhaka on the Rohingya issue. It is clear

that if India continues to tacitly favour Myanmar at international forums, its much-valued bilateral ties with Bangladesh may suffer greatly.

Instead of just pushing one-time economic aid into Bangladesh and Myanmar, India could have forged a regional 'compact', much like the Jordan Compact on Syria, to ensure sustained humanitarian assistance in addressing the short- and long-term needs of the displaced Rohingya population. This would have ensured uniform donor interest and better monitoring of where aid is going to. Instead, India has deported (or refouled) more than a dozen Rohingya refugees from its own territory back to Myanmar, in violation of international and domestic legal norms.

Using the geo-economic leverage that it enjoys with Myanmar, India could compel Myanmar to bring the alleged perpetrators of war crimes to book or at least get a guarantee that such conduct would not be repeated in the future. But New Delhi does not want to corner Aung San Suu Kyi, whose own relations with the Generals remain dicey.

For now, India is happy to be in a stable, but morally tenuous, friends-with-benefit relationship with Myanmar. The victims continue to be the stateless Rohingya.

Angshuman Choudhury is Senior Researcher and Coordinator, South East Asia Research Programme, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi

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.

Wave or retreat?

The telecast and analysis of various exit polls at the conclusion of the seven-phase general election seem to have had much of India glued to the TV as if they were the actual results (Page 1, "Exit polls predict second term for Modi", May 20). The difference in numbers predicted by the various psephological groups is unconvincing. In one instance the difference is 94 seats as far as the NDA's grand total is concerned. The track record of exit polls in general is hardly glowing. The most common argument to justify their failure is the sample size and the kind of people interviewed. While the sample size can always be

enhanced, the behaviour of people is always difficult to judge. Predicting an election in the world's largest democracy has to take into account several factors ranging from caste, religion, region, money power to voting percentage. There needs to be fresh methodology and techniques as the results of every election redefine the rules of psephology.

N. SADHASIVA REDDY, Bengaluru

■ If the predictions are true, they show that Mr. Modi's election campaigns have been successful only because of his personal popularity rather than his government's performance. The Opposition may have tried to pin him down but,

surprisingly, the issues they raised may not have struck a chord. Does this mean the BJP employed an election strategy that was more clever and tactful than the Opposition's? The partisan attitude of the Election Commission of India and the prolonged election process seem to have helped the ruling party. In the end, I hope the new Prime Minister will take the country to newer heights, according importance to secularism.

D. SETHURAMAN, Chennai

What mattered in 2019

Some of the findings of the post-poll survey even with reference to the pre-poll survey are astonishing ("The issues that mattered in an issue-less election", 'The

Hindu-CSDS Lokniti post-poll survey 2019'). Scant concern for corruption is surprising as it was the focal point in 2014. What is equally disturbing is the lack of interest in farming related issues.

N. VIJAI, Coimbatore

After May 23

One is happy that the election is over and the final result will be known shortly (Editorial, May 20). In the end, it is disappointing that institutions which should have been the guardrails of democracy have not lived up to their mandate. We need strong, solid institutions, people committed to putting the interests of their fellow citizens above party and personal interests and also

respect for the rules and laws of the land. We need to set dignified standards of civility and decorum in public life.

H.N. RAMAKRISHNA, Bengaluru

Promoting coffee

A report ('Business' page, "India to launch coffee consumption drive", April 14) said the India Coffee Trust in collaboration with the International Coffee Organisation is planning to launch a 'catch them young' campaign to promote the coffee drinking habit among

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS

The graphic titled "NDA redux?" that accompanied the front-page story on exit polls (May 20, 2019) had the figures corresponding to the exit polls conducted by ABP Nielsen wrong. It had said: NDA - 267; UPA - 127; and Others - 148. It should have said: NDA - 277; UPA - 130; and Others - 135.

The Reader's Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

The case against war on Iran

U.S. military action could trigger multiple conflicts in the Gulf



STANLY JOHNY

U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly spoken out against America's costly wars. Last year, for instance, he called the 2003 Iraq war "the single worst decision ever made". During the presidential campaign, he had promised to bring U.S. troops home. But two and a half years into his own presidency, the U.S. is on the brink of another major war in West Asia, this time with Iran.

Claiming to have intelligence that Iran could target its interests or the interests of its allies in the region, the U.S. has already sent an aircraft carrier group and a bomber squadron to the Gulf, which U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton called "a clear and unmistakable message to the Iranian regime". When asked if the U.S. is going to war with Iran, Mr. Trump replied, "I hope not." But the growing clamour for war both in Washington and in West Asia is hard to miss. Mr. Bolton, who is currently driving the Iran policy, is a well-known Iran hawk and has repeatedly called for regime change in Tehran.

It is Israel that provided the intelligence inputs that set off the latest flare-up. A Saudi newspaper owned by Turki bin Salman, brother of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, carried an editorial last week calling for "surgical strikes" on Iran. A mysterious attack on four oil tankers off the UAE coast, and a drone attack on a Saudi pipeline that was claimed by the Iran-backed Houthi rebels of Yemen, worsened the crisis. The situation in the Gulf is so dangerous now that a mere spark could trigger a full-blown conflict.

Morally wrong

If the U.S. goes to another war in a region still struggling to recover from its past interventions, it will be morally calamitous and strategically ludicrous. First, Iran does not deserve this treatment. The country signed an international agreement in 2015 to limit its nuclear programme in return for sanctions relief. It fully complied with the deal until Tehran



"If U.S. President Donald Trump truly wants to change the course, he should start with de-escalation." People protest in Tehran after Mr. Trump threatened to destroy Iran if it attacked American interests. ■ AP

announced this month that it would suspend some commitments made under the deal in protest against U.S. sanctions. It was Mr. Trump who violated the deal first by pulling the U.S. out of it last year and reimposing sanctions on Iran. In a better world, Iran's adherence to the agreement would have been appreciated and the country allowed to reap the promised benefits of the deal. Instead, the Trump administration punished it.

Second, if the U.S. goes to war, it will be a unilateral military action. It won't get the approval of the United Nations Security Council as Russia and China remain steadfastly opposed to military action. Even the U.S.'s European allies, including the U.K. which supported the Iraq war, remain committed to the nuclear deal. The U.S. might get the support of Saudi Arabia and Israel, but it is not certain whether even these countries would like to get dragged into a full-blown war. A unilateral military action would further weaken international institutions and create more fissures in the Atlantic alliance.

Iran is not Iraq

Third, Iran is not Iraq. Nor is it Libya. The U.S. went to Iraq after a decade of crippling sanctions that it imposed battered the country's economy and

military. Iraq was totally isolated. Arab countries had turned against Baghdad after the first Gulf war, Iran was its enemy, and Russia was still in retreat mode. The U.S., the U.K. and their allies marched to Iraq and toppled the Saddam Hussein regime in just a few weeks.

Iran, on the other hand, is a country that lives in a state of permanent insecurity. It has always been battle-ready. While Iran is not a strong conventional military force and is crippled by sanctions as well, Iranian policymakers were aware of these challenges. That is why they adopted a 'forward defence' doctrine of expanding Iranian influence across West Asia through non-state militia groups. Iran has Hezbollah in Lebanon, Shia militias in Iraq and Syria, the Houthis in Yemen, and the Islamic Jihad in Gaza. In the event of a war, Iran could activate these groups, triggering multiple conflicts, drawing in several other countries. This possibility makes even "a limited strike" on Iran dangerous. Besides, Iran could block the Strait of Hormuz, which lies between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, through which one-third of the world's LNG and 20% of total oil production flows. That would be a drastic measure that could trigger a massive response from the U.S. But war itself is a dras-

tic measure and could cause extreme retaliatory action.

Fourth, the U.S.'s war record is not as great as is often presented to be. It is the world's pre-eminent military power not because of the results of the wars it has fought but because of its military might. It is ironic that the U.S. is escalating tensions in the Gulf at a time when it is negotiating with the Taliban to find a face-saving exit from Afghanistan.

When the War on Terror began, the U.S. promised to go after every terrorist in the world. Seventeen years later, al-Qaeda is still alive, the Islamic State and other terror organisations are operating across the world, and the Taliban controls almost half the territory in Afghanistan. In Iraq, the U.S. could easily topple the Saddam regime, but it failed to quell the post-Saddam unrest. The country slipped into a sectarian civil war. It was from the mayhem in Iraq that the Islamic State rose. In Libya, the promise was liberation from Muammar Gaddafi's dictatorship when the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (i.e., the U.S., France and the U.K.) intervened in 2011. Gaddafi was killed, but the country sank into chaos and is still to recover from it. In Syria, the U.S. made an indirect intervention and demanded President Bashar al-Assad's ouster until it was outwitted by the Russians. It failed to get the desired outcome in all these countries. How will Iran be any different?

Using diplomacy

As U.S. President, Barack Obama seemed to have realised the challenges in Iran. That is why he attempted to curtail Iran's nuclear programme through diplomatic means. And he succeeded, until Mr. Trump came along and sabotaged it. President Trump says he wants talks with the Iranians, but he doesn't have a realistic programme for the same. If talks were his primary objective, the U.S. should not have withdrawn from the nuclear deal. Mr. Trump should have used the bonhomie created by the deal to expand ties and address concerns such as Iran's regional activism. If he truly wants to change the course, he should start with de-escalation and rein in his bellicose advisers.

stanly.johny@thehindu.co.in

A jibe that marked a new low in electoral politics

Public discourse has reached its nadir, and the Prime Minister symbolises it



KAPIL SIBAL

Even as we eagerly await the verdict of the people on May 23, it is time to reflect on the nature of the political discourse this election season. We witnessed a new low in the campaign: the Prime Minister's desperate fulminations against not just his political opponents, but also the late Rajiv Gandhi, who left us in tragic circumstances.

On May 21, 1991, tragedy struck the nation when former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was campaigning in Sriperumbudur on the outskirts of Chennai, trying to turn around the political fortunes of the Congress party. He was brutally assassinated by militants of the LTTE in a suicide bomb attack. In the course of his campaign trail, he had dreamt of a new India driven by technology.

The nation mourned the death of a leader whose patriotic fervour could never have been questioned. Rajiv Gandhi was critical of the bureaucracy for having failed to deliver services to the last man in the queue. He carried the hopes of young India on his shoulders. We lost him in the midst of our nation's journey, but he left behind his vision, which brought about a revolution of ideas, laying the foundation of a modern, effervescent India.

Stooping low

Twenty-eight years later, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while speaking at a rally in Uttar Pradesh's Pratapgarh constituency, addressed Congress president Rahul Gandhi and said, "Your father was termed 'Mr. Clean' by his courtiers, but his life ended as 'Bhrashtachari No. 1 (Corrupt No.1)'. His statement surprised millions of sane voices. Very few expected him to stoop so low.

The Bofors issue is dead. The alleged charge against Rajiv Gandhi was given a quietus by a judgment of the Delhi High Court, against which the then National Democratic Alliance government chose not to appeal. The court did not find an iota of evidence to support the alleged charge. I happened to have argued the case. Yet, the Prime Minister raked up the issue and taunted Rajiv Gandhi's son, alleging that his father ended his life as "Bhrashtachari No. 1". That may be so in the jaundiced eyes of the Prime Minister, but

not in the eyes of the law. Such a statement is antithetical to the cultural ethos of India. Mr. Modi should have at least respected the sentiments of Sonia Gandhi, who dealt with this personal tragedy with stoic dignity.

Rajiv Gandhi was Mr. Clean. The Prime Minister is aware of the tainted people surrounding him, including those who consider Nathuram Godse a 'deshbhakt' (patriot). Hinduism has always espoused the path of truth, which is perhaps inconsistent with Hindutva, of which the Prime Minister considers himself to be an icon. Not the courtiers, but the nation recognised Rajiv Gandhi as Mr. Clean. All attempts to sully his name failed despite a premier investigating agency's Herculean efforts to do so at the instance of the Bharatiya Janata Party. Surprisingly, in Uttar Pradesh in 1989, Bofors did not even figure in the campaign in Amethi, from where Rajiv Gandhi contested. But this time, Mr. Modi tried to make it an issue.

A reluctant politician

Rajiv Gandhi was destiny's child. It was Sanjay Gandhi who claimed to be the natural heir to former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, but his tragic death in an accident pushed Rajiv Gandhi to the centre stage. He was a passionate pilot and a reluctant politician. Rajiv Gandhi took up the mantle to lead the country after he lost his mother to tragic circumstances. No sensitive, thoughtful, cultured human being, certainly not one who holds the office of the Prime Minister, should have made such a statement.

Responding to Mr. Modi's remarks in the course of an interaction during the Uttar Pradesh campaign trail, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said, "The Prime Minister, who is seeking votes in the name of martyrs, yesterday disrespected the martyrdom of a noble man. People in Amethi will give a befitting reply." Rahul Gandhi turned philosophical when dealing with Mr. Modi's taunt. He tweeted, "Modi ji, the battle is over. Your Karma awaits you. Projecting your inner beliefs about yourself onto my father won't protect you. All my love and a huge hug. Rahul." This was a dignified response, the response of a true gentleman.

Respective of who wins in 2019, Mr. Modi's jibe will be remembered as a new low, not just in electoral politics but in public life. The example set by Mr. Modi shows that public discourse has reached its nadir, and Mr. Modi symbolises it.

Kapil Sibal is a Member of the Rajya Sabha, and a senior Congress leader

SINGLE FILE

The purpose of art

If art does not facilitate new thoughts and be a constant reminder of historical time, it isn't art at all

KUNAL RAY



Can art be devoid of social consciousness? Often, social consciousness defines the very credo of an artist's practice because artists don't exist in a socio-political vacuum. Their work and aesthetics are shaped by the times they live in and the reality that surrounds them. Therefore, they find a multitude of ways of engaging with socio-political or cultural factors – repeatedly, and across generations and genres.

An artist who does so also risks labels such as 'activist artist'. But this is a facile way of thinking and branding art and artists. Artists are not propagandists, but their art is a constant reminder of historical time. I often argue that history is perhaps best recorded in fiction; the greater truths are to be found in works of art resisting linear readings and interpretations of history.

The social concerns of artists could differ, as they always have, but an ivory tower artist is a menacing creature. Art ought to see and show people not as objects of anthropological inquiry, but repositories of a moment in history, living archives even.

I was assailed by a plethora of such thoughts on a recent visit to the National Gallery of Modern Art in Mumbai, where I encountered the works of a renowned painter at a special exhibition dedicated to showcasing his works. His work was influenced by the Kerala mural tradition. Natural motifs such as flowers, birds, flora and fauna predominantly featured in his paintings. In the gallery, I wondered whether a reflection on contemporary time was missing in his work.

Women from the Bhil tribe in Rajasthan were sometimes the objects of his paintings, and he referred to them as a 'medium'. Should the artist have attempted to see them as something beyond beautiful and brooding village women? The artist was devoted to capturing and recreating a notion of the beautiful in an idyllic setting. Yet, while the purpose of a painting can be to capture and reproduce, shouldn't it also comment?

It appeared to me that the women in the paintings had no identity other than being part of a community. I wondered what the painter's humanist concerns were. I reflected that perhaps he was interested in capturing a certain aspect of his subjects and remained immune to the rest, maybe because it didn't resonate with his artistic agenda.

Stepping back from this example, what is the relevance of art in 2019 when the world is being ravaged by the clash of identities? Can there be any idea of artistic beauty that remains untouched by these forces? If art becomes all about creating escapist paradigms, we must then ask who that serves. Unless art facilitates new thoughts – and that can often come from holding up a mirror to broader society – it isn't art at all.

The writer teaches literary and cultural studies at FLAME University, Pune



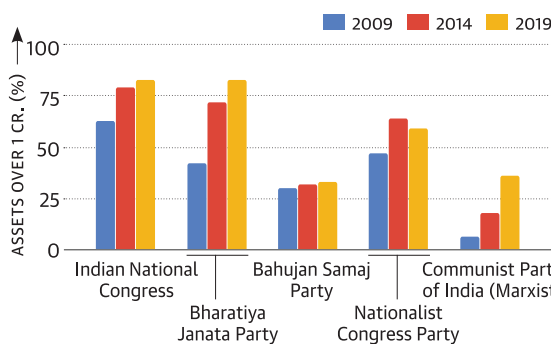
DATA POINT

Wealth effect

The total assets of all candidates in the 2019 Lok Sabha election exceeded ₹27,000 crore. The Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party fielded the highest number of wealthy candidates. The net assets of most parties and re-contesting candidates was substantially higher than the past few elections. By **Suman Sen**

The rise over the years

The party-wise proportion of candidates with assets more than ₹1 crore has increased consistently since the 2009 Lok Sabha election. The chart shows the party-wise split of such candidates since the 2009 Lok Sabha election. The BJP's share of such candidates increased by 41% points. Ramesh Kumar Sharma was the richest, with net assets of over ₹1,107 crore



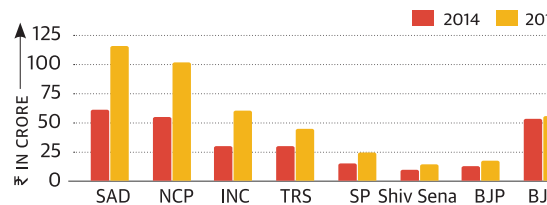
Candidate	Constituency	Party	Net assets (in ₹)
Ramesh Kumar Sharma	Pataliputra, Bihar	IND	1,107 crore
Konda Vishweshwar Reddy	Chevella, Telangana	INC	895 crore
Nakul Nath	Chhindwara, M.P.	INC	660 crore

INC: Indian National Congress | BJP: Bharatiya Janata Party
SAD: Shiromani Akali Dal | NCP: Nationalist Congress Party
TRS: Telangana Rashtra Samiti | SP: Samajwadi Party
BJD: Biju Janata Dal | KA: Karnataka | IND: Independent

Source: Association of Democratic Reforms

Re-contesting candidates

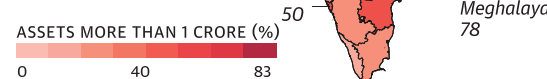
The graph shows party-wise increase in assets of re-contesting candidates. The net assets of the Akali Dal's candidates increased by over ₹54 crore, the highest among all parties. The Congress's Jyotiraditya Scindia's total wealth rose by 1,032%



Candidate	Constituency	Party	Percentage rise in assets
Jyotiraditya Scindia	Guna, M.P.	INC	1,032
Jigajinagi Ramesh Chandappa	Bijapur, Karnataka	BJP	464
D.K. Suresh	Bangalore Rural, KA	INC	295

State-wise split

Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Mizoram had the highest proportion of candidates whose net assets were more than ₹1 crore. Telangana, Gujarat, and Kerala had the lowest. The map shows the % of contestants with net assets more than ₹1 crore



FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 21, 1969

U.K.'s vital role in European Union

To a British Government worried by too many domestic troubles, the West German Finance Minister, Herr Franz-Josef Strauss, brought words of cheer yesterday [May 19, London]. He said that a united Europe was inconceivable without Britain and that the admission of Britain to the Common Market was a matter of procedure only and not of opinion. He assured that the Bundesbank would be willing to consider favourably a line of credit to the Bank of England if the latter asked for it. He underlined that Britain's partnership with France in nuclear arms was essential for an effective defence of Europe. Herr Strauss was on a visit to Britain primarily to address the European Atlantic Group. He took the occasion to reiterate, perhaps more forcefully than hitherto, his views on Britain's position in Europe and these attracted attention not only because they were expressed on British soil but because Herr Strauss is regarded as a possible successor to Dr. Keisinger as Chancellor.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 21, 1919.

Tampering with the Evidence.

Their lordships Mr. Justice Walsh and Mr. Justice Stuart disposed of the appeal of Asghar against the sentence of death passed on him by the Sessions Judge of Budaun on a charge of having murdered an old man named Chiddo. It was alleged that the accused decoyed the deceased into the house of Amirulla under the pretext of getting him a goat for sale, and throttled him to death. Amirulla was alleged to have abetted the crime by holding the deceased's legs. The motive of the murder was suggested to have been the greed of taking possession of Rs. 75 which the deceased had with him on selling his house. Their Lordships said it was quite clear that the evidence of the daughter of Amirulla, as the Sessions Judge had found, was tampered with by the Sub-Inspector himself or through his instrumentality apparently with the insidious and thoroughly unjust motive of persuading her to give the best evidence against Asghar and to say as little as she could against her father who was tried with him.

POLL CALL

Voter apathy

Voter apathy is perceived apathy among those eligible to vote in an election. This can happen when voters are disillusioned with the electoral process, political parties and candidates, or when they don't think their vote will count, or when they don't care much for the issues around them. In India, voter turnout has been going up in the past decade largely due to the Election Commission's efforts to enhance voter participation in the country, the media's efforts to raise public interest in elections, and an increase in the number of women coming out to vote.

MORE ON THE WEB

Watch | What is the controversy surrounding VVPAT all about?

http://bit.ly/VVPATEVM



पूर्व अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति

अंतर्ध्वनि
>> पांडेय बेचन शर्मा 39

क्रोध चाहे कोई
करे, वह पाप का
मूल होता है

अपने पिता की एक झलक-मात्र मेरी आंखों में है। मंदिर से आकर ब्राह्मण-वेश में किसी ने मेरे मुंह में एक आचमनी गंगाजल डाल दिया, जिसमें बताशे घुले हुए थे। मैं मां की गोद में था। उसने बतलाया, चरणामृत है बेटे! कितना मीठा! मैंने अपने पिता को बुरी तरह बीमार देखा, घर में चारों ओर निराशा। पिता का मरना...आई का पछाड़ खा-खाकर रोना मुझे याद है। यद्यपि तब मैं बहुत छोटा, रोगीला, वेदम-जैसा बालक था। जब मेरे पिता का देहांत हुआ, मैं महज दो साल और छह महीनों का था। यानी मैंने जरा ही आंखें खोलकर दुनिया को देखा, तो मेरा कोई सरपरस्त नहीं! प्रायः जन्मजात अनाथ, ऐसा जिस पर किसी का भी वरदहस्त नहीं रहा।

चाची मेरी आई से तो कसकर झगड़ती थीं, लेकिन मुझे उनका वात्सल्य प्राप्त था। पाते ही प्यार से, पुचकार से वह मुझे कुछ-न-कुछ खाने को देतीं। लेकिन इसका पता लगते ही मेरी आई मुझे लिटाकर, देवराणी को दिखा-दिखा, सुना-सुनाकर धमार की धुन में धमकती थीं।

क्रोध माता करे या पिता, पति करे या पत्नी, बालक करे या युवा, होता है - पाप का मूल। मेरी आई परम क्रोधिनी थीं, साथ ही परम भोलीं।

वह परिश्रमी भी जबरदस्त थीं। हमारे लंबे-चौड़े दरिद्र कच्चे घर को होली-दिवाली पर वह अकेले ही कछाड़ बांधकर पोतीती या पीली मिट्टी से दिव्य कर दी थीं। फटे-पुराने कपड़ों की कथा ऐसी सी देती थीं, जिसे सदी के दिनों में परदान को तरह लोग ओढ़ते-बिछाते थे। कागज गला पल्य बना उसकी भद्दी टोकरीयां बना लेती थीं। सिक के पंखे तो खासे बना लेती थीं। ब्याह-गौना, कथा वगैरह में सामयिक गीत गाने वालियों में वह आगे ही रहना चाहती थीं।

-दिलिपनंद हिंदी साहित्यकार

पंजाब उन गिने-चुने राज्यों में से है, जहां आज कांग्रेस की सरकारें हैं, ऐसे में मुख्यमंत्री और एक प्रभावशाली मंत्री के बीच का यह विवाद सिर्फ एक सूबे का मामला नहीं है, बल्कि यह कांग्रेस के शीर्ष नेतृत्व की कमजोरी को भी दिखाता है।

कैप्टन से तकरार

आम
चुनावों के नतीजे आने से पहले पंजाब के मुख्यमंत्री कैप्टन अमरिंदर सिंह और उनके असंतुष्ट मंत्री नवजोत सिंह सिद्धू के बीच जैसी तकरार चल रही है, उसे कांग्रेस पार्टी के लिए अच्छा नहीं कहा जा सकता। स्थिति यहां तक पहुंच गई कि सूबे में ऐन मतदान के दिन 19 मई को कैप्टन ने आरोप लगाया कि सिद्धू उनकी जगह मुख्यमंत्री बनना चाहते हैं! यह सारा झगड़ा लोकसभा चुनाव में टिकट बंटवारे से शुरू हुआ, जब कांग्रेस ने सिद्धू की पत्नी नवजोत कौर को चंडीगढ़ से टिकट नहीं दिया। सिद्धू और उनकी पत्नी दोनों को लगता है कि कैप्टन अमरिंदर सिंह की मर्जी से जानबूझकर उनका टिकट काटा गया और फिर उसे उन दोनों ने खुद की प्रतिष्ठा का प्रश्न

बना लिया। सिद्धू भले यह कह रहे हों कि वह 2015 में पवित्र ग्रंथ की बेअदबी करने वालों पर कार्रवाई की मांग कर रहे हैं, लेकिन जब उन्होंने अपनी पार्टी के कुछ नेताओं पर पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री प्रकाश सिंह बादल के परिवार और अकाली दल को चुनाव में फायदा पहुंचाने का आरोप लगाया, तो उसके निहितार्थ एकदम स्पष्ट थे। ऐसे में भाजपा महासचिव शहनवाज हुसैन के इस बयान पर हैरानी नहीं होती कि सिद्धू के बयान से उनकी पार्टी को फायदा पहुंचा है! सिद्धू की सूबे में लोकप्रियता है और उनकी पत्नी भी पिछली अकाली-भाजपा सरकार में अहम पदों पर रही हैं। यह संभव है कि कांग्रेस पार्टी के नेताओं के खिलाफ उनके आरोपों में सच्चाई भी हो, लेकिन जिस तरह से उन्होंने इसे सार्वजनिक किया है, उससे तो उनकी अपनी छवि

ही खराब हुई है। सिद्धू इससे पहले पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान के शपथ ग्रहण समारोह में शामिल होकर मुख्यमंत्री और कांग्रेस पार्टी, दोनों के लिए असहज स्थिति पैदा कर ही चुके हैं। सिद्धू राजनीतिक रूप से महत्वकांक्षी हैं, यह कोई छिपी बात नहीं है और इसमें कुछ गलत भी नहीं है, लेकिन हकीकत यह है कि 2017 के विधानसभा चुनाव में कांग्रेस पार्टी को भारी बहुमत दिलाने में कैप्टन अमरिंदर सिंह की सबसे अहम भूमिका थी। पंजाब उन गिने-चुने राज्यों में से है, जहां आज कांग्रेस की सरकारें हैं, ऐसे में मुख्यमंत्री और एक प्रभावशाली मंत्री के बीच का यह विवाद सिर्फ एक सूबे का मामला नहीं है, बल्कि यह कांग्रेस के शीर्ष नेतृत्व की कमजोरी को भी दिखाता है।

क्या ईरान से बढ़ता तनाव युद्ध में बदलेगा

अ
मेरिका क्या ईरान के साथ युद्ध की ओर बढ़ रहा है? वास्तव में अमेरिका पहले ही एक दलदल में फंसा हुआ है। यमन के निरर्थक युद्ध में अमेरिका अब तक लगभग ढाई लाख मौतों में उलझ गया है, जिनमें से अनेक बच्चे हैं, जो भूख के कारण मर गए। कुछ ही दिनों पहले बम धमाके (संभवतः अमेरिका निर्मित) में चार यमनी बच्चे मारे गए। वहां हर बारह मिनट में एक बच्चा मर जाता है। कई बुरे खिलौनों की वजह से यमन एक जटिल जगह है, लेकिन मूल बात यह है कि चूंकि अमेरिका की दुश्मनी ईरान के प्रति है और सऊदी अरब के साथ उसके अच्छे रिश्ते हैं, इसलिए वह यमनी बच्चों को भूख और बम धमाकों में मरने में मदद कर रहा है।



क्षेत्र में तनाव बढ़ने के साथ सऊदी अरब अब अमेरिका को दुश्मनी बढ़ाने और ईरान पर सैन्य हमले करने के लिए उकसा रहा है। बहुसंख्यक को सऊदी सरकार से संबद्ध अरब न्यूज़ ने लिखा 'अमेरिका को ईरान पर कड़ा हमला करना चाहिए।' यह 2015 में सऊदी अरब की नीति थी, जब वहां के उन्मत्त युवराज मोहम्मद बिन सलमान ने यमन में हस्तक्षेप किया था। वह अपनी कठोरता दिखाना चाहते थे और यह मानते थे कि उनके सशस्त्र बल ईरान समर्थित गुट हूती विद्रोहियों को कुचल देंगे। इसके बजाय सऊदी अरब के हस्तक्षेप के परिणामस्वरूप यमन में ईरान का प्रभाव बढ़ गया। जिसे संयुक्त राष्ट्र दुनिया का बदतर मानवीय संकट कहता है, सऊदी अरब ने उसे बढ़ाने में मदद की है। अब जब फिर से ईरान के साथ अमेरिकी संबंधों की बात हवा में तैर रही है, यमन यह याद दिलाता है कि युद्ध में शामिल होना आसान है, जबकि उससे निकलना मुश्किल।

अमेरिका जब पहले ही यमन के निरर्थक युद्ध में फंसा हुआ है, तब सऊदी अरब के उकसावे पर ईरान पर उसके हमला करने के भीषण नतीजे होंगे।



निकोलस क्रिस्टॉफ

हैं, जिन्होंने यमन पर बम गिराए, लेकिन वाशिंगटन हथियारों और खुफिया सूचनाओं की आपूर्ति करता है, जो इस युद्ध को अनिश्चितकाल तक खींचने की अनुमति देता है। अमेरिकी नीति यमनी बच्चों को भूख से मरने देने का समर्थन करती है, क्योंकि वे ईरान से संबद्ध एक गुट से शासित हैं।

यह पक्षपातपूर्ण मुद्दा नहीं होना चाहिए। यमन में पूर्व राष्ट्रपति बराक ओबामा ने सऊदी अरब का समर्थन किया था, और ट्रंप ने उस समर्थन को

मंजिलें और भी हैं
>> कैरॉन रॉन्सले

आयरलैंड से आकर बावड़ियां साफ करने में जुटा

मैं आयरिश हूँ और फ्रांस में पैदा हुआ हूँ। लेकिन मैं भारत से बहुत प्यार करता हूँ। मेरे दादा भारत में चीफ रेलवे इंजीनियर थे। मुंबई-वड़ोदरा (बंबई-बड़ौदा) रेलमार्ग के निर्माण में उनकी महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका थी। उन्होंने अपने जीवन का बड़ा हिस्सा भारत में बिताया। वह भारतीय जीवन शैली के बड़े प्रशंसक थे। नौकरी से रिटायर होने के बाद वह इंग्लैंड लौट गए। वह हमें भारत के बारे में बताते रहते थे, जिसका असर मुझ पर पड़ा और मुझमें भारत को नजदीक से जानने की इच्छा प्रबल होती गई। हालाँकि भारत आने से पहले मैंने पाकिस्तान में बीस साल बिताए। मैंने क्रायवी के एक बर्धिर स्कूल तथा प्रसिद्ध कराची ग्रामर स्कूल में पढ़ाया। स्कूलों में पढ़ाने के अलावा मैंने पर्यावरण संरक्षण से जुड़े काम भी किए। सिंध के कुछ स्कूलों में भी मैंने अध्यापन का काम किया। पढ़ाने के काम से ऊब जाने के बाद मैं थार मरुस्थल के उमरकोट शहर में चला गया, जहाँ हिंदुओं की भी बड़ी आबादी है। पर पाकिस्तान का मेरा अनुभव अच्छा नहीं था। लोग तो मुझसे नाराज रहते ही थे, ब्रिटिश उच्चायोग तक ने मेरा सहयोग नहीं किया।

वर्ष 2014 में मैं भारत आ गया। शुरुआती कुछ वक्त मैंने इस देश को देखने में बिताया। उसके बाद मैं पर्यावरण के क्षेत्र में काम करने के अवसर ढूँढने लगा। आखिरकार मैं राजस्थान में जैसलमेर के एक गांव हाडा में रहने लगा। वहाँ मैंने स्थानीय लोगों की सहायता से एक बगीचा बनवाया, जिसमें करीब एक हजार पेड़ लगावाए। वहाँ से मैं जोधपुर चला गया। जोधपुर में बावड़ियों ने मेरा मन मोह लिया। मैंने पढ़ा था कि भारत में कई जगह पीने का पानी इकट्ठा करने के लिए बावड़ियां बनाई गई थीं। बावड़ियों की खूबसूरती देखकर मुझे अपने दादा की याद आई, जो भारतीय संस्कृति की तरफ़ी किया करते थे। लेकिन बावड़ियों की हालत देखकर मेरा मन दुखी हो गया। मैंने स्थानीय प्रशासन से लेकर एनजीओ तक से बावड़ियों की साफ-सफाई में मेरी मदद करने के लिए कहा। लेकिन किसी ने मेरी बात नहीं सुनी। ऐसे मे, मैंने कुछ लोगों की मदद ली और बावड़ियों की सफाई में जुट गया। ये बावड़ियां अब शराबियों, जुआरियों के अड्डों में बदल गई हैं, जहाँ शराब की खाली बोतलें, बीड़ी-सिगरेट के टुकड़े और गंदगी भरी रहती थी। हालाँकि सत्तर साल की उम्र में मेरे लिए एक जगह पर लंबे समय तक बैठना कठिन है, इसके बावजूद मैं छह घंटे तक अपने स्वयंसेवकों के साथ बावड़ियों की सफाई में लगा रहता था।

इस बीच मुझे मेहरानगढ़ फोर्ट ट्रस्ट से मदद मिली। उसने हमें बावड़ियों से पानी निकालने के लिए पंप तो दिए ही, वित्तीय मदद दी और साथ में पांच से दस स्वयंसेवक भी दिए। हर तीन से चार महीने में एक बार ट्रस्ट की ओर से दो सौ स्वयंसेवक भेजे जाते थे, तो बावड़ियों में इकट्ठा कूड़ा निकालने का काम करते थे। एक साथ इतने लोगों को देखकर स्थानीय लोग भी काम में हाथ बंटाने आ जाते थे। इससे स्थानीय लोगों में हक भावना पैदा हुई कि एक विदेशी बुजुर्ग उनके आसपास की गंदगी साफ करने आया है। जो लोग कभी मुझे पागल साहब कहकर चिढ़ाते थे, वे आज मेरा सम्मान करते हैं। मेरे लिए संतोष की बात यह है कि स्थानीय लोगों, छात्रों और युवाओं में यह सोच बन रही है कि केवल जल संकट से निपटने के लिए ही नहीं, पर्यावरण संरक्षण के लिए भी बावड़ियों को बचाया जाना चाहिए।

-दिलिपनंद साक्षात्कार पर आधारित।

तेलंगाना में दल बदल का खेल

पिछले कुछ महीने के भीतर ही दक्षिणी राज्य तेलंगाना में कांग्रेस के 19 में से 12 विधायक टीआरएस में चले गए हैं। यदि एक और विधायक टीआरएस में चला जाता है, तो वे दल बदल विरोधी कानून के तहत अयोग्य होने से बच जाएंगे।

ऐ
से समय, जब सारा देश आम चुनाव, एगिजट पोल और संभावित नतीजों की चर्चा में मशगूल है, दक्षिणी राज्य तेलंगाना में एक दिलचस्प राजनीतिक घटनाक्रम हो गया, जिस पर लोगों का खास ध्यान नहीं गया। तेलंगाना में सत्तारूढ़ तेलंगाना राष्ट्र समिति (टीआरएस) ने दिसंबर, 2018 में समय से पहले चुनाव करवाए थे, जिसमें उसे राज्य की 119 में से 88 सीटें मिली थीं और दो निर्दलीय का समर्थन मिलने से विधानसभा में उसका आंकड़ा 90 पर पहुंच गया, जिससे उसकी स्थिति काफी मजबूत हो गई। विधानसभा चुनावों के नतीजे घोषित होने के बाद अन्य पार्टियों के सदस्यों ने टीआरएस का रुख करना शुरू कर दिया। खासतौर से कांग्रेस, जिसके कुछ महीने के भीतर ही 19 में से 12 विधायक टीआरएस में जा चुके हैं। यदि कांग्रेस का सिर्फ एक और विधायक टीआरएस का रुख कर लेता है, तो कांग्रेस के दो तिहाई विधायक पाला बदल चुके होंगे और वे दल बदल विरोधी कानून के तहत अयोग्य होने से बच जाएंगे।

तेलंगाना में 2014 में हुए पहले विधानसभा चुनावों के बाद से टीआरएस ने दल बदल को बढ़ावा दिया है, जबकि उस समय उसे 119 में से 63 सीटें मिली थीं। तब यह तर्क दिया गया कि कांग्रेस सरकार को अस्थिर करने की कोशिश कर सकती है, इसलिए टीआरएस ने कांग्रेस के विधायकों को अपनी पार्टी से जोड़ने की कवायद की। जबकि तथ्य यह है कि टीआरएस ने कांग्रेस और अन्य दलों से आए ऐसे विधायकों के जरिये जमीनी स्तर पर अपना आधार मजबूत करने की कोशिश की, जिनकी लोगों के बीच पर्याप्त विश्वसनीयता रही है। अपने दूसरे कार्यकाल में भी



महेश बाबू कुरुवा

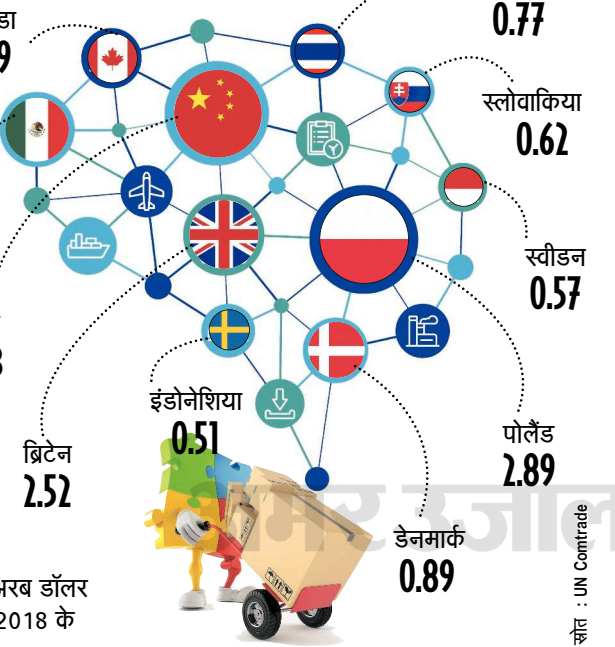
टीआरएस की नजर कांग्रेस के विधायकों पर रही। पाला बदलने वाले पार्टी के विधायकों को अयोग्य घोषित करने से संबंधित कांग्रेस की याचिका विधानसभा अध्यक्ष के पास लंबित है। कांग्रेस ने अलग हुए गुट के टीआरएस में प्रस्तावित विलय को लेकर तेलंगाना हाई कोर्ट का भी दरवाजा खटखटाया है। हाई कोर्ट इस बारे में 11 जून को सुनवाई करेगा। इस पृष्ठभूमि में हाल के राजनीतिक इतिहास की ओर लौटने की जरूरत है, जिससे अंदाजा लगाया जा सकेगा कि आखिर तेलंगाना में क्या हो सकता है। 2003 में उत्तर प्रदेश में बसपा के 13 विधायकों ने पार्टी से अलग होकर लोकतांत्रिक बहुजन दल के नाम से एक अलग गुट बना लिया था। बाद में 24 और

विधायक उनसे मिले और पार्टी से अलग होने वाले विधायकों की संख्या 37 हो गई। उस समय बसपा के 98 विधायक थे और अलग होने वाले विधायकों की संख्या एक तिहाई से अधिक हो गई। इन विधायकों ने अपनी नई पार्टी का मुलायम सिंह यादव की सपा में विलय कर दिया, ताकि नई सरकार का गठन हो सके। विधानसभा अध्यक्ष ने भी इस दल बदल को मंजूरी दे दी। उस समय सदन में बसपा के नेता स्वामी प्रसाद मौर्य की याचिका को इस तकनीकी आधार पर खारिज किया कि यह दल बदल नहीं है, बल्कि पार्टी में टूट हुई और फिर इस गुट का विलय किया गया, जो कि दल बदल कानून का उल्लंघन नहीं है। मामला सुप्रीम कोर्ट तक पहुंचा, जिसने फरवरी, 2007 को 13 विधायकों को अयोग्य घोषित कर दिया। उस समय तक मुलायम सिंह यादव सरकार का कार्यकाल लगभग पूरा हो चुका था और विधानसभा चुनाव को सिर्फ दो महीने बचे थे। संविधान के 91 वें संशोधन के जरिये दल बदल कानून के तहत किसी पार्टी में टूट के समय अयोग्यता के दायरे में आने वाले विधायकों की न्यूनतम संख्या एक तिहाई से बढ़ाकर दो तिहाई कर दी गई। इस संशोधन के बावजूद छोटे राज्यों में दल बदल को रोक पाना अब भी मुश्किल है।

-लेखक, हेमवती नंदन बहुगुणा केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालय, उत्तराखंड में सहायक प्राध्यापक हैं।

खुली खिड़की

चीनी खिलौने का दबदबा
खिलौने और गोम्स के निर्यात में चीन का दबदबा कायम है, उसके बाद पोलैंड और ब्रिटेन का स्थान आता है।



सामान नहीं, ज्ञान

स्वामी रामतीर्थ अमेरिका जा रहे थे। उनका जहाज सैनफ्रांसिस्को बंदरगाह पर पहुंचा, तो सभी यात्री जल्दी-जल्दी सामान उतारने लगे। लेकिन रामतीर्थ हाथ में एक थैला लिए हुए एक ओर शांत भाव से खड़े थे। उनके चेहरे पर न कोई घबराहट थी और न जल्दी उतरने की कोई उतावली। एक अमेरिकी काफी देर से उन्हें देखे जा रहा था। आखिरकार उसने उनसे पूछ ही लिया, आप भारत से आए हुए लगते हैं। लेकिन जहाज से अपना सामान क्यों नहीं उतारते? स्वामी जी शांत स्वर में बोले, मैं सामान का बोझ नहीं होता, सिर्फ ज्ञान का अर्थ समझता हूँ। वह अमेरिकी उनकी बात सुन हैरान हो गया। उसने फिर पूछा, तो यहां कहां ठहरेंगे? यहां आपका कोई न कोई मित्र तो होगा? स्वामी जी बोले, हां, यहां मेरा एक मित्र तो है। अमेरिकी ने अब सवालियों की जैसे झड़ी लगा दी, कौन है वह? उसका क्या नाम है? क्या वह आपको लेने आ रहा है? स्वामी जी ने उस व्यक्ति के कंधे पर हाथ रखकर मुस्कुराते हुए कहा, समझ लीजिए कि मेरा वह मित्र आप ही हैं। प्रेम की पवित्रता और निश्चलता से भोग चुका वह व्यक्ति सचमुच स्वामी रामतीर्थ का मित्र बन गया। जब तक स्वामी जी अमेरिका में रहे, उसी के यहां रहे। स्वामी जी के ज्ञान और आत्मविश्वास ने उस व्यक्ति को ही नहीं, उसके परिवार और मित्रों को भी स्वामी का जी का शिष्य बना दिया।

हरियाली और रास्ता

कियान, मंजूला और खुशी

एक शादीशुदा जोड़े की कहानी, जिसे खुश रहने का राज एक गरीब दंपति के करीब जाने के बाद पता चला।



कियान और मंजूला की नई-नई शादी हुई थी। दोनों बहुत खुश थे। कियान को पता चला कि शहर में एक जाने-नाम ज्योतिषी आए हुए हैं। दोनों अगले दिन उनके पास पहुंच गए। कियान ने ज्योतिषी से कहा, स्वामी जी, हमारे पास किसी चीज की कमी नहीं। हमारी सोच भी काफी मिलती है। हमारे बीच कभी कोई परेशानी न आए, इसका उपाय बताइए। ज्योतिषी बोले, आप बस कोई एक ऐसा जोड़ा ढूँढ लीजिए, जो हमेशा खुश रहता हो। उसके घर से उसका एक कपड़ा लाकर अपने घर में रख लीजिए। आपके घर में कभी कोई अशांति नहीं होगी। कियान और मंजूला हमेशा खुश रहने वाले जोड़े की तलाश में लग गए। उन्हें पता चला कि राजपाल का परिवार बहुत खुश रहता है। उनके घर पहुंचकर उन्होंने देखा कि राजपाल के पास तो अपनी पत्नी के लिए समय ही नहीं है। जो आपस में बात भी न करें, वे कैसे खुश रह सकते हैं, यह सोचकर वे वहां से लौट गए। एक रिश्तेदार ने उन्हें दूसरे शहर में एक सुखी दंपति के बारे में बताया। वहां पहुंचकर उन्होंने पाया कि वे खुश तो हैं, पर यह उनकी पहली शादी नहीं। कियान और मंजूला घर लौट आए। कई शहरों की दौड़ और कई लोगों से मुलाकात के बाद भी उन्हें ऐसा कोई दंपति नहीं मिला, जो हमेशा खुश रहता हो। फिर उन्हें राजस्थान के एक सुखी परिवार का पता चला। उन्होंने देखा कि वे बहुत गरीब हैं। उनके पास खाना नहीं, पहनें न कोई कपड़े नहीं, घर की टपकती छत ठीक करवाने को पैसे नहीं। उनके साथ दो दिन बिताते पर उन्होंने पाया कि सचमुच वे बहुत खुश हैं। कियान ने उनसे पूछा, गरीबी में भी आप इतना खुश कैसे रहते हैं? वे बोले, हम एक दूसरे के लिए हैं, और एक दूसरे के साथ वह सब कुछ हासिल कर सकते हैं, जो हम चाहते हैं।

जिस खुशी को हम बाहर तलाश करते हैं, वह और कहीं नहीं, अपने अंदर होती है।

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 80

सही और गलत!

वर्ष 2019 के आम चुनाव के नतीजे चाहे जो भी हों लेकिन यह कहना उचित होगा कि 36 दिन तक चली इस कवायद के बाद निर्वाचन आयोग का कद छोटा हुआ है। ये चुनाव आधिकारिक तौर पर निहायत अशुभता से भरे हुए थे और इस अवधि के दौरान सत्ताधारी दल और विपक्षी उम्मीदवारों द्वारा उल्लंघन के तमाम मामलों की शिकायत के बाद अब

आयोग में आपसी असहमति सामने आ रही है। निर्वाचन आयुक्तों में से एक अशोक लवासा ने आदर्श आचार संहिता के उल्लंघन के मामलों की सुनवाई वाली बैठकों से खुद को अलग करते हुए कहा कि उनकी असहमति को दर्ज ही नहीं किया जा रहा। लवासा विवादों के केंद्र में रहे हैं। चुनाव के दौरान निर्वाचन आयोग ने

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी और भाजपा अध्यक्ष अमित शाह को चुनाव प्रचार के दौरान धर्म को बीच में लाने और बालाकोट हमले का जिक्र करने के पांच मामलों में क्लीनचिट दी। लवासा ने इन सभी अवसरों पर विरोध किया। आयोग के नियमों के मुताबिक बहुमत का निर्णय मान्य होता है और मुख्य निर्वाचन आयुक्त ने अपनी दलील में कहा था कि अल्पमत का निर्णय रिकॉर्ड नहीं किया जाएगा क्योंकि आचार संहिता के उल्लंघन का मामला अद्वैत न्यायिक निर्णयों में नहीं आता है।

यह नजरिया चुनाव आयोग के ध्येय की रक्षा भले ही करता हो लेकिन यह उसकी आत्मा के अनुरूप नहीं है। यह एक खुला प्रश्न है कि क्या उसे प्रधानमंत्री की केदारनाथ यात्रा के प्रसारण के लिए सरकारी संसाधनों

के इस्तेमाल की अनुमति देनी चाहिए थी जबकि अभी चुनाव प्रचार समाप्त ही हुआ था। अगर यह यात्रा प्रचार अभियान के दौरान हुई होती तो कोई मुद्दा नहीं बनता। यह बात भी आश्चर्य का सबब है कि उसने मोदी और ममता बनर्जी को बंगाल में पूरे दिन चुनाव प्रचार की अनुमति क्यों दी, इसके ठीक बाद उसने चुनावी हिंसा की निंदा करते हुए प्रचार को अवधि को ही कम कर दिया। हाल के वर्षों में सार्वजनिक बहस में आरोप प्रत्यारोप बढ़ गए हैं। यह कहना उचित होगा कि इससे पहले के चुनाव आयोग ने भी कोई बहुत अधिक प्रतिष्ठा नहीं अर्जित की है। न ही उनसे निपटने वाले राजनीतिक प्रतिष्ठानों ने ऐसा कुछ किया है। वर्ष 2009 का उदाहरण हमारे सामने है जब मुख्य निर्वाचन आयुक्त

एन गोपालस्वामी ने अपने सहयोगी नवीन चावला को हटाने की अनुशंसा की थी क्योंकि उन्हें कांग्रेस पार्टी के करीब माना जाता था। वर्ष 2002 में मोदी ने गुजरात के मुख्यमंत्री के पद पर रहते हुए कहा था कि तत्कालीन मुख्य निर्वाचन आयुक्त जे एम लिंगदोह ने गुजरात में सांप्रदायिक दंगों के बाद जल्दी चुनाव कराने की उनकी मांग इसलिए टुकरा दी थी क्योंकि वह ईसाई थे। सन 1989 में निर्वाचन आयोग को तीन सदस्यीय इसलिए बनाया गया क्योंकि तत्कालीन निर्वाचन आयुक्त आरवीएस पेरी शास्त्री ने कुछ ज्यादा ही स्वतंत्रता का परिचय दिया था। शास्त्री को उनके दौर में कुछ व्यापक चुनाव सुधार लाने के प्रयास के लिए भी जाना जाता है। सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने इसे खारिज कर दिया

था लेकिन 1993 में टीएन शेषन ने इसे दोबारा शुरू किया। उनकी स्वायत्तता ने तमाम राजनीतिक दलों को असहज कर दिया था। शास्त्री और शेषन दोनों ने चुनाव आयोग की निष्पक्षता के नए मानक तय किए। उस वक्त तक इसे एक अनुगामी संगठन की छवि हासिल थी लेकिन बाद में यह संस्थागत निष्पक्षता की मिसाल बन गया। यह प्रतिष्ठा 2000 के दशक में गायब होने लगी। इसकी कमजोरी का एक सिरा यह भी है कि यहां होने वाली नियुक्तियां वह कार्यपालिका करती है जिसकी निगरानी का काम आयोग के पास है। उस लिहाज से देखें तो लवासा ने सच बोलकर असाधारण साहस दिखाया है। यह दुखद है कि आयोग ने उनकी सुविचारित दृष्टि को नकार दिया है।



अजय मोहंती

अच्छे दिनों का आगमन और सरकार की भूमिका

अगर सरकार शांति कायम करने, तत्काल न्याय प्रदान करने और लागत कम करने में सहायता करे तो भारत तेजी से प्रगति कर सकता है। विस्तार से बता रहे हैं देवाशिष बसु

वर्ष 2014 के आम चुनाव में भारतीय जनता पार्टी (भाजपा) ने अपने चुनाव घोषणा पत्र के दो संस्करण सार्वजनिक किए थे। एक छोटा और दूसरा बड़ा। मैंने छोटे संस्करण को अपने लैपटॉप की स्क्रीन पर सेव किया था। मुझे लगा कि चूंकि एक अलग सरकार का वादा किया गया था और कहा गया था न्यूनतम सरकारी हस्तक्षेप के साथ अधिकतम शासन होगा, ऐसे में मैं देश में आ रहे बदलाव को दर्ज करना चाहता था। करीब छह महीने बाद मैंने उसे हटा दिया। मैंने ध्यान दिया कि केवल नेतृत्व में बदलाव आया है, सरकार के कामकाज में कोई ढांचागत परिवर्तन नहीं आया है।

निश्चित तौर पर बाद के वर्षों में हालात और खराब हुआ। इस महीने के शुरूआती दो सप्ताह में हमें ऐसी सुर्खियां देखने को मिलीं, 'मारुति ने मांग में कमी के चलते तीसरे महीने भी उत्पादन घटाया।' '21 महीनों में पहली बार देश के औद्योगिक उत्पादन में कमी।' 'वित्त वर्ष 2019 में वृद्धि दर तीन वर्ष के निचले स्तर पर।' 'आईबीसी भी फंसे हुए कर्ज से संबंधित पुराने विफल कानूनों की राह पर' या फिर

'नरेंद्र मोदी की सबसे विशिष्ट आर्थिक नीतियां सबसे बुरी साबित हुईं।' आखिर गलती कहां हुई? मोदी सरकार द्वारा विभिन्न योजनाओं की शुरुआत की घोषणा के एक वर्ष बाद लेखक और विचारक अरुण शौरी ने कहा था कि कांग्रेसनीत संग्रह सरकार में गाय को शामिल कर दिया जाए तो यह सरकार वैसी ही है। यह व्याख्या अद्भुत थी। संग्रह की दोनों सरकार की पहचान थी रोजगार गारंटी योजनाएं, सरकारी क्षेत्र की अनुत्पादक कंपनियों को लगातार समर्थन, सांठगांठ के साथ बुनियादी परियोजनाओं की लागत में अनावश्यक इजाफा, आधार जैसी विवादास्पद योजना, राजकोषीय घाटे को छिपाने के लिए बजट में करामात, कर आतंक, किसानों के लिए लोकलुभावनवाद आदि। राजग सरकार में भी काफी कुछ ऐसा ही था।

भाजपानीत सरकार स्पष्ट बहुमत के साथ सत्ता में आई थी। 30 वर्ष के अंतराल के बाद किसी सरकार को बहुमत मिला था। यह अप्रत्याशित बहुमत रोजगार और विकास के लिए था। इसके बजाय प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने संग्रह की योजनाओं

का नाम बदलकर उन्हें आगे बढ़ाना शुरू कर दिया। सरकार ने मुद्रा नामक ऋण योजना शुरू की। सरकारी क्षेत्र में कोई सुधार नहीं किया गया, कोई सार्थक विनिवेश नहीं, जो थोड़ा बहुत हुआ भी वह बहुत सार्थक नहीं था। मिसाल के तौर पर ओएनजीसी द्वारा हिंदुस्तान पेट्रोलियम को खरीदना और पावर फाइनेंस कॉर्पोरेशन द्वारा रूरल इलेक्ट्रिफिकेशन को खरीदना। सरकारी कंपनियों से लाभांश के रूप में हजारों करोड़ रुपये की राशि ली गई। उनमें से कई के पास तो वेतन देने तक के लिए पैसे नहीं हैं। सरकारी बैंकों में स्वाभिव्य, भ्रष्टाचार और जवाबदेही की कमी की स्थिति में कोई सुधार देखने को नहीं मिला है। करदाताओं को हजारों करोड़ रुपये की राशि इन बैंकों में डाली गई ताकि ये परिचालित होते रह सकें। सॉब्सिडी कम करने वाली परियोजना के बजाय आधार निगरानी करने का उपाय बन गया है। चूटकुला साबित हुई है।

वस्तु एवं सेवा कर तथा संग्रह सरकार द्वारा प्रस्तावित ऋणस्रोशन अक्षमता एवं दिवालिया संहिता (आईबीसी) मोदी

सरकार के दो बड़े सुधार हैं। परंतु उच्च जोएसटी दरों और पुरातनपंथी नियमों ने कई तरह की समस्याएं पैदा कीं। नौकरशाही और दिक्कतदेह आईबीसी ढांचे ने यह तय कर दिया कि नई व्यवस्था भी पुराने दिवालिया कानूनों की ही गति को प्राप्त हो। सोदेबाजी, लंबी निष्क्रियता और अनसुलझे मामलों की लंबी सूची इसका उदाहरण बन गई।

अब से कुछ सप्ताह में नई सरकार कार्यभार संभाल लेगी। वह ढांचागत बदलाव लाने के लिए क्या कर सकती है? तकनीकी दुनिया में कहा जाता है कि किसी भी चीज को दस गुना अलग बनाया जाए तभी वह लोगों का ध्यान आकर्षित कर पाती है। गरीबी में जी रहे लाखों भारतीयों के जीवन में बड़ा बदलाव लाने के लिए हमें भी शासन में 10 गुना अंतर पैदा करना होगा। ऐसा करने के लिए अब तक उठाए गए कदमों से कुछ अलग सोचना होगा। योजनाएं, सॉब्सिडी और कर बढ़ाकर इसे हासिल नहीं किया जा सकता है। हमारे रुख में ढांचागत बदलाव आवश्यक है। सरकार को खुद काम करने के बजाय सेवा प्रदाता बनना होगा। ऐसा करके ही रुख में 10 गुना बदलाव लाया जा सकेगा।

हमें यह यकीन दिलाया गया है कि सरकार की नीतियां और उसके कदम ही हर समस्या का समाधान कर सकते हैं। फिर चाहे मामला कृषि ऋण का हो, रोजगार का, आवास का, खराब स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं का या खराब बुनियादी ढांचे का। बहरहाल, अगर हम अधिक गहराई में जाएं तो हमें पता चलेगा कि सरकार अपने आप में समस्या है, न कि हल। हर घोटाला या हर बेकार होने वाले व्यय की जड़ लाइसेंसिंग, सरकारी क्षेत्र, निविदा या अपारदर्शी व्यवस्था में निहित होती है। इनके लिए अकेले सरकार ही उत्तरदायी है।

सन 1950 और 1960 के दशक में एक वक्त था जब निजी पूंजी और कौशल दुर्लभ थे और सरकार को औद्योगिक परियोजनाएं स्थापित करनी पड़ती थीं। तब से अब तक सरकार ने अबाध गति से विस्तार किया है। इससे निजी उपक्रमों का विकास सीमित हुआ। सांठगांठ वाले पूंजीवाद और भ्रष्टाचार के उभार के चलते कई प्रतिभावान भारतीयों ने देश से बाहर का रुख किया। इन हालात को बदलना होगा। सरकार को अपनी भूमिका कम करनी होगी। यह काफी अनुत्पादक और गैरजवाबदेह है। आज प्रतिभा, पूंजी और निजी संस्थानों की ताकत को लाभकारी और गैरलाभकारी, दोनों क्षेत्रों में महसूस किया जा सकता है।

मेरा कहने का तात्पर्य यह है कि अगर सरकार शांति कायम करने, तत्काल न्याय प्रदान करने और लागत कम करने में सहायता करे तो भारत तेजी से प्रगति कर सकता है। अगर ऐसा हुआ तो निजी संस्थानों को भी प्रोत्साहन मिलेगा और वे हरसंभव तरीके से अपना नजरिया सामने रख सकेंगे। अगर हम ऐसा कर पाते हैं तो सरकार को कम कर की आवश्यकता होगी। वह अपनी ऊर्जा वृद्धि को गति प्रदान करने में लगा सकती है। तब सही मायने में अच्छे दिन आएंगे।

भारतीय राज्य के स्वरूप में सुधार को देनी होगी तवज्जो

चुनावी कोलाहल के बीच में एक भीषण चक्रवाती तूफान का दस्तक देना अच्छी बात नहीं है। कुछ समय के लिए तूफान से जुड़ी बातें सुर्खियों में रहीं और इस दौरान राजनीति के भी बढ़िया मौके बने। मसलन, तूफानी विपदा से निपटने के लिए किसने अच्छा काम किया और किसने नहीं किया? लेकिन यह सच है कि फनी तूफान ने ओडिशा के बड़े हिस्से और पश्चिम बंगाल एवं बांग्लादेश में भी काफी नुकसान पहुंचाया। यह अपने पीछे टूटे घर, बिजली के गिरे खंभों और ढांचागत बरबादी के निशान छोड़ गया है। एक ही झटके में ओडिशा ने कई वर्षों के अर्जित विकास लाभांश को गंवा दिया है।

लेकिन इस तूफान के दौरान मरने वाले लोगों की संख्या पहले से कम रही। इससे वैज्ञानिकों और ओडिशा के प्रशासन की तरफ से 10 लाख लोगों को सुरक्षित निकालने और उन्हें राहत शिविरों तक पहुंचाने के लिए बड़े पैमाने पर किए गए अद्भुत प्रयासों का भी पता चलता है। इससे पहले 1999 में ओडिशा में आए पिछले भीषण चक्रवाती तूफान में करीब 10 हजार लोगों की मौत हुई थी। लेकिन इस बार 170 किलोमीटर प्रति घंटे से भी तेज रफ्तार हवाएं चलने के बावजूद मृतकों की संख्या 70 तक ही सीमित रखने में कामयाबी मिली है। यह कोई छोटी उपलब्धि नहीं है।

हालांकि यह सप्ताहों की जरूरत है कि जलवायु को लेकर जोडिम थरी इस दुनिया में फनी तूफान का क्या मतलब है? जब भी ऐसी कोई प्राकृतिक आपदा आती है तो जलवायु परिवर्तन की तरफ डंगलियां उठने लगती हैं। लेकिन केवल जलवायु परिवर्तन को ही ऐसी विपदाओं के लिए जिम्मेदार क्यों ठहराया जाए?

संशयवादी इस तरह इशारा करेंगे कि तूफानों की संख्या में बढ़ोतरी दिखाने वाले ठोस आंकड़ों की कमी है। कुछ बदलाव आया है लेकिन इस फर्क को मापने वाले काल-आधारित पैमाना काफी नहीं है। विश्व मौसम-विज्ञान संगठन की जलवायु आकलन रिपोर्ट 2018 के मुताबिक उत्तरी गोलार्द्ध में उठने वाले उष्ण-कटिबंधी तूफान एक साल पहले के 63 से बढकर 74 हो गए जबकि दक्षिणी गोलार्द्ध में दोनों साल 22 तूफान दर्ज किए गए। ऐसे में अगर आप अपने



जमीनी हकीकत

सुनीता नारायण

जोखिम पर यह दलील दे सकते हैं कि इसमें कुछ भी नया नहीं है। तूफान तो आएंगे और जाएंगे। इसके लिए जलवायु परिवर्तन को भला क्यों दोष दें?

सच तो यह है कि भारतीय मौसमविज्ञान विभाग (आईएमडी) के मुताबिक इन तूफानों में बड़ा फासला है। तूफानों के बारे में अनुमान लगा पाना काफी मुश्किल होता जा रहा है। हालांकि कुछ वर्षों में आईएमडी ने तूफानों के बारे में अनुमान लगाने के विज्ञान में खुद को काफी सिद्धहस्त कर लिया है लेकिन यह अब भी सीखने के दौर से गुजर रहा है ताकि तूफानों के उद्भव एवं प्रसार के बारे में अनुमान लगाने की तकनीक और पद्धति को बेहतर किया जा सके।

आईएमडी को वर्ष 2017 के आखिर में केरल के तटीय इलाकों में आए तूफान 'ओकची' ने पहला झटका दिया था। कई लोगों की जान लेना बला और समुद्र में गए मछुआरों को संकट में डालने वाला यह तूफान छह घंटों के भीतर ही गहरे दबाव के क्षेत्र से चक्रवाती तूफान बन गया था। हमें यह अहसास होना चाहिए कि उस तूफान का पूर्वानुमान लगाने और समय से चेतावनी जारी करने में कामयाम रहना महज मानवीय गलती नहीं थी। इसकी वजह ऐसे चक्रवाती तूफान की असामान्य प्रकृति थी जिसे पहले कभी भी सूत में समुद्री तूफान कभी नहीं आते हैं। यह भीतरी इलाकों में कैसे और क्यों पहुंचा? भविष्य में इस तरह का अनुमान कैसे लगाया जाना चाहिए?

फनी हमें कई बातें बताता है। पहला, हमें मौसम के विज्ञान और आपदा से तत्काल निपटने के लिए सरकार की क्षमता बढ़ाने में निवेश करना होगा। दूसरा, तूफानों की संख्या के आधार पर हम यह नतीजा नहीं निकाल सकते हैं कि दुनिया का कुल कितना हिस्सा सुरक्षित है। लेकिन सबसे अहम बात, यह हमें बताता है कि भविष्य अधिक जोखिम वाला है और अनुमानों से परे अप्रत्याशित है। इस हकीकत के प्रति जागरूक होने का वक्त आ गया है। अब समय नहीं गंवाया जा सकता है।

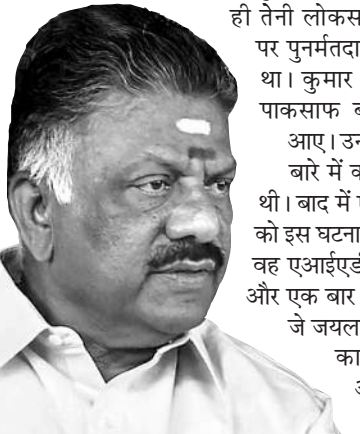
कानाफूसी

103 नाबाद

पिछले दिनों संपन्न लोकसभा चुनाव में 103 वर्ष के श्याम सरन नेगी ने अपना वोट डाला। सन 1951 के लोकसभा चुनाव से वोट डाल रहे नेगी ने 32वें बार वोट डाले। उन्होंने हर बार हिमाचल प्रदेश के किन्नौर जिले के कालपा गांव के मतदान केंद्र पर ही अपने मताधिकार का प्रयोग किया है। नेगी ने 16 बार लोकसभा चुनाव में वोट डाला है। वह 13 विधानसभा चुनावों और दो क्षेत्रीय परिषद चुनावों में भी मतदान कर चुके हैं। स्थानीय प्रशासन ने उनको घर से मतदान केंद्र तक ले जाने की व्यवस्था कराई जो करीब ही प्राथमिक विद्यालय में स्थित था। वहां उनका जमकर स्वागत किया गया। गौरतलब है कि लोकसभा चुनाव का अंतिम चरण 19 मई को समाप्त हो गया है। अंतिम चरण का मतदान खत्म होने के साथ ही एग्जिट पोल आने लगे तथा चुनाव परिणाम 23 मई को आएंगे।

बड़ी जल्दी है भाई!

तमिलनाडु के उप मुख्यमंत्री और अखिल भारतीय अन्ना द्रविड़ मुन्नेत्र कण्णम के समन्वयक ओ पनीरसेल्वम के बेटे ओ पी रवींद्रनाथ पिछले दिनों उस समय विवादों में घिर गए जब एक मंदिर में उनका नाम तेनी लोकसभा क्षेत्र के सांसद के रूप में दर्ज किया गया। गौरतलब है कि अभी लोकसभा चुनाव के परिणामों की घोषणा नहीं हुई है। जब यह घटना सोशल मीडिया पर वायरल हो गई तो मंदिर प्रबंधन हरकत में आया और आनन-फानन में सांसद शब्द को हट दिया गया। बहरहाल तब तक पर्याप्त विवाद हो चुका था। इसे लेकर आरोप-प्रत्यारोप के दौर शुरू हो गए। चुनाव आयोग पहले ही तेनी लोकसभा क्षेत्र के कुछ बूथ पर पुनर्मतदान की बात कह चुका था। कुमार भी तत्काल खुद को पाकसाफ बताने के लिए आगे आए। उन्होंने कहा कि उन्हें इस बारे में कोई जानकारी ही नहीं थी। कुमार भी तत्काल खुद को इस घटना का दोषी बताया गया। वह एआईएडीएमके का समर्थक है और एक बार पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री स्वर्गीय जे जयललिता की सफलता की कामना करते हुए उसने अपना सर तक मुंडवा लिया था।



आपका पक्ष

एग्जिट पोल कितने विश्वसनीय

लोकसभा चुनाव के नतीजे 23 मई को आने वाले हैं। इससे पहले मीडिया में आ रहे एग्जिट पोल के नतीजे से कई सवाल खड़े हो रहे हैं। अलग-अलग मीडिया संस्थान मतदान के बाद सर्वे करके एग्जिट पोल करते हैं लेकिन कई बार इनके नतीजे चुनाव परिणाम से बिल्कुल उलट आते हैं। साल 2004 के लोकसभा चुनाव में एग्जिट पोल के अनुसार राजग को 230 से 275 सीटें और कांग्रेस को 175 से 190 सीटें मिलने का अनुमान लगाया गया था। लेकिन चुनाव परिणाम के बाद एग्जिट पोल गलत साबित हुए। राजग को 187 सीटें और संग्रह को 219 सीटें मिली थी। वहीं 2009 के लोकसभा चुनाव के बाद भी एग्जिट पोल गलत साबित हुए थे। 2014 के लोकसभा चुनाव में नरेंद्र मोदी की नेतृत्व वाले राजग को एग्जिट पोल के अनुसार 183 से 289 सीटें मिलने का अनुमान गलत साबित हुआ। राजग ने



रिकॉर्ड तोड़ बहुमत से 336 सीटें लाकर सरकार बनाई। इस बार भी चुनाव परिणाम से पहले कई न्यूज चैनलों पर अलग-अलग आंकड़े पेश किए जा रहे हैं जिससे जनता भ्रमित हो रही है। दर्शकों के बीच संदेह की स्थिति बन रही है कि कौन से सर्वे को सही मानें। इस वक्त करीब 10 से 12 राष्ट्रीय न्यूज चैनल अलग-अलग आंकड़े पेश

एग्जिट पोल के मुताबिक राजग को भारी बहुमत मिलने की संभावना जताई गई है

कर रहे हैं जिसमें राजग के केंद्र में सरकार बनाने की बात तो की जा रही है लेकिन सीटों की संख्या तब तक स्पष्ट नहीं हो पाएगी जब तक चुनाव परिणाम नहीं आ जाते।

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

उत्सर्जन उनका देश करता है। देश की बात करें तो महाराष्ट्र में जल संकट दिन प्रति दिन गहराता जा रहा है। लेकिन इसके लिए कोई ठोस कदम नहीं उठाए जा रहे हैं। वैज्ञानिकों को आशंका है कि साफ हवा की कमी के कारण 10 लाख प्रजातियां विलुप्त हो जाएंगी। वहीं एक रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक देश की 102 प्रजातियां विलुप्त होने के करगार पर हैं। वैश्विक तापमान दिन प्रतिदिन बढ़ता जा रहा है। एक शोध के मुताबिक ग्लोबल वार्मिंग की वजह से न केवल अधिक आपदाएं आ रही हैं बल्कि यह अमीर देश और गरीब देशों के बीच आर्थिक असमानता कम करने में बाधक बन रहा है। फरवरी 2019 तक दुनिया की आबादी 7.71 अरब का आंकड़ा पार कर चुकी है। भारत की जनसंख्या 1.19 प्रतिशत की दर से बढ़ रही है। देश में केवल 24.39 प्रतिशत भूमि वन से घिरी है। देश को 32 प्रतिशत वन क्षेत्र का आंकड़ा लाना है ताकि नैसर्गिक पर्यावरण में संतुलन बनाया जा सके।

२०१२ के चुनावों में, अशोक सिन्हा, भारतीय जनता पार्टी के उम्मीदवार, उत्तर प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री बन गए।

आगे का सफर

रविवार को हुए मतदान के साथ सत्रहवीं लोकसभा के गठन के लिए आम चुनावों का आखिरी चरण पूरा हो गया। अब चुनाव आयोग की ओर से आधिकारिक तौर पर नतीजों की अंतिम घोषणा के पहले तक कयासों का दौर चलेगा। दरअसल, हर चुनाव के बाद जिस तरह समूचे देश में भावी सरकार को लेकर लोगों के बीच उत्सुकता देखी जाती है, उसके मुताबिक स्वाभाविक ही कई तरह के आकलन पेश किए जा रहे हैं। लेकिन आने वाली सरकार की कमान किस दल या गठबंधन के हाथ में आती है, उसका क्या स्वरूप होता है, यह तैईस मई के बाद ही साफ होगा। इसमें कोई संदेह नहीं कि निष्पक्ष और स्वच्छ मतदान सुनिश्चित करने के लिए चुनाव आयोग को यह अधिकार है कि वह इसके मुताबिक व्यवस्था करे। असली मकसद अगर लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था को मजबूत करना और चुनाव-प्रक्रिया को विवादरहित बनाना है तो इसके लिए हर जरूरी इंतजाम किए जाने चाहिए। इस लिहाज से कुछ राजनीतिक पार्टियों की ओर से छोटी-मोटी शिकायतों को छोड़ दिया जाए तो चुनाव आयोग ने कामयाबी के साथ चुनाव संपन्न कराए। लेकिन एक लंबी और थकाऊ चुनाव प्रक्रिया ने विचार के कई पहलू छोड़े हैं।

सवाल यह है कि करीब डेढ़ महीने और सात चरणों में चली इस प्रक्रिया को क्या इससे कम अवधि में नहीं निपटाया जा सकता था! विपक्ष सहित मौजूदा सत्ताधारी पार्टी के कुछ सहयोगी दलों ने भी राय जाहिर की है कि चुनाव प्रक्रिया को इतना लंबा खींचने से बचा सकता है। इतने अधिक चरणों में मतदान कराने के पीछे एक बड़ा कारण यह रहा है कि इससे देश के अलग-अलग हिस्सों में होने वाली चुनावी हिंसा की घटनाओं की आशंका को खत्म किया जा सकेगा। सच है कि एक दौर में देश में होने वाले चुनाव रक्तरेंजित रहे हैं और हमारे लोकतंत्र के लिए वह एक बेहद अफसोसनाक स्थिति थी। उस तस्वीर से बाहर लाने में राजनीतिक दलों की भूमिका है, लेकिन यह जिम्मेदारी मुख्य रूप से चुनाव आयोग की है, जिसे उसने कमोबेश पूरा किया। लेकिन देश के कुछ हिस्सों से छिटपुट हिंसा की खबरों के अलावा खासतौर पर पश्चिम बंगाल से अमूमन हर चरण के मतदान के बीच जिस तरह की हिंसा की खबरें सामने आईं, उनसे साफ है कि चुनावों को लंबा खींच कर इस समस्या से पूरी तरह नहीं निपटा जा सकता है।

आज जब देश तकनीक और संसाधनों के रस्तर पर ज्यादा बेहतर स्थिति में है, सुरक्षा-व्यवस्था पुख्ता की जा सकती है, उसमें चुनाव-प्रक्रिया को इतना लंबा खींचे बिना भी स्वच्छ मतदान सुनिश्चित कराने पर विचार जा सकता है। इसके अलावा, पिछले लोकसभा चुनाव के मुकाबले मतदान-प्रतिशत में कोई खास सकारात्मक बदलाव देखने को नहीं मिला तो इसका एक बड़ा कारण पूरे चुनाव के दौरान मौसम का मिजाज भी रहा। तेज गरमी की वजह से बहुत सारे ऐसे मतदाताओं का उत्साह ठंडा रहा, जो मौसम में नरमी की स्थिति में शायद वोट देने जाते। शायद यही वजह है कि चुनाव फरवरी या फिर नवंबर में आयोजित कराने की मांग उठी है। हालांकि देश भर में सामाजिक और भौगोलिक जटिलताओं के बीच भी आमतौर पर लोगों ने जो उत्साह दिखाया, खासतौर पर महिला मतदाताओं के प्रतिशत में जो बढ़ोतरी देखी गई, उसे और मजबूत करने की जरूरत है। चुनाव कराने पर होने वाले खर्च से लेकर राजनीतिक दलों की ओर से अपने प्रचार के मद में बहाई गई राशि भी ऐसा सवाल है जिस पर चुनाव आयोग और देश के राजनीतिक दलों को सोचना होगा। यह ध्यान रखने की जरूरत है कि भावनात्मक मुद्दों के बजाय अगर देश और समाज के वास्तविक विकास को लक्षित सवालों पर जनता का मत लिया जाए तो यही हमारे लोकतंत्र के लिए जीवन-तत्त्व बनेगा।

युद्ध के मुहाने

मध्य-पूर्व में जो हालात बन रहे हैं, उनकी आशंका तभी पैदा हो गई थी जब पिछले साल अमेरिका के राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने ईरान के साथ अंतरराष्ट्रीय परमाणु करार को भंग कर दिया था। उसके बाद अमेरिका ने ईरान पर प्रतिबंध लगाने की घोषणा की थी और फिर लगातार दोनों देशों के बीच संबंध खराब होते गए। हालांकि अब भी यह उम्मीद की जा रही थी कि कूटनीतिक स्तर पर पहलकदमी होगी और बातचीत के जरिए सीधे टकराव की स्थिति को टाला जा सकेगा। लेकिन अब अमेरिका ने जैसा रुख जाहिर किया है, उससे शायद तनाव बढ़े ही। डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने साफ लहजे में कहा कि अगर ईरान अमेरिकी हितों पर हमला करता है तो उसे नष्ट कर दिया जाएगा। यों ईरान ने इस पर सीमित प्रतिक्रिया देते हुए कहा कि हम जंग नहीं चाहते हैं, लेकिन साथ ही चेतावनी दी कि किसी को इस बात का भ्रम नहीं होना चाहिए कि अमेरिका इस क्षेत्र में ईरान का सामना कर सकता है। दूसरी ओर, संयुक्त अरब अमीरात के तट पर तेल के चार टैंकों पर कथित तौर पर हमले का दावा यमन के बागियों ने किया था, जिनके बारे में माना जाता है कि उन्हें ईरान का समर्थन हासिल है। इसके बाद सऊदी अरब की ओर से भी यही कहा गया है कि उनका देश युद्ध नहीं चाहता, लेकिन वह ईरान के खिलाफ अपनी रक्षा कराने से हिचकिचाएगा नहीं।

यों अमेरिका और ईरान के संबंध पहले भी सहज नहीं रहे थे, लेकिन अमेरिका में डोनाल्ड ट्रंप के सत्ता में आने के बाद दोनों देशों के बीच दुश्मनी की धार और तीखी हो गई है। अंदाजा इससे लगाया जा सकता है कि अमेरिका ने आइआरजीसी यानी ईरान के रिवाँल्यूशनरी गार्ड कॉर्प्स को विदेशी आतंकी संगठन तक घोषित कर दिया है जबकि आइआरजीसी ईरानी सेना के एक अहम हिस्से के रूप में काम करता है। यों अमेरिका की ओर से लगाए गए चौतरफा प्रतिबंधों के बाद से ही ईरान की अर्थव्यवस्था काफी बुरे दौर से गुजर रही है। न केवल खुद अमेरिका ने अपने स्तर पर कई तरह की पाबंदियां लगाई हैं, बल्कि वह दुनिया के किसी भी देश को ईरान से व्यापार नहीं करने दे रहा है। अमेरिका की इसी दबाव की नीति के बाद भारत को भी ईरान से अपने लिए तेल आयात बंद करना पड़ा। ईरान के मसले पर अमेरिका और यूरोप में मतभेद खुल कर सामने आए, क्योंकि यूरोपीय संघ ईरान के साथ हुए परमाणु समझौते को बचाने की कोशिश कर रहा था, लेकिन ट्रंप ने साफतौर पर इससे इनकार कर दिया।

जाहिर है, अगर सभी पक्ष इस तरह के रुख पर अड़े रहे तो तनाव में बढ़ोतरी होगी और कोई एक घटना भी न केवल अमेरिका और ईरान, बल्कि समूचे मध्य-पूर्व को युद्ध की आग में झोंक दे सकती है। युद्ध जैसे हालात मध्य-पूर्व के लिए कोई नई बात नहीं हैं और इस क्षेत्र ने लंबी अवधि तक चलने वाले त्रासद युद्धों को भी देखा है। तो फिलहाल अमेरिका और ईरान के बीच तनाव के जैसे हालात बन रहे हैं, वे अगर युद्ध की ओर बढ़ जाएं तो हैरानी की बात नहीं होगी। लेकिन विशेषज्ञों का साफ मानना है कि डोनाल्ड ट्रंप अपनी मौजूदा शत्रुतापूर्ण नीतियों के साथ और ईरान को बातचीत में शामिल किए बिना इस इलाके में शांति कायम नहीं कर सकते। जैसा कि अमूमन हर युद्ध के असर के तौर पर देखा गया है, अगर अमेरिका और ईरान में प्रत्यक्ष जंग छिड़ जाती है तो एक बार फिर दुनिया को इसके त्रासद अंजाम की गवाह बनना पड़ेगा!

कल्पमेधा

स्त्री पुरुष से अधिक बुद्धिमान होती है क्योंकि वह पुरुष से कम जानती है पर समझती अधिक है ।

-जेम्स स्टीफन

जनसत्ता

२०१२ के चुनावों में, अशोक सिन्हा, भारतीय जनता पार्टी के उम्मीदवार, उत्तर प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री बन गए।

संजय कुमार सिंह

२०१२ के चुनावों में, अशोक सिन्हा, भारतीय जनता पार्टी के उम्मीदवार, उत्तर प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री बन गए।

प्लास्टिक का उपयोग कम करने से लेकर बेकार प्लास्टिक को सही तरह से फेंकने और उसका प्रबंध करने की जरूरत है। इसी क्रम में बेकार प्लास्टिक का उपयोग सड़क निर्माण में किया जा रहा है और यह इसकी खपत का अच्छा तरीका है। भारत समेत दुनिया के कई हिस्सों में अनुपयोगी प्लास्टिक कचरे से सड़कें बनाई जा रही हैं।

प्लास्टिक कचरे को सड़क निर्माण में इस्तेमाल करने से, दुनिया भर में अलग-अलग तरीकों से प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं।

प्लास्टिक धरती के लिए संकट का बड़ा कारण बन जाएगा, किसी ने सोचा भी नहीं होगा। धरती पर प्रदूषण के जितने भी रूप और कारण हैं उनमें प्लास्टिक सबसे बड़ा कारण बन कर उभरा है। चाहे समंदर हों, धरती के ध्रुव हों या हिमालय जैसे पर्वत, या फिर जमीन, सब जगह प्लास्टिक बड़ी समस्या बन गया है। इसलिए अब धरती को बचाने के लिए जितने भी अभियान चल रहे हैं उनका पहला मकसद ही धरती को प्लास्टिक से मुक्त कराना है। प्लास्टिक हमारे जीवन में इस कदर चुस गया है कि कपड़े के झोले को भूल चुके हैं। प्लास्टिक से होने वाले नुकसान के महेनजर अब फिर से बाजार में पकड़े और जूट के थैलों का चलन शुरू हुआ है। अभी हम प्लास्टिक की जिस थैली का उपयोग करते हैं उसकी खोज 1965 में ही हो गई थी, पर अमेरिका में इसका प्रचलन 1979 में हुआ। आठवें दशक के मध्य में महसूस किया गया कि यह बहुत सस्ता और

प्लास्टिक कचरे को सड़क निर्माण में इस्तेमाल करने से, दुनिया भर में अलग-अलग तरीकों से प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं।

प्लास्टिक कचरे को सड़क निर्माण में इस्तेमाल करने से, दुनिया भर में अलग-अलग तरीकों से प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं।

राजेंद्र प्रसाद

आज बहुत सारे लोगों के पास काफी बातों के लिए पर्याप्त समय है, लेकिन अपने व्यक्तित्व को खंगालने, निखारने, संवारने, सुधारने, उस पर विचार करने आदि के लिए उनके पास कोई वक्त नहीं है। कई बार बेवसी होती है, कई बार सांसारिक चक्र में उलझन से सुलझने का भाव पैदा ही नहीं होता। हालांकि संसार में मजबूत व्यक्तित्व के विकास की बहुत आवश्यकता है, लेकिन संकीर्ण सोच, तंगदिली या दुनियादारी के खेल में अत्यधिक रमने के कारण हम इस बात पर विशेष या उतना ध्यान नहीं दे पाते, जितना जिंदगी को सुनुहरा बनाने के लिए जरूरी होता है। निश्चित रूप से ऊंचाई पर वे ही पहुंचते हैं जो बदला नहीं, बदलाव लाने की सोच रखते हैं।

तेजी से बदलते सामाजिक-आर्थिक परिवेश में विद्यालय और महाविद्यालयों में ऐसे पाठ आमतौर पर कम ही पढ़ाए जाते हैं, जहां वर्तमान और भविष्य के जीवन को अच्छे विचारों के आधार पर खड़ा किया जाए। हम सब अच्छी संतान तो चाहते हैं, लेकिन उसे तैयार करने के लिए कौन-कैसे बीड़ा उठाएगा, यह प्रश्न निरंतर कुरेदता प्रतीत होता है। आमतौर पर

नक्सली नासूर

नक्सलियों द्वारा रह-रह कर अंजाम दी जा रही हिंसक घटनाएं बताती हैं कि वे आंतरिक सुरक्षा के लिए अभी भी गंभीर खतरा बने हुए हैं। पिछले दिनों उन्होंने फिर अपना खूनी चेहरा दिखाया और महाराष्ट्र के गढ़चिरोली जिले में पुलिस के त्वरित कार्रवाई दस्ते के एक वाहन को बारूदी सुरंग से उड़ा दिया। इसमें प्रारंठ जवानों के साथ एक वाहन चालक वीरगति को प्राप्त हुआ। बीते कुछ समय से नक्सली जिस तरह सिर उठाते दिख रहे हैं, वह गंभीर चिंता का कारण बनना चाहिए- न केवल नक्सलप्रस्त राज्यों, बल्कि केंद्र सरकार के लिए भी। इसके पहले छत्तीसगढ़ में एक भाजपा विधायक के वाहन को इसी तरह बारूदी सुरंग से उड़ा दिया गया था। इससे थोड़ा और पहले छत्तीसगढ़ में ही बीएसएफ के चार जवानों को निशाना बनाया गया था। एक आंकड़े के अनुसार बीते पांच वर्षों में करीब तीन सौ जवान नक्सलियों का निशाना बन चुके हैं। गढ़चिरोली की वारदात पुलवामा की आतंकी घटना की याद दिला रही है। यह नितांत अनिवार्य है कि नक्सलियों की बेलगाम हिंसा को न केवल आतंकी वारदात के तौर पर देखा जाए, बल्कि उनसे वैसे ही निपटा जाए, जैसे आतकियों से निपटा जा रहा है। आखिर जब आतकियों के खिलाफ सुरक्षा बलों को खुली हूट दी जा सकती है तो नक्सलियों के खिलाफ भी ऐसा क्यों नहीं किया जा सकता?

यह कहना तो समस्या का सरलीकरण करना है कि नक्सली भटके हुए लोग हैं। वे भटके हुए लोग नहीं, नृशंस हत्यारे और निर्मम लुटेरे हैं। वे गरीबों के नाम पर उगाही के साथ खूनी खेल खेलने में लगे हुए हैं। उनके प्रति नरमी दिखाना जान-बूझ कर खतरा मोल लेना है। गढ़चिरोली की घटना बताती है कि नक्सलियों की सही तरह से घेरेबंदी नहीं हो पा रही है। माना कि वे छत्तीसगढ़

संकट बनता प्लास्टिक

प्लास्टिक कचरे को सड़क निर्माण में इस्तेमाल करने से, दुनिया भर में अलग-अलग तरीकों से प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं।

उपयोगी है और उस समय पचहत्तर फीसद सुपर मार्केट में प्लास्टिक की थैली सामान के साथ मुफ्त दी जाने लगी थी। पर बाजार में इसकी हिस्सेदारी पच्चीस फीसद ही थी। लेकिन अगले एक दशक में ही प्लास्टिक की थैलियों का अस्सी फीसद बाजार पर कब्जा हो गया। मुफ्त मिलने वाली ये थैलियां दुनिया भर में फैल गईं। घर में रसोई से लेकर शयनकक्ष में बच्चों के खाने से लेकर कूड़े, नाले, नदी और समुद्र तक में। सस्ता, टिकाऊ और उपयोगी होने के कारण प्लास्टिक हर चीज में है। प्लास्टिक अगर सस्ता है तो पीछा भी नहीं छोड़ता और खराब नहीं होता। मिट्टी में, पानी में गलता नहीं है और अब इसकी यही खासियत पूरी दुनिया के लिए गंभीर समस्या बन गई है।

कई देशों और शहरों में प्लास्टिक की थैली का उपयोग प्रतिबंधित है। पर अभी इस दिशा में काफी काम किया जाना है। ब्रिटेन में शोधकर्ताओं ने कहा है कि दुनिया भर में प्लास्टिक से हर साल एक सौ तिहत्तर लाख करोड़ रुपए का नुकसान होता है। भारत के केंद्रीय प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड के आंकड़े बताते हैं कि देश में हर दिन पंद्रह हजार टन प्लास्टिक कचरा निकलता है। दुनिया भर के समुद्र में हर साल आठ हजार टन कचरा पहुंचता है। चौंकाने वाली बात तो यह है कि इसमें से छह हजार टन कचरा अकेले भारत से पहुंचता है। इससे मामले की गंभीरता का अंदाजा लगता है। अगर पिछले साढ़े तीन दशक में हमने यह स्थिति बना ली है तो इसे रोकना कितना जरूरी है, इसका अंदाजा सहज ही लगाया जा सकता है।

प्लास्टिक का असर हमारे पर्यावरण से लेकर जीवन तक पर है। फिर भी प्लास्टिक का उत्पादन बढ़ता ही जा रहा है। इसलिए विश्व पर्यावरण दिवस की थीम प्लास्टिक प्रदूषण को मात देने पर आधारित थी। भारत के लिए यह और महत्त्वपूर्ण है, क्योंकि हमें इस वर्ष संयुक्त राष्ट्र ने विश्व पर्यावरण दिवस का मेजबान राष्ट्र बनाया है। वैसे तो जीवन में पांच तत्त्व महत्त्वपूर्ण हैं- जल, हवा, आसमान, आग और मिट्टी। लेकिन नई सभ्यता में प्लास्टिक छठी बड़ी जरूरत बन गई है। इसलिए प्रदूषण की सबसे बड़ी वजह भी प्लास्टिक बन गया है। हालांकि प्लास्टिक-प्रदूषण से मुक्ति की दिशा में काम की शुरुआत तो हुई है, लेकिन जिस रफ्तार से यह प्रदूषण बढ़ रहा है, उसकी तुलना में हमारे प्रयास ऊंट के मुंह में जीरे के समान हैं। जरूरी है

प्लास्टिक कचरे को सड़क निर्माण में इस्तेमाल करने से, दुनिया भर में अलग-अलग तरीकों से प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं।

कि हम इस बारे में जांनें और अपनी भूमिका निभाएं। क्या हम कभी यह सोचते हैं कि जिस तरह लकड़ी, लोहे अथवा कागज की वस्तुओं को अनुपयोगी होने पर फेंक देते हैं, वैसे ही प्लास्टिक की वस्तुओं को भी फेंकना सही है? क्या होता है जब हम इसे मिट्टी या पानी में फेंकते हैं? क्या होता है, जब इसे जलाते हैं? चूंकि यह प्राकृतिक तौर पर नष्ट नहीं होता इसलिए दुनिया भर के समुद्रों में पहुंचता रहता है। यह कचरा किसी अन्य तत्त्व या जैविक चीजों की तरह पर्यावरण में घुलता नहीं, बल्कि सैकड़ों साल तक वहां वैसे ही बना रहता है, जहां इसे फेंका गया था। साथ ही, उस जगह को अपने रसायन से जहरीला भी बनाता जाता है। प्लास्टिक जिस मिट्टी में जाता है, उसकी उर्वरता प्रभावित होती है। पानी में जाता है, तो पानी को न केवल जहरीला बनाता है, बल्कि जलीय जीवों के लिए नुकसानदेह बना देता है।

प्लास्टिक कचरे को सड़क निर्माण में इस्तेमाल करने से, दुनिया भर में अलग-अलग तरीकों से प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं।

प्लास्टिक का उपयोग जितना बढ़ा है, उतना अन्य चीजों का नहीं। सन 1960 में दुनिया में पचास लाख टन प्लास्टिक बनाया जा रहा था, आज यह तीन सौ करोड़ टन से ज्यादा हो चुका है। यानी हर व्यक्ति के लिए करीब आधा किलो प्लास्टिक हर साल। पर्यावरण से लेकर हमारे जीवन तक पर इसका बुरा असर हो रहा है, फिर भी प्लास्टिक का उत्पादन बढ़ता ही जा रहा है। सौंदर्य प्रसाधनों में इस्तेमाल होने वाला माइक्रो प्लास्टिक या प्लास्टिक बड्स पानी में घुल कर प्रदूषण बढ़ा रहे हैं। इसकी मौजूदगी जलीय जीवों में भी मिली है। माइक्रो प्लास्टिक मछलियों के साथ-साथ भोजन-भूखला के जरिए पक्षियों और कछुओं में भी मिलने की पुष्टि हुई है। यही वजह है कि भारत और कई अन्य देशों

प्लास्टिक कचरे को सड़क निर्माण में इस्तेमाल करने से, दुनिया भर में अलग-अलग तरीकों से प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं।

प्लास्टिक कचरे को सड़क निर्माण में इस्तेमाल करने से, दुनिया भर में अलग-अलग तरीकों से प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं।

उम्मीद का जीवन

लिया है कि हमने अब सही को सही पहचानना, सही के लिए सही सोचना लगभग बंद कर दिया है।

जिंदगी की मजेदार बात यह भी है कि हर कोई चाहता है कि मेरी भावना का ध्यान रखा जाए, मुझे न्याय मिले, मेरे साथ दूसरे अच्छा करें, दूसरों से सच जानने को मिले, मैं सुखी रहूँ, मुझे कोई धोखा न दे, लोग मुझे पहले नमस्कार करें, मेरी पूछ हो, मेरा सम्मान हो, मुझे दिमाग वाला समझें, मेरी आदतें लोग

सही मानें, मेरी सब तारीफ करें आदि। दूसरी तरफ उससे पूछा जाए कि वह ये सब पाने के

लिए कितनी जिम्मेदार और सार्थक भूमिका जीवन में निभाता है तो शायद इसका संतोषजनक उत्तर न दे। यह ऐसे दृष्टांत की तरह है, जैसे जीवन में सच की भूख सबको है, लेकिन जब सच परोसा जाता है तो बहुत कम लोगों को उसका स्वाद अच्छा लगता है।

नसीहत केवल आदर्शवाद का प्रकाश नहीं है, बल्कि उसमें व्यावहारिकता, सच्चाई, अनुभव का खजाना, भविष्य का ऐसा महत्त्वपूर्ण दर्शन है, जिससे हम भाईचारा, आस-पड़ोस, मानवता, कर्मशीलता, संवेदनशीलता आदि को ऐसे निरंतर जिंदा रखने का वैचारिक अभ्यास कर सकते हैं, जिससे हमारे अंदर एक अच्छे और नेक इंसान बनने की ज्वाला सुलगती

प्लास्टिक कचरे को सड़क निर्माण में इस्तेमाल करने से, दुनिया भर में अलग-अलग तरीकों से प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं।

हमारे देश के राजनीतिक लोगों की भाषा इतनी मर्यादाहीन और असभ्य हो गई है कि उससे भावी पीढ़ी को कोई सीख नहीं दी जा सकती बल्कि हर समय उससे सावधान रहने की हिदायत ही दी जा सकती है। यह देश की राजनीति में भाषिक संक्रमण काल है जिस पर सभी राजनीतिक विचारकों और बुद्धिजीवियों को गंभीर चिंतन करने की आवश्यकता है वरना आने वाले समय में राजनीति में अच्छे वक्ताओं का सर्वथा अभाव होता जाएगा।

- सुशील कुमार शर्मा, विश्वास पार्क, नई दिल्ली**



तंत्र में लोक
लोकतंत्र का विस्तार इस बात पर टिका होता है कि वह कितने संवेदनशील ढंग से अपने समाज व नागरिकों की असहमति और प्रतिरोधों को सुनता-समझता है। उनसे संवाद करता है, उन्हें अपनी नीतियों-नियमों और कार्यों में जगह देता है। वाद-विवाद, संवाद और सहमतियां-प्रतिरोध सबको सुन-समझ कर, जगह देकर ही लोकतंत्र शक्तिवान होता है। नहीं तो उसका विकास जड़ हो जाता है जो आगे चल कर सत्ता के लोकतांत्रिक रूप को ही नुकसान पहुंचाता है। समाज वैज्ञानिक और लोकतंत्र के विचारक इस बात को हमेशा से कहते रहे हैं। यह एक ऐसा सुझाव है जिसे जनता के वोटों से सत्ता में पहुंचने वाले वर्ग को गांठ बांध लेना चाहिए।

नई दिल्ली

एआइ पर जोर

कंप्यूटर और डिजिटल तकनीक का नया आयाम है- आर्टिफिशियल इंटेलिजेंस (एआइ). मनुष्य और मशीन की बढ़ती साझेदारी के साथ इस अत्याधुनिक तकनीक को प्रयोगशालाओं से निकालकर रोजगार के कामों में इस्तेमाल करने की संभावनाएं भी बढ़ रही हैं. नीति आयोग ने इस संबंध में एक महत्वाकांक्षी योजना तैयार की है. रिपोर्टों के अनुसार, इस संस्था ने सरकार के सामने कलाउड कंप्यूटिंग प्लेटफॉर्म और शोध संस्थानों की स्थापना का प्रस्ताव रखा है. इसमें शुरुआती तीन सालों में 7,500 करोड़ रुपये का खर्च आयेगा. प्रारूप में पांच क्षेत्रों- शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, कृषि, शहरीकरण एवं गतिशीलता- को चिह्नित किया गया है, जिनके लिए एक उच्च स्तरीय कार्य-बल की निगरानी में पांच शोध संस्थाओं और 20 केंद्रों में एआइ तकनीक पर काम होगा. इस योजना पर अगर समुचित रूप से अमल हुआ, तो 2035 तक हमारी अर्थव्यवस्था में 957 अरब डॉलर की राशि जुड़ सकती है तथा वृद्धि दर में 1.3 फीसदी की बढ़ोतरी हो सकती है. वर्ष 2018-19 के बजट में सरकार ने एक राष्ट्रीय कार्यक्रम बनाने का जिम्मा नीति आयोग को दिया था. इसी के अनुरूप पिछले साल जून में यह संस्था एआइ के बारे में एक रणनीतिक मसौदा जारी कर चुकी है. उम्मीद है नयी सरकार जल्दी ही इसे मंजूरी देगी, क्योंकि दुनिया के अनेक देश इस तकनीक को अपनाने की होड़ में लगे हैं. चीन ने एआइ के घरेलू उद्योग को स्थापित करने के लिए कुछ सालों में 150 अरब डॉलर के निवेश की योजना बनायी है. उसका लक्ष्य एक दशक में इस क्षेत्र में अग्रणी होने का है. हमारे देश के बैंकिंग सेक्टर में इस तकनीक को बढ़े पैमाने पर अपनाया जा रहा है. नेशनल बिजनेस रिसर्च इंस्टीट्यूट के एक अध्ययन के अनुसार, 32 फीसदी से अधिक वित्तीय संस्थाएं एआइ का इस्तेमाल कर रही हैं. इससे सेवा को बेहतर और सुरक्षित बनाने के साथ बैंकिंग के समावेशीकरण में भी मदद मिल रही है. इसी महीने केंद्र सरकार ने रक्षा क्षेत्र के सार्वजनिक उपक्रमों के लिए एआइ परियोजनाओं पर काम करना अनिवार्य बना दिया है. यह अत्याधुनिक तकनीक के जायेंदे रक्षा क्षमता बढ़ाने के उद्देश्य से किया गया है. अर्थिक प्रगति के बावजूद हमारे देश में गरीबी, अशिक्षा, बीमारी आदि जैसी बड़ी चुनौतियां हैं. इनका सामना करने में एआइ एक कारगर हथियार हो सकता है. ऐसे संकेत हैं कि निजी क्षेत्र भी इसमें निवेश बढ़ाने की ओर अग्रसर है. लेकिन, इससे जुड़े कुछ सवालों पर भी ध्यान दिया जाना चाहिए. एआइ, रोबोटिक्स, ऑटोमेशन जैसे तकनीक रोजगार के अवसरों पर नकारात्मक असर डाल सकते हैं. ऐसे में युवाओं को इन तकनीकों के विकास और उपयोग के लिए कौशल एवं प्रशिक्षण देने की व्यवस्था होनी चाहिए. इससे रोजगार भी उपलब्ध होगा और एआइ उद्यम भी बढ़ेगा. सूचना क्रांति के दौर में भारत ने दुनिया को बेहतरीन विशेषज्ञ और सॉफ्टवेयर मुहैया कराया था. एआइ के क्षेत्र में उस कामयाबी को दोहराने का फिर मौका है.

सूचना क्रांति के दौर में भारत ने दुनिया को बेहतरीन विशेषज्ञ और सॉफ्टवेयर मुहैया कराया था. एआइ के क्षेत्र में उस कामयाबी को दोहराने का फिर मौका है.

में इस तकनीक को बढ़े पैमाने पर अपनाया जा रहा है. नेशनल बिजनेस रिसर्च इंस्टीट्यूट के एक अध्ययन के अनुसार, 32 फीसदी से अधिक वित्तीय संस्थाएं एआइ का इस्तेमाल कर रही हैं. इससे सेवा को बेहतर और सुरक्षित बनाने के साथ बैंकिंग के समावेशीकरण में भी मदद मिल रही है. इसी महीने केंद्र सरकार ने रक्षा क्षेत्र के सार्वजनिक उपक्रमों के लिए एआइ परियोजनाओं पर काम करना अनिवार्य बना दिया है. यह अत्याधुनिक तकनीक के जायेंदे रक्षा क्षमता बढ़ाने के उद्देश्य से किया गया है. अर्थिक प्रगति के बावजूद हमारे देश में गरीबी, अशिक्षा, बीमारी आदि जैसी बड़ी चुनौतियां हैं. इनका सामना करने में एआइ एक कारगर हथियार हो सकता है. ऐसे संकेत हैं कि निजी क्षेत्र भी इसमें निवेश बढ़ाने की ओर अग्रसर है. लेकिन, इससे जुड़े कुछ सवालों पर भी ध्यान दिया जाना चाहिए. एआइ, रोबोटिक्स, ऑटोमेशन जैसे तकनीक रोजगार के अवसरों पर नकारात्मक असर डाल सकते हैं. ऐसे में युवाओं को इन तकनीकों के विकास और उपयोग के लिए कौशल एवं प्रशिक्षण देने की व्यवस्था होनी चाहिए. इससे रोजगार भी उपलब्ध होगा और एआइ उद्यम भी बढ़ेगा. सूचना क्रांति के दौर में भारत ने दुनिया को बेहतरीन विशेषज्ञ और सॉफ्टवेयर मुहैया कराया था. एआइ के क्षेत्र में उस कामयाबी को दोहराने का फिर मौका है.



बोधि वृक्ष

हंसी का अर्थ

बहुत लंबे समय से लोग कह रहे हैं कि हंसी सबसे अच्छी दवा है. कहीं पर कुछ लोगों ने यह समझ लिया कि खुश, आनंदमय रहनेवाले लोग अपने आप को स्वाभाविक रूप से ठीक कर लेते हैं. आप स्वस्थ हैं या बीमार, यह वास इस से तय होता है कि आप का शरीर कितने अच्छे से काम कर रहा है. अगर ये अच्छी तरह से काम कर रहा है, तो हम इसे अच्छा स्वास्थ्य कहते हैं. अगर ऐसा नहीं हो तो हम इसे बीमारी कहते हैं. जब आप खुश हैं, आनंदपूर्णा हैं, तब आप का भौतिक शरीर सबसे अच्छे तरीके से काम करता है. तब इसके लिए ठीक रहना, स्वस्थ रहना स्वाभाविक ही है. हंसी आप को ठीक नहीं करती. वह तो आप को खुशी है, जो ये करती है, लेकिन लोगों ने हंसी को आनंद के साथ बहुत ज्यादा जोड़ दिया है. गौतम कभी जोर से नहीं हंसे थे, स्पष्ट रूप से मुस्कुराते भी नहीं थे, उनकी मुस्कुराहट भी हल्की सी, छोटी सी होती थी. हंसी एक बंधन भी बन सकती है. अगर आप को यह विश्वास है कि खुशी, आनंद का अर्थ हमेशा 'हा हा हा' करना है, तो आप अपने आप में हास्यास्पद, मूर्खतापूर्ण होंगे, क्योंकि सभी प्रकार की परिस्थितियों में, बिना परिस्थिति की गहराई और उसके आयामों को समझे, आप 'हा हा हा' करते रहेंगे. आनंद का अर्थ हंसी नहीं है. आनंद की अभिव्यक्ति हरसंभव प्रकार से हो सकती है- ये जरूरी नहीं है कि ये किसी एक खास तरह से ही व्यक्त हो. ये हंसी के रूप में व्यक्त हो सकता है, ये मौन के रूप में भी व्यक्त हो सकता है. आनंद आप में स्थिरता ला सकता है, आपको कामों में लगा सकता है, या इससे आपकी आंखों में आंसू भी आ सकते हैं. आनंद का अर्थ हंसी या मुस्कुराहट नहीं है. आनंद का अर्थ है कि आप जीवन के मूल पर स्थिर हैं. जिस क्षण आप इसे किसी एक खास अभिव्यक्ति या प्रकट करने के तरीके का गुलाम बना देते हैं, आप यह सुनिश्चित कर देते हैं कि आप हर समय आनंद में नहीं रह पायेंगे. आनंद का अर्थ यह है कि मूल रूप से आप जीवन की गहराई तक पहुंच चुके हैं, आप जीवन की सतह पर नहीं हैं.

सद्गुरु जगजी वसुदेव

कुछ अलग

जहां विस्मय तरबूज की तरह

जैत की तपती दोपहर में जब हम लू की लहर से बचने के लिए तरबूज की ओर शीतलता की उम्मीद से देखते हैं, तब इसी धूप में नदी की रेत के खेत में तपते तरबूज किसानों का जलता हुआ खून-पसीना हमसे नजरअंदाज हो जाता है.

जिस तरबूज को खरीदने में हमारी आंख निकलती है, उसके लिए किसानों को पैकारों से बहुत ही न्यूनतम मूल्य मिलता है. आलोक धन्वा की काव्य पंक्ति 'जहां विस्मय/तरबूज की तरह/ जितना हरा उतना ही लाल' और किसी के लिए पता नहीं क्या मानी रखता है, लेकिन गंडक के तटीय इलाकों में तरबूज के किसानों की स्थिति बताने के लिए यह पंक्ति मानीखेज है. यहां ज्यादातर किसानों का जीवन असुरक्षा से घिरा हुआ है. यह असुरक्षा तरबूज की खेती में लगनेवाले अत्यधिक खर्च और फसल तैयार होने पर इस रकम वापसी की अनिश्चितता के कारण है. ज्यादातर किसान महंगी दर से जमीन पट्टे पर लेकर खेती करते हैं, जिसका उनके पास कोई दस्तावेज भी नहीं है कि वह फसल बीमा मिलने जैसी स्थिति में किसी को बता सके कि मेरी इतने बीघे की खेती है. बीज से खास तक सब कुछ इन्हें बहुत महंगा मिलता है. सरकार से कोई भी मदद या सहायता नहीं मिलती. बहुसंख्या किसान ब्याज पर पैसे लेकर खेती करते हैं, जिससे कर्ज चुकाने का अतर्कित दबाव होता है.

सरकार या किसी एजेंसी से कोई भी फसल बीमा तरबूज किसानों को उपलब्ध नहीं है. कुछ लोगों को मुनाफा होता है, लेकिन ज्यादातर किसानों की लागत भी नहीं निकल पाती

सुधांशु फिरदौस

साहित्यकार
sudhansufirdaus@gmail.com

ग्रीष्म ऋतु में गर्मी नहीं पड़ेगी तो फिर कब पड़ेगी? पहले भी खूब भीषण गर्मी पड़ी है, बहुत बुरे अकाल की मार पड़ी है. किंतु दो-एक साल के दुकाल के बाद स्थिति औसत पर लौट आती थी, ऊंच-नीच के बाद सामान्य हालात बहाल हो जाते थे. अब ऐसा नहीं है. हर साल लगने लगा है कि गर्मी और प्रचंड होती जा रही है. शहरों की हालत और भी बुरी है. मौसम विज्ञान की कई रपटें बताती हैं कि आगामी दिनों में इसमें और भी बढ़ोतरी हो सकती है.

गर्मी बढ़ने का मामला इतना सीधा नहीं है. उदाहरण के लिए जब कड़ाके की सर्दी पड़ती है, तो लोग व्यर्थ में पूछते हैं कि जलवायु परिवर्तन का क्या हुआ! अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप यह कई बार कर चुके हैं. ऐसा कहने के पीछे एक बुनियादी चूक होती है. मौसम और जलवायु एक चीज नहीं है. यह अंतर कुछ वैसा ही है जैसा हाथ की घड़ी और पंचांग में होता है. घड़ी हमें एक दिन यानी 24 घंटे के समय का हिसाब दे सकती है. बस, लेकिन पंचांग पूरे साल के बारे में बताता है. मौसम घड़ी की तरह है, जो अल्पकाल में काम करता है. जलवायु पंचांग की तरह होता है, उसका हिसाब मौसमी नहीं होता. मौसम का ठंडा या गर्म होना उत्तरी गंभीर बात नहीं है, जितनी कि जलवायु परिवर्तन. जलवायु में बदलाव यानी हमारी दुनिया की विराट धुरी का परिवर्तन, यानी साल भर का हिसाब गड़बड़ाना. जब से जलवायु परिवर्तन की जटिलताएं वैज्ञानिकों के सामने धीरे-धीरे उभरी हैं, सालों-साल के शोध के बाद. बहुत पहले से यह समझ आ रहा था कि मौसम का ढरा बदलनेवाला है, हमारे ग्रह के ऊपर का औसत तापमान बढ़ने वाला है. जलवायु परिवर्तन की बात वैज्ञानिक बहुत पहले से करते आ रहे हैं और अब जो हो रहा है, यह उनके आंकलन की पुष्टि मात्र है.

औसत तापमान भी एक अलग चीज है. अगर आपके पैर बर्फ में पड़े हों और सर पर आग रख दी गयी हो, तो

हो सकता है कि आपके शरीर के बड़े हिस्से का तापमान औसतन ठीक ही हो. लेकिन तब आपका सिर जल जायेगा और पैर ठंड से अकड़ जायेंगे. इसलिए हमें समझना चाहिए कि जलवायु परिवर्तन से बड़ी समस्या मनुष्य सभ्यता में आज तक आयी ही नहीं है. इसके संदर्भ मनुष्य सभ्यता के कुल इतिहास में नहीं हैं. यह कितनी नयी, विराट और विचित्र चीज है, इसे समझना तो दूर, हमारे लिए इसकी कल्पना भी अत्यंत मुश्किल है.

पहले के जमाने में हमारे उपमहाद्वीप में गांव या शहर बसाते समय हरियाली का ध्यान रखा जाता था. पहले हर गांव-नगर में अमराइयों, वन-उपवन और वाटिकाएं हुआ करती थीं. पहले अमराइयों सिर्फ आम के लिए नहीं लगायी जाती थीं, बल्कि उसकी छांव में तो बरात तक ठहरती थी और वहां लोग इकट्ठा होकर सार्थक संवाद भी किया करते थे. पैड़-पौधे वहां अधिक लगाये जाते थे जहां जल स्रोत हों. राजस्थान जैसे सूखे क्षेत्रों में भी हजारों एकड़ के 'ओरण' छोड़े जाते थे. ओरण यानी अरण्य, यानी वन और प्राकृतिक परिवेश. इसी तरह गुजरात के पश्चिमी हिस्सा भी राजस्थान जैसा सूखा क्षेत्र हैं.

हमें 'राम' मिलता है, छोटा राम भी और बड़ा भी. राम भी अरण्य का ही अपभ्रंश है. यह दोनों शब्द यही बताते हैं कि हमारे यहां लोग अपनी बस्तियों में प्रकृति के लिए जगह छोड़ते थे, क्योंकि वे मानते थे कि प्रकृति ही मनुष्य को बचा



सोपान जोशी

पर्यावरणविद्
sopanjoshi@hotmail.com

पर्यावरण, जलवायु परिवर्तन और मौसम के बदल रहे ढर्रे को लेकर हमारे अंदर थोड़ी विनम्रता की जरूरत है. पहले हम यह मानें कि प्रकृति ने हमें बनाया है. हम प्रकृति के संतुलन से ही बच पायेंगे.

हमें 'राम' मिलता है, छोटा राम भी और बड़ा भी. राम भी अरण्य का ही अपभ्रंश है. यह दोनों शब्द यही बताते हैं कि हमारे यहां लोग अपनी बस्तियों में प्रकृति के लिए जगह छोड़ते थे, क्योंकि वे मानते थे कि प्रकृति ही मनुष्य को बचा

सकती है. अगर हरियाली और पानी के लिए जगह छोड़ेगे, तो वह हरियाली और पानी हमें पालेगा. आज ऐसा नहीं है. हमारे गांव-शहर हरियाली को केंद्र में रख के नहीं बनाये गये हैं. भीषण गर्मी तो होनी ही है.

भारत में कुल पानी का लगभग 70-90 प्रतिशत तीन महीने के मॉनसून में गिर जाता है. इस पानी को अगर आप रोक नहीं सकते, तो बाकी समय सूखे की मार निश्चित है. चौमासे के पानी को रोकने के दो ही तरीके हैं- या तो जंगल-पेड़ हों या फिर जलस्रोत हों, संभवतः दोनों हों, क्योंकि पेड़ एवं जलस्रोत एक-दूसरे के बिना आमतौर पर नहीं हो सकते. शहरों में न पेड़ रह गये हैं और न जलस्रोत बचे हैं. ऐसे में यह कैसे संभव है कि शहरों का तापमान न बढ़े?

पहले तालाब बनाना और हरियाली रखना सामाजिक काम था, पुण्य का काम था. आधुनिकता की आंधी में हमने अपने समय-सिद्ध सामाजिक ज्ञान का होम कर दिया. आधुनिकता और विज्ञान से भी उसकी अच्छी-ऊंची बातें नहीं लीं, सिर्फ उसका कचरा ओढ़ लिया है. आज हम परंपरा और आधुनिकता का सिर्फ कचरा ढो रहे हैं, उसकी अच्छाई को हम त्याग चुके

हैं. अब हमारे शहर सिर्फ कंक्रीट के होते हैं, जो गर्मी को रोकने की बजाय बढ़ाता है. मौसम के उतार-चढ़ाव के साथ मजबूत बने रहने के हमारे पुराने तरीके चले गये, क्योंकि हमने मान लिया कि आधुनिकता के युग में हम

ट्रेड वार से नयी सरकार को मौका

अमेरिका और चीन के बीच तेजी से बढ़ते ट्रेड वार के खतरों से भारत को बचाना नयी केंद्र सरकार की एक बड़ी चुनौती होगी. एक ओर चीन अपने उन उत्पादों को भारतीय बाजार में तेजी से भेजना चाहेगा, जिन पर अमेरिका में आयात शुल्क बढ़ गया है. वहीं दूसरी तरफ अमेरिका भी भारत के उत्पादों पर आयात शुल्क बढ़ाकर भारत को ट्रेड वार की चपेट में ले सकता है. ऐसे में जरूरी होगा कि केंद्र की सरकार भारत को ट्रेड वार के इन नये खतरों से बचाये और अमेरिका तथा चीन में निर्यात बढ़ने की नयी संभावनाओं के मौकों को मुट्ठी में लेने की नयी रणनीति बनाये.

मौजूदा ट्रेड वार को देखते हुए अर्थ-विशेषज्ञ यह कह रहे हैं कि यद्यपि अमेरिका और चीन के बीच ट्रेड वार से वैश्विक अर्थव्यवस्था में सुस्ती बढ़ेगी, लेकिन अमेरिका और चीन में भारत से निर्यात बढ़ने की संभावनाओं के नये मौके भी निर्मित होंगे. वैश्विक स्तर पर यह अध्ययन रिपोर्ट पेश हुई है कि चालू वित्त वर्ष 2019-20 में अमेरिका-चीन के ट्रेड वार के कारण इन दोनों देशों में भारत से 3.5 फीसदी निर्यात बढ़ेंगे. दरअसल, अमेरिका ने पिछले वर्ष जनवरी में चीन के कुछ उत्पादों पर आयात शुल्क लगाता व्यापार युद्ध की शुरुआत की. इसके जवाब में चीन ने भी अमेरिकी वस्तुओं पर आयात शुल्क लगा दिया. धीरे-धीरे ये दोनों देश एक-दूसरे से आयात होनेवाली कई वस्तुओं पर आयात शुल्क आरोपित करते गये. भारी हानि की आशंका को देखते हुए अमेरिका और चीन ने 24 अगस्त, 2018 के बाद लगातार समाधान वार्ता आयोजित की. लेकिन, 10 मई तक इन वार्ता का कोई समाधान नहीं निकला और अमेरिका ने 10 मई से आयातित 200 अरब डॉलर की वस्तुओं पर शुल्क की दर मौजूदा 10 प्रतिशत से बढ़ाकर 25 प्रतिशत कर दी. इस पर 13 मई को चीन ने कहा कि वह 1 जून से अमेरिका से आयात होनेवाले 60 अरब डॉलर मूल्य की 5,140 वस्तुओं पर आयात शुल्क पांच प्रतिशत से बढ़ाकर 25 फीसदी कर देगा.

ट्रेड वार अमेरिका और चीन के बीच व्यापार युद्ध वैश्विक अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए उपयुक्त नहीं है, लेकिन भारत के लिए इन दोनों देशों में निर्यात बढ़ाने के जो मौके निर्मित हुए हैं. इससे देश का व्यापार घाटा कम करने में भी मदद मिलेगी. विश्व व्यापार विशेषज्ञों का मत है कि अमेरिका से चीन में अमेरिकी सामानों की आवक घटने पर भारत अब चीन को करीब उस उत्पादों की आपूर्ति बड़े पैमाने पर कर सकता है. इनमें तंबाकू, ताजा अमूर, रबर, गॉल, ल्यूब्रिकेंट्स, सोयाबीन, ऑयल, स्टील, कॉटन, बादाम, अखरोट, कृषि उत्पाद, विभिन्न रसायन आदि शामिल हैं. भारत सतरे, बादाम, अखरोट, गेहूं और मक्का का निर्यात दूसरे देशों को तो

करता है, लेकिन चीन को नहीं करता. चीन इन चीजों को अमेरिका से खरीदता है. अप्रैल 2019 में चीन के साथ द्विपक्षीय कारोबार में व्यापार घाटे को कम करने के लिए भारत ने 380 उत्पादों की सूची चीन को भेजी थी, जिनका चीन को निर्यात बढ़ाया जा सकता है. इनमें मुख्य रूप से बागवानी, वस्त्र, रसायन और औषधि क्षेत्र के उत्पाद शामिल हैं.

वर्तमान में चीन भारतीय उत्पादों का तीसरा बड़ा निर्यात बाजार है. वहीं चीन से भारत सबसे ज्यादा आयात करता है. दोनों देशों के बीच 2001-02 में आपसी व्यापार तीन अरब डॉलर था, जो 2018-19 में बढ़कर करीब 88 अरब डॉलर पर पहुंच गया. पिछले वर्ष भारत से चीन को निर्यात बढ़कर 18 अरब डॉलर पर पहुंच गया, जो वर्ष 2017-18 में 13 अरब डॉलर था. इतना ही नहीं चीन से भारत का आयात भी 75 अरब डॉलर से कम होकर 70 अरब डॉलर रह गया. ऐसे में अमेरिका और चीन के ट्रेड वार के बीच भारत से चीन को निर्यात बढ़ने की संभावनाओं से भारत-चीन व्यापार घाटे में और कमी आयेगी.

ट्रेड वार के मोचे पर अमेरिका का सामना करने के लिए और भारत को अपने पक्ष में करने के लिए चीन करीब आता दिख रहा है. इसी तरह अमेरिका में चीनी उत्पादों पर आयात शुल्क संबंधी प्रतिबंधों के कारण अमेरिका में चीनी उत्पादों की आमद घट जायेगी. ऐसे में भारत अमेरिका में मशीनरी, इलेक्ट्रिकल उपकरण, वाहन, परिवहन कल पुर्जे, रसायन, प्लास्टिक, रबड़ जैसे उत्पादों का बड़े पैमाने पर निर्यात बढ़ा सकता है. भारत अमेरिका को टेपस्टाइल, गारमेंट और जेम्स-ज्वैलरी का निर्यात भी बढ़ा सकता है. अमेरिका के लिए मेक्सिको के बाद चीन अटॉटो पार्ट्स का दूसरा बड़ा सप्लायर है. कुछ अमेरिकी कंपनियां भारत से इन्हें खरीदने में रुचि दिखा रही हैं. यद्यपि अमेरिका को भारत के निर्यात की नयी संभावनाएं हैं, लेकिन यह जरूरी है कि भारत के अमेरिका के साथ व्यापार मतभेदों का उपयुक्त समाधान हो.

भारत का यह एक सराहनीय कदम है कि अमेरिका से आयातित, बादाम, अखरोट और दालें समेत 29 वस्तुओं पर भारत ने जवाबी शुल्क लगाने की समय-सीमा को लगातार आगे बढ़ाया है और अब यह सीमा 16 जून, 2019 तक है. ऐसे में भारत-अमेरिका के बीच कारोबारी तनाव को कम करने के लिए व्यापार वार्ता को आगे बढ़ाना होगा. ऐसा होने पर ही अमेरिका-चीन के ट्रेड वार का फायदा लेते हुए भारत अमेरिका को निर्यात में नये सिरे से वृद्धि कर सकेगा. हम आशा करें कि केंद्र में बनेवाली नयी सरकार भारत को एक ओर ट्रेड वार के खतरों से बचाने तथा दूसरी ओर अमेरिका और चीन में निर्यात बढ़ाने के लिए सुनियोजित रणनीति के साथ आगे बढ़ेगी.

देश दुनिया से

ईयू में जगह बनाने की ग्रीस की कोशिश

ग्रीस (यूनान) यूं तो यूरोप की कुल आबादी का सिर्फ दो प्रतिशत से कुछ ज्यादा है, लेकिन पिछले सालों में आर्थिक मुश्किलों की वजह से वह यूरोप के सबसे अहम मुद्दों में शामिल रहा है. अब वह यूरोपीय संघ (ईयू) में जगह बनाने की कोशिश में लगा हुआ है. ग्रीस के आर्थिक संकट और 2015 के शरणार्थी संकट ने आज के यूरोप को बहुत हद तक परिभाषित किया है. यूरोप के दक्षिण पश्चिम सीमा पर स्थित ग्रीस भारत की ही तरह लोकतांत्रिक गणतंत्र है, जहां सरकार का मुखिया संसद में बहुमत का नेता प्रधानमंत्री होता है. राज्य प्रमुख राष्ट्रपति होता है, जो मुख्य रूप से देश का प्रतिनिधित्व करता है. ग्रीस में औपचारिक रूप से मतदान अनिवार्य है, लेकिन इसकी हकीकत में जांच नहीं की जाती. संसद में 300 सीटें हैं. चुनाव 59 चुनाव क्षेत्रों में होता है. अठारह साल से ज्यादा उम्र के सभी नागरिकों को मतदान अधिकार है. इस साल अक्टूबर में होनेवाले संसदीय चुनावों से मतदान की उम्र घटाकर 17 वर्ष की जा रही है. यूरोपीय संसद में ग्रीस 21 सदस्य भेजता है. वह 1981 से यूरोपीय संघ का सदस्य है और 2000 से शेंगेन का और 2001 से यूरो जोन का सदस्य है. ग्रीस पुराने यूरोपीय संघ के गरीब देशों में शामिल है.

कार्टून कोना



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

प्रकृति पर विजय कर के उसे अपनी मर्जी के हिसाब से ढाल लेंगे. जलवायु परिवर्तन की बढ़ती मार हम सह नहीं पा रहे हैं. इससे बचने का तरीका बहुत सरल है, कि शहरों में कंक्रीट कम हो और हरियाली बढ़े. लेकिन, यह इसलिए नहीं हो सकता, क्योंकि आज की व्यवस्था में इससे किसी को मुनाफा नहीं है.

हम लोग अपनी घड़ियों में और अपने छोटे काल की समझ में इतने रहे हुए हैं कि हम भूल जाते हैं कि काल का एक बड़ा स्वरूप है, जो पंचांग में निकलकर आता है. यह अगर हम नहीं समझ पाते हैं, तो इसमें बड़ा योगदान पर्यावरण की एक नयी तरह की भोथरी भाषा का भी है. यह भाषा हमारा पढ़ा-लिखा समाज बना रहा है, हमारे नीति-निर्धारक इसे तैयार कर रहे हैं. वे कहते हैं कि हमें पर्यावरण बचाना है, पृथ्वी को बचाना है. जैसे कि पर्यावरण और पृथ्वी हमारे बनाये से बने हैं और हमारे बचाने से बच जायेंगे! असंलियत इससे उल्टी है. प्रकृति ने हमको बनाया है, हमने प्रकृति को नहीं बनाया है. अगर हमें कुछ बचाना है, तो अपने आप को ही बचाना होगा, अपने आप ही से. यह रास्ता प्रकृति से निकलेगा. हमें पुरानी व्यवस्थाओं से यह सीखना पड़ेगा कि कठिन से कठिन परिस्थितियों में कैसे मजबूती से बने रहा जा सकता है.

पर्यावरण, जलवायु परिवर्तन और मौसम के बदल रहे ढर्रे को लेकर हमारे अंदर थोड़ी विनम्रता की जरूरत है. पहले हम यह मानें कि प्रकृति ने हमें बनाया है. हम प्रकृति के संतुलन से ही बच पायेंगे. शहरों में पेड़ काटकर सड़क निर्माण कर देना विकास नहीं, विनाश ही है. विकास के मूल में ही यह अहंकार है कि हम प्रकृति के बनाये नहीं हैं. हमारे अहंकार को तोड़ना प्रकृति के लिए कोई बड़ी बात नहीं है. आज श्रेष्ठ विज्ञान भी हमें उसी विनम्रता का रास्ता दिखा रहा है, जो हमारे सहज सामाजिक व्यवहार में और हमारे अध्यात्म में भी रही है. कोई सुननेवाला है? (वसीम अकरम से बातचीत पर आधारित)



आपके पत्र

ट्रंप पर महाभियोग की मांग

अब तक बाहर वाले ही राष्ट्रपति ट्रंप पर महाभियोग चलाने की मांग कर से कर रहे थे, अब तो उन्हीं की रिपब्लिकन पार्टी के मिश्रित संसद जस्टिन अमाश ने भी महाभियोग चलाने की मांग कर दी है. क्या ऐसा होगा? अमेरिकी इतिहास में ट्रंप तीसरे राष्ट्रपति होंगे, जिनके विरुद्ध इस तरह की प्रक्रिया अपनायी जायेगी. वर्ष 1868 में एंड्रू जॉन्सन के खिलाफ महाभियोग चला था. फिर 1998 में बिल क्लिंटन पर भी महाभियोग लगा था, जिसमें उनकी जीत हुई थी. 1974 में रिचर्ड निक्सन पर भी इम्पीचमेंट चलाने की बात सुन ही हुई थी, पर उन्होंने त्यागपत्र दे दिया था. पिछले अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति चुनाव में रूसी दखलंदाजी पर रॉबर्ट मुलर ने जो रिपोर्ट पेश की थी, उस पर विवाद अभी थमने का नाम नहीं ले रहा है. हालांकि उस रिपोर्ट का निचोड़ था कि रूस ने किसी तरह का हस्तक्षेप चुनावों में नहीं किया है, मगर जब पिछले दिनों विदेश मंत्री माइक पोम्पियो रूस के दौर पर गये थे, तो उन्होंने रूसी अधिकारियों से कहा था कि अमेरिकी चुनावों में वह हस्तक्षेप नहीं करे. इसका मतलब क्या हुआ? एक ओर रिपोर्ट में रूस को क्लीनचिट दी जाती है, वहीं दूसरी ओर उसे हिदायत दी जा रही है!

जंम बहादुर सिंह, गोलपहाड़ी, जमशेदपुर

बंपर वोटिंग का संदेश

लोकसभा चुनाव, 2019 के अंतिम चरण में संताल परगना की तीन सीटों के लिए हुए चुनाव में बंपर वोटिंग हुई. निश्चय ही सरकार एवं विभिन्न संस्थाओं द्वारा चलाये गये मतदाता जागरूकता अभियान का यह प्रभाव है. इससे साफ तौर पर लोकतंत्र मजबूत हुआ है. नतीजतन, वर्ष 2014 की तुलना में इस बार की वोटिंग में प्रायः तीन प्रतिशत की बढ़ोतरी दर्ज की गयी. चिलचिलाती धूप में भी मतदाताओं ने अपनी जिम्मेदारी का निर्वहन किया है. लिहाजा, निर्वाचित होने वाले प्रत्याशी को भी मतदाताओं के प्रति उत्तरदायित्व का इमानदारी से पालन करना होगा, उनके सुख-दुख में खड़ा रहना होगा. इलाके के विकास के लिए अग्र बढ़ना होगा.

शंभु सहाय, बिलासी, देवघर

अफवाह फैलाने से बचें

अभी-अभी लोकसभा चुनाव खत्म हुआ है और लोगों ने बड़ी उत्साह के साथ अपना कीमती वोट अपने मनपसंद उम्मीदवार को दिया, लेकिन एक बात जो मुझे बहुत बुरी लगी, वह यह है कि कुछ लोगों की शरारत के कारण दूसरे लोगों को परेशानी का सामना करना पड़ा. वह महज अफवाह ही कि जिन लोगों का वोट लिस्ट में नाम नहीं है, वे भी आधार कार्ड और दो फोटो की मदद से वोट डाल सकते हैं. इस अफवाह को हजारों लोगों ने बिना सत्यापन और बिना कुछ सोचे सोशल मीडिया पर पोस्ट भी कर दिया. नतीजा यह हुआ कि बड़ी संख्या में ऐसे लोगों को नाहक परेशान होना पड़ा और मतदान केंद्रों से निराश होकर लौटना पड़ा, जिन्होंने इस तरह के पोस्ट पर जरा भी भरोसा किया. मैं सभी लोगों से निवेदन करना चाहता हूँ कि ऐसी अफवाह आप न फैलाएं और न ही ऐसा करने में भागीदार बनें.

अंकित वर्णवाल, झेल से.